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In the Matter of:

Instrument of God

Paul Robinson

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“Grind our enemies into the dust, and drown them in their own gore.”
“Above all else... We shall go on...”
“...*And continue!*”
and “The greatest philosopher alive, possibly the greatest who ever lived.”
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Lyrics from the following songs,
Elusive Butterfly, used on Page [20](#)
Tonight's the Night, used on Page [60](#)
You Mean the World to Me, used on Page [120](#)
Sign, used on Page [164](#)

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I'm not really sure if a fiction book is supposed to have a preface, or is it a foreword? I'm not really even sure what the difference is. I just looked it up. A general purpose talk at the beginning of a book about that book is an *Introduction*; some books have that, possibly when the book is by multiple authors or the talk is. A *preface* is when the author writes the introduction, a *foreword* is when someone else writes it. So I have just now changed the name of this section from a foreword to a preface, and reversed the appearance of the two words in the first sentence of this paragraph. So there!

I don't know where the idea for this book came from. I know I've had inklings about it and hints for years, both from my private thoughts and from my personal notes of things I wrote down when I was writing the first book "In the Matter of:" series, "The Gatekeeper: The Gate Contracts" ("Gatekeeper") more than twelve years ago. (When I started this book, it was over *seven* years ago; it has taken me *five years* to write this one, and over eight to finally *finish* it.) Where has the time gone? Back then, the book wasn't even part of a *series*, just a drug-induced hangover. Oh, no, I don't do illegal drugs (basically because I can't afford them and I'm far too lazy to steal to pay for them); it was because I was taking Phen-Fen for treatment of depression. And because of severe overweight but that's beside the point.

You'll notice some of the words in this section are in **boldface**. When I mention a real or fictional person or company for the first time I'll do that. It's a trick I picked up from the Washington (DC) *City Paper*, when its column about happenings mentions someone, it puts their name in bold. I thought it was a nice idea so I decided to do that.

What am I going to use this preface to talk about? This book, in hope that you'll find it interesting enough to buy it. Or read it on yours or someone's electronic book. (I had to add this line when **Amazon.Com** released the *Kindle*.) Or borrow and read it if it's at a library. Nothing more complicated than that. So I'll tell you something about it so maybe you will.

I have to ask **myself**, is this book perhaps some advance notice to me and perhaps to others about what we could expect? Is it just some weird dream that popped into my head? Is it a shared experience passed on to me from others? I do not know and may never know.

What I'm going to do here is to say a few things about death, and maybe about life, and their meanings. The points I make here are supposed to be for fun, to maybe make you think about some things, and maybe make you a little bit uncomfortable about your pre-set notions so you'll want to hear more about what I have to say. But I'm not really trying to rock your world, or shock your world; that's what the rest of this book is for. So read on, and maybe you'll learn something in a fun way, and hopefully consider this book interesting enough that you'll want it and I'll get a chance to tell you the story that awaits, starting on page 1. But you don't need to read this introduction to enjoy this story, I just wanted to say a few things as background to the story.

What I am doing here in this preface is a discussion of the philosophical concept called *metaphysics*. That's where someone asks those really weird questions that keep people up at

night, like, How did this universe get here? Why does it seem like I am the only person in the Universe? Why are things the way they are, i.e. is the universe the result of some planned intelligence or is it random chance that caused everything? What happens after **you** die, if anything? Or the even less asked question, what happened to you before you were born? Have you been here before, or did you just suddenly appear here because you were instantiated anew and never existed before? And there's lots more questions after that. Lots and lots of questions. Lovely questions, really interesting things to think about. Only problem is, I'm not allowed to answer *any* of them. If I do, I'm being dishonest.

I know one of the first rules of metaphysics: You're supposed to ask questions, you aren't allowed to give answers unless you admit clearly that they are only your opinions and are not necessarily right and you may even know them to be wrong. If you claim your answer to a metaphysical question is a (or the only) correct one, you crossed over the line into *religion*, which is kind of like cheating. Philosophers aren't allowed to have answers (that are claimed to be correct) to metaphysical issues – only questions. (If there does turn out to have a legitimate answer to the question, it stops being metaphysical.) Preachers and ministers *are* allowed to have answers to these questions (that are claimed to be correct), that's *their* job.

Since I'm wearing my Philosopher's Hat today, not my Reverend's Hat, I'll try and avoid that trap of religion (pun unintentional) by saying that everything I say in this preface about life beyond this world is merely my opinion; some of it may be right or wrong. I do not know the correct answers and do not claim to know them. So let's take a look at some possible answers, some of which I can *guarantee* will be wrong, because they conflict with one another. Remember, I'm trying to have some fun with you in order to get you to take this book, so I'm going to toss different ideas at you, not all of which are compatible with each other.

The late **Robert A. Heinlein**, probably the greatest science fiction writer in history, wrote a short story about a man who kills himself across to another universe while in prison after he got caught committing some white collar crimes, and becomes a teacher in the new universe he now inhabits, teaching some of his students to do what he did, to be able to Cross Over. At the moment I can't remember the name of the story, this sentence will be replaced with the name. Oh yeah, *Elsewhen*. In that story, the main character makes the statement that nobody will ever cease to exist when they die, because *no human being has the capacity to believe in their own death*.

So, have you thought about what happens after you die? There are only two possible conclusions. You cease to exist or you continue on in some form. The former is a dead end (pun unintentional) and the latter has two possible states, either you'll like the way things turned out or you won't. (Well, maybe you won't have an opinion either way, but eventually, I think you will.)

I think I can, for the moment, skip discussing what happens if you like the results after you die because if you're totally happy about it, there's no point in looking at it because if it's perfect, the subject is pretty much dead (pun unintentional again), you don't need to change perfection.

I'm going to look at the other possibility, that you continue to exist, but you're in some manner dissatisfied with the results.

Of the ways that people consider life after death - an *Afterlife*, by whatever you want to call it - to be unpleasant, the most common one seems to be the idea of hell, or something like that, where you roast in fire and brimstone for a long time, maybe for eternity. Sounds boring. And a real example of a stupid way to punish someone, read the next paragraph. It ain't hard to torture people, that doesn't take much smarts, there are lots of stupid torturers in those South American countries where Death Squads roam the countryside and those fighting, both in and out of the military, barely even know how to shoot the guns they carry, and a lot of them "couldn't pour piss out of a boot if you printed the instructions on the heel." ("**Cañal três** presents our next programme, *Exécution of de Week*. This execution is sponsored by the **Départementé de Taxaçion** which reminds you that failing to pay your taxes - which is whatever we say you owe, even if it's more than you have - is very dangerous and could result in fines, imprisonment or even death, or possibly a visit from your friendly neighborhood officer of the **Ministry de Disappeariances**, whose motto is "We specialize in invisibility. They'll never see you going or where you've gone. In fact, they'll never see you again. And neither will anyone else. Nor will anyone who asks about you ever be seen again." It is also sponsored by the **Office of Religious Affairs**, reminding all Catholic nuns and priests that they will be sent to see their boss any time they disagree publicly with government policy. And we don't mean the **Pope**, we mean *his boss*.")

Read this book for some really great ideas on how to make life after death into a real hell, without having to hurt those who are being punished at all. And not only are they punished, they learn something. Which should be the reason for punishing someone, to make them understand that they did something wrong and need to learn not to repeat their misconduct. And if punishment is meant to deter someone's conduct, it has to have an end so they can continue the usual and customary affairs of their existence and go about their business.

If you read more of this book, **Supervisor 246** discusses with someone named **Akers** the issue of eternal suffering after one dies and whether it makes any sense. If all you do is torture people, you don't allow them to fix what they did wrong, and you don't even let others know that they are being punished, why do you want to do that? You're going to punish them for something they did wrong, but they can't let others know about what they did so the other people might learn from this person's error, and you're not going to ever end their punishment so they can't learn from their mistake so they don't repeat it. Torture for torture's sake is an asinine way to punish someone. Unless it's because that's what the person being punished *wants* as punishment.

Some people believe there are really bad people who should be punished after they die. Now, the question is, will they be, and what is the standard? Who decides, and why?

When **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** and **Winston Churchill** met with **Joseph Stalin** - one of those so-called 'people' whom we can put on our 'double-plus ungood list' - at the Yalta Conference, where they decided how to divide up the world after the war, someone asked Stalin

how he knew that he was destined to become ruler of the Soviet Union. He said that **God** came to him in a vision and told him that it was to be so. FDR turned to him and said, "Now wait a minute, Joe, I never said any such thing."

I think that it's pretty hard to expect someone who believes (or at least *claims* to believe; I have no idea if he did) he was divinely inspired to be ruler, and ended up having over 20 million people murdered in mass collective farming schemes¹, to believe that he was a bad man who deserves to be punished. As he himself put it, "One man's death is a tragedy; a million men dying are a statistic." So if he is punished, it's because someone else is going to impose punishment upon him for something he probably doesn't even believe was wrong.

So if someone else decides the punishment, it's probably going to be arbitrary, might be capricious, and may not have any relation to what is appropriate. Might be too lenient. Probably be too strict. If we are going to punish people after they die, if they deserve to be punished, that is, would it not make more sense, by letting them determine their own fate? Maybe they do exactly that.

Following along with what I just pointed out and the quote from Heinlein's *Elsewhen*, perhaps we get the Afterlife we believe we are supposed to have. In such a case, then, eternal suffering for eternity would make sense, because the person who got it believes that's what they deserve. In which case, they can probably get out of it simply by changing their mind, ala **Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio**, who plays the deceased wife of **Robin Williams** after he dies, when he goes to try and rescue her from Hell in the movie *What Things May Come*.

But I think that might not happen for those we would think would *really* deserve it, because the really bad people that have, as **Dr. Malcolm Stevens** refers to **Dr. Hugo Sign** in *Gatekeeper*, "so contaminated this universe that a trillion years of torture in boiling acid, wouldn't cure one second of what they have inflicted upon it by simply existing, wasting space which would be more usefully occupied by maggots," don't believe themselves to be evil, and thus won't ever be really punished in ways we might find appropriate. I pointed out the example of ol' fun lovin' Joe Stalin. And I'll bet all those people who committed horrible crimes in Nazi Germany didn't think they were bad either.

I think it was said that the War Crimes Trials at Nuremberg, Germany showed, not the horror of evil, but it's banality. Being a guard in a concentration camp, where you raped a few Jewish women, gassed their husbands, stole the gold out of the teeth of the corpses, and worked the survivors to death, was just another job like being a file clerk, or any other ordinary occupation. (The willingness of people to simply obey otherwise horrific orders would later be confirmed in the *Milgram* and *Stanford Prison Experiments*, among others.)

Watch *The Green Mile* sometime. Being the guards at a prison Death Row, to them, it's a job they do, and yet to some, what they are doing is a clear and obvious example of barbarism, of some form of sadistic death rituals which we can wonder how sane human beings can commit themselves to be part of. (Coincidentally, while I was writing this preface, that movie was

released on free broadcast television.)

So, since the really bad people don't believe themselves to be that way, who does get punished? Those of us like you and me (well maybe not me; see below) who have a conscience and believe we should be punished when we die for whatever we did wrong. The character played by **Tom Hanks** in *The Green Mile* later comes to realize he's being made to live a long time as punishment for what he did wrong in performing the execution of a man he knew to both be innocent and something which in some people might consider to be a Messenger of God. Consider the plight of **Hattie Durham** in the *Left Behind* series of Christian thrillers, after she realizes who **Carpathia** is, for a long time believes that she doesn't deserve **Christ's** salvation by becoming a Christian, and deserves to be violated six-ways-from-Sunday in Hell for eternity for what she did.

Well, maybe you think you deserve that, more power to you as you scream in agony then, I hope you enjoy the torture since you wanted it so much. I don't think I've done anything wrong enough to deserve being punished at all when I die. I figure all the suffering and hell I put up with in this life, plus the trauma of dying, more than makes up for anything that I might have done wrong here, if I did do much of anything wrong. See **Robert Short's** book *Something to Believe In* on the subject of Hell on Earth.

So you get to the end of your life and you believe you done wrong and deserve some punishment. So you get it and you realize how horrible it is. Who do you blame for this state of affairs? Well, it ain't me, I'm giving you a new idea for the meaning of death, and it ain't God, if (s)he exists, because (s)he didn't decide to punish you, you did. So maybe you need to rethink what you believe is going to happen to you at the end of your life here on earth.

The clock is running, sooner or later your time will run out. And it was Robert A. Heinlein, again, who said about his own death, exactly what will happen next: Either you will know what happens after you die, or you will know nothing.

What am I saying here? If you will know nothing, that is, if you 'die dead' - that when you die, the result is oblivion, that is, annihilation and subsequent nonexistence - then you don't need to concern yourself about what happens when you die. I used to think the thought was terrifying until I realized - or actually it was **my sister** who pointed it out to me - that it's exactly what it is, if the end result of your life is oblivion, that you'll never know that you don't exist. That's one of those kind of self-evident ideas that, until you think about it, is probably something you don't realize.

Do I think it's sad if that is the case? Yes, I am deeply saddened by such a concept. All the horribly pointless waste of human potential that is lost at death and can't ever be recovered. Thirty billion souls - the estimated total population that has ever existed on earth - all used once and thrown away. If that doesn't say something about the need for recycling, or reclamation or something, then nothing will.

But there are a few glimmers of hope. One of the finest examiners of myth and mythology, the late **Dr. Joseph Campbell**, asks the question, “Are we consciousness or are we the vehicle of consciousness?” One way to put that is, are we, that is, our soul, and our personality, our essence, merely a display, or is it part and parcel of what we are as an entity?

If our consciousness, our ‘soul’ as it were, is merely a display, then when we die, we go with it. Maybe some part of our existence will remain, if you can call it that. And I think that’s still a waste, because if you aren’t around to remember what happened to you, what is the point of living, of having lived? Maybe there isn’t one, as Supervisor 246 says later in this book.

But if - this, I hope with every fiber of my being is true - that I am something more than mere display, then I continue notwithstanding my death, and birth or rebirth, that I exist for all time, I always have existed, will always exist, and never will cease to exist. And neither will you, either.

Also, consider this. Science tells us that matter and energy are the same thing. If the energy in our brains represents our soul, then it should stand to reason that if one’s soul is a form of energy, and is thus matter, then under the rules of science that matter can neither be created nor destroyed; we have always been here, we always will be here.

On the other hand - and I hate bringing up this point, but if I am to be honest with myself I have to make it - there is the possibility that while our existence is a form of energy, it is simply kept as an electrical storage within the construct of the brain, the way the files stored on a computer disk are simply the change in magnetic flux; the disk never changes, just the contents, and the contents can be modified, changed, replaced or lost. Or, the contents of the electronic memory of a computer, its “RAM,” as long as it is refreshed by electricity the contents remain; if the computer ever shuts down, the physical memory remains but the electrical contents, the running program, disappear. If it’s the same thing in our case, then when we die, we’re gone, annihilated, we cease to exist and we become part of the *consignment to oblivion*. (Somehow, that seems like a cheesy and weak cliché.)

Ayn Rand put it quite simply in her book *Atlas Shrugged*: “There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or non-existence - and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not: it depends on a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist. It is only a living organism that faces a constant alternative: this issue of life or death. Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action. If an organism fails in that action, it dies; its chemical elements remain, but its life goes out of existence.”

There is one possible answer which, if that answer does occur, then provides for certainty of life beyond existence. If it ever is shown that, even using the best possible atomic storage capacities, that the human brain’s capacity is inadequate to store the contents of the mind of a human being, then obviously part of us exists somewhere other than our brain. It may be that the brain does have the capacity to store all of us. Or perhaps it does not. I’ll leave that point

open for now.

And let's not forget all the reports of people who can remember having been here in a previous life. And Near-Death Experiences; I get to those in a later paragraph. And other things. Maybe all of these things are all coincidence and mere self-induced delusion to make ourselves believe in something beyond existence. But there are enough reports of people who, never having heard of other people having these reports, coming forward to say the same things without knowing about the others, at least as I understand it they did not know of the others.

Maybe all of these people got together and concocted these stories. Now, one thing experienced interviewers such as police officers and security people tell us that when two people tell a story about an event, there should be minor differences between them. If two people tell exactly the same story about an event, they're lying or they've been coached (or both). If these people did not know of each other when they told different people the exact same things about what they saw and what happened, it provides a question: Why are all of them are telling essentially the same story? If they are a bunch of co-conspirators, who is raising the money to finance this operation and what are they getting out of it?

It can't be some religious organization, because the way this stuff is coming out, it doesn't necessarily favor any specific religion, and I don't see where it favors a political agenda since a lot of people won't believe it. I suspect it might simply be either cracks in a very well designed system or game to keep those on this side of the line from finding out about the other side, or hints thrown at us to keep us guessing.

I think a very good reason to argue for continued existence with our memories intact, but it staying hidden, is that if it has the sort of promise that what this book talks about, the many people living in less than subsistence conditions, if they had positive evidence of there being something more and possibly better than this world, would commit suicide in such mass numbers that there would be almost no one alive here in some parts of the world.

Just consider how much better the lifestyle of some yuppie stockbroker on Wall Street would look to some less-than-subsistence farmer in sub-Saharan Africa. And yet the stockbroker has his own set of problems to deal with. And yet, think about what's possible when your only limit on what you can experience is your own imagination. Go see *The Matrix* if you haven't. I think it's going to be one of those special pieces of work that becomes a classic, the sort of thing that the people who made it may not have had an idea of what they would end up doing at the time, sort of like what happened to *Citizen Kane*.

So I think we can build a case on almost any side of the issue for the continued existence of the soul, the death of the body notwithstanding. The reports of Near-Death Experiences ("NDEs") also provide good hearsay evidence of this. As I said, there should be discrepancies in every story; if two people tell the exact same story, they're lying or they've been coached. And it seems like everyone who has had an NDE is telling the same story. Are they all lying, or is the experience so explicit that they all had the same thing?

Now, they've done experiments where they simulated the Near Death Experience (sounds like the name of some New Age punk rock group) by causing certain parts of the brain to experience loss of oxygen or being struck on the head or something, and the results seem to be the same. But I have this suspicion there is something more there, something I can't quite put my finger on, that makes this phenomenon more than the mere dying or almost dying of a few brain cells. Perhaps it's some misguided faith on my part that wants to believe it enough to discard evidence to the contrary. I hope not, I believe I am a good enough philosopher of reason and scientist of logic to accept such evidence - if there ever is any - *even if I do not like the answer*. But call it a hunch.

To quote **Mr. George Green** in my first book *Gatekeeper* again, only I'll use it on the subject of whether there is something more than this life, "Perhaps you just have a gut feeling [about it]... I know how that is; more than once I've had gut feelings about things where I couldn't put my finger on it, but I knew something... Later I would discover why I had that feeling, and, more importantly, why I was right, but at the time I did not have the evidence or knowledge to know why I felt that way."

I think, should that be the case, that perhaps it is possible to forgive everyone for their stupid screwups when they are here. Come on, someone screws with you for a few years and tortures you to death once? You going to hate him (or her) for the next trillion years? What if, in your previous life, you were a soldier and killed a bunch of people, should they be mad at you too? Or what if it was him you killed then, isn't he entitled to payback in the next life for what you did in the previous one? How do you know what you might have done before? Or what about some crackpot who thinks you did wrong to him?

If you play a game of Monopoly and you crucify one of your friends, I mean "grind them into the dust and drown them in their own gore"TM, and bankrupt them, and really enjoy watching as they have to liquidate everything, turn over everything they own to you and quit the game in ruins, are they supposed to hate you for several years over that? Or might it be likely that the next time you play, they should do their best to destroy you then? Could it perhaps be that life is like that?

When I first learned to play chess back in 5th or 6th grade in school, I was about 11 or 12 at the time, I was terrible at it and a **friend of mine** kept crucifying me, I kept losing badly. I got so mad one day I swept all the pieces off the board. Well, one day - and he swears he was playing his best and did not throw the game - my friend made some really bad mistake in one of his moves. You can bet I enjoyed every minute of that game as I turned around and destroyed him! No mercy and not a bit of charity, I enjoyed watching him suffer and lose big time. You have to figure it was a significant moment of my life when I can remember one chess game I played over thirty years ago, and yet sometimes I can't remember what I had for breakfast yesterday.

Do I regret destroying him in that game? Of course not, it was payback for what he did before. And if he was able to come after me again, I should have no complaints. And yet we could still

be friends in other circumstances even if we were merciless competitors on the chessboard.

Back in the summer of 1995 I had a friend named **Erwen Tang**, whom I have never met in person, only spoke with him by telephone and e-mail even though we only lived maybe 40 kilometers apart. We played the computer game DOOM - in deathmatch mode - by modem a lot. I'd kill him some times, he'd kill me a lot and we always played take-no-prisoners mode. One time I and **one of his friends** went at each other and we toasted each other left and right, a charnel-house of killing. When we got finished, we both talked how much fun we had, especially when the other guy did a really neat way of killing us. Erwen and I were still friends even though we always fought to the death - and redeath - in the game, and we even collaborated on writing a map for the game, that ended up being included in a third-party book on maps done by expert players of the game. He went on to college and I went back to work so we sort of drifted apart and I haven't spoken to him in several years. We never took our game playing attitude of "kill the other son-of-a-bitch at all costs" toward each other out of the game.

So maybe we have to consider the possibility that we're playing a game on earth or we're learning things, and as such, once we die we shouldn't hold people responsible for what happened here, because maybe what they did to us here is payback for what we did to them before. Or just maybe, you're going to violate them six-ways-from-Sunday in their next life to make up for what they did here. Presuming you can find them.

A dear friend of mine mentioned how **one of her friends** died and promised if there was any way to do so they would try and send a message back from beyond. And she never got a message from them. I said that if sending a message is possible maybe what happened was, they wanted to learn something and decided to come back to earth in order to learn whatever it was in the life of that particular entity.

Maybe what happened was that they got to Heaven, Paradise, The Afterlife or Valhalla, or whatever you call it, and the **Death Traffic Manager** or **Incomings Support Clerk**, or **Optional Recycling Operator** said to them, before they could even get to the equivalent of a phone to make a call back to earth, "Hey, I got just the thing for you, we have a birth in an hour and 45 minutes where that person will have over 20 of the experiences you put in a requisition that you wanted to learn, and you have a priority reservation for them, since it's a pure match for what you've selected. Only problem is, you have to immediately go under the knife now, you just made it in time if you want to catch that one. Otherwise, from looking at our plans for the future of earth, someone having all these experiences won't be around for another 10 years and unless you stay here the whole time you won't be available. You were chomping at the bit to get three of these and you only took your last life because you knew you were going to die early and would get one of the experiences you wanted badly in that life you just left. Or you can pick up each one of them, but you'll have to die and be reborn as many as 30 times to get all the things you want. So it might take you 2500 years to get all these experiences versus maybe 70. We've got all of eternity but you might not want to take that long. It's your call, do you want to take this birth now or pass?"

And they took it, did a u-turn, so they're no longer dead and can't signal her. But maybe, because they know them, their Circle of Life will touch again. My sister has a **friend** whom they suspect they knew each other before in previous lives. In one life, she claims they were both soldiers in the same army (which implies they were both men at that time), and in another they were husband and wife or lovers, I'm not sure which. In this life, both of them are female, so maybe people get Real Sex Changes quite often. Or maybe you don't get to pick your sex when you're born. Maybe you don't get to pick, it's involuntary. Or there is no Afterlife (in the sense that you don't get to stay after you die) and since you have to come back, recycling is automatic. Or maybe you don't get to come back, you only get one chance, and the people who think they have been here before are mistaken. Or maybe you keep coming back until you get it right (see my **David Letterman** parody about "Top 10 Reasons you can't remember what was before life" following this preface.)

Which brings up a whole new kettle of fish: presuming, for the moment, that people do survive death, do they come back? If so, is it because they have to (no afterlife to stay in), they choose to come back, or is it that they come back because of some misconduct (or simple insufficiency) and don't qualify to stay there? (Alfred Brooks in the movie *Defending Your Life*.) And if so, what level of misconduct justifies "taking the being born course over"? What might we consider to be the sort of thing that says that people have to go back and try again?

My sister has this fascination with Serial Killers. Don't get them confused with Mass Murderers, as I did, of which someone could be both. A serial killer kills usually one, or perhaps two people, at a time, or maybe a few extra if the opportunity comes up, but they do their killing more than once. Mass murderers might kill 5 or 6 people or more people at a time, and might only murder once. **Ted Bundy** was a serial killer. So are **John Mousaui** and **John Malvo**, the boy Mousaui was molesting, who, as this book was being written, were allegedly shooting 13 people from Fredericksburg, VA, to Montgomery County, MD, killing 11 of them before they were caught on their way to Pennsylvania. So was Supervisor 246's dear friend, **Jeffrey Dahmer**, of which he speaks so highly. **Those who crashed the planes** in the World Trade Center, Second Edition event were Mass Murderers. As was, of course, 246's other poster child, **Timothy McVeigh**. The **Manson Family** members who killed people were both. I spoke to my sister about her fascination with Serial Killers, that maybe she's learning something to understand how she was in a previous life, or perhaps she's taking advance lessons for her next life. As 246 says, maybe she'll have quite an accomplishment if that's going to be the case.

Someone once said life was too short to feel bad about things. How about eternity is too long to spend it wallowing in pity. Or seething in hate. If there is something beyond life, and it holds the kind of capacity that an entity of pure energy can obtain, then there is really no reason to have those negative emotions once you cross over. In this book I'm holding the Afterlife to a mirror-image copy of earth, because it gives me a good palette to paint my story upon and comment upon our world. But if you have no restrictions upon your existence, and the universe is what you can dream it up to be, then the capability is unlimited for happiness, to do anything you please. If you've ever seen "Q" from *Star Trek: Next Generation* then that's the sort of

thing that everyone just could be. Of course that character is a pest because he's too needy, but that's beside the point.

On a side note, I'm an agnostic. I do not know and do not have enough evidence to express an opinion one way or the other. Professionally I remain neutral but personally I suspect something is out there as a controlling entity. The problem I have with the whole scenario is that if you have nothing there, the universe makes too much sense, or, they still have the problem in which the universe was created but have no explanation as to what caused it. On the other hand, if someone did create the universe, how did they get here? And why are all the ways I keep hearing about whoever might be running the universe depict Him - and it's almost always a Him, the writers of most religious tracts tend to depict their God as male because, as Ayn Rand notes, when they created Him in their own image - and it's usually men who write religious tracts - God usually appears to have the social graces of an uncivilized two-year-old, being exceptionally rude, throwing tantrums and fits, and generally acting like someone who has severe self-respect problems? The character TDR - **Tansin A. Darcos** - exhaustively explains my reasoning on the subject in *Gatekeeper* which I don't need to reiterate here. That gives me yet another excuse to sell my other book to you also.

So I think maybe I've rambled on just a little too much. Maybe I've given you some questions to think about. But again, I'm not claiming I have *the* answers, that is, the ones that are right, or *any* answers. While I love what she has to say and I believe much of it, in my opinion I'm a much better metaphysicist than Ayn Rand because I learned from one of her errors, as I have stated from the beginning, that the most important rule of metaphysics is: it's a system of questions, you aren't allowed to give out the answers. Once you try to answer a metaphysical question, and claim it is correct, you stop dealing in metaphysics, you cross the line and you fall over into religion. Rand made that error at least once. I learned from it. And sometime in the future I'm sure someone will spot one of my errors and point it out. Maybe I'll be lucky enough to be alive when that happens, so I can learn too.

Well, anyway, let's go on to the story before I scare you so much that you put the book back on the shelf without buying it. The story is supposed to be fun to read, and while I don't know if you'll have fun reading it, I sure had a lot of fun writing it. While trying to do all the other things, e.g. look for work, settle an automobile accident claim, write to the CEO of a financial organization to tell him how I felt he shouldn't think he broke his promises, get clearances for some of the things in this book, handle my application to become a common carrier, notarize documents, clean up my room, and so on and so forth. Oh great, I finally get the chance to legitimately use "e.g." in a sentence, it's very hard to get that opportunity as most times "i.e." is the one you have to use to be correct. I treasure such rare pleasures.

You can read more about and discuss this book online at

<http://www.instrumentofgod.com>

or send e-mail to

246@instrumentofgod.com

In writing this book, I wanted to say that I had a hell of a lot of fun doing it. But I can't say that. What I can say is I had a Heaven of a lot of fun doing it! And if there is anything to a Heaven, or an Afterlife, or something, I hope it's organized like this one. If it is - and I hope with every fiber of my being that it is so - I can't wait until I become part of that society when some nice lady picks me, takes me to her room, and 'loves me back into the world'.

On to the book. Here we go. It's all yours. Go to town on it.

"One thing seems clear and obvious from the lessons of history. It stands out singularly among all the things the lessons of history can teach us. The one thing, more than any other, that the lessons of history teach us, if the lessons of history teach us anything at all, is that no one ever learns the lessons that history teaches us."

- Paul Robinson

Paul Robinson <paul@paul-robinson.us>
Prince George's County, Maryland, USA, North America, Terra
August 18, 2002 - September 30, 2010

Commonwealth of Virginia)
County of Arlington)

I certify that this book, *In the Matter of: Instrument of God*, is a true and complete copy of the original on file and of record in my office. Witness my hand and seal, this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Paul Robinson
Seal
for the Commonwealth of Virginia at large, and the State of Maryland in and for Prince George's County."

"A Computer Programmer and Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia at large, and the State of Maryland in and for Prince George's County."

Virginia Commission No. 318185
My Commission Expires November 30, 2014

I recommend the following books and motion pictures as either being related to the same subject of this book, or being very helpful in giving me ideas for creating this book:

Books:

Heinlein, Robert A.

- *Elsewhen*

An interesting short story which I talk about earlier. You get the afterlife you expect to get. "No human being is capable of believing in their own death," so nobody ever disintegrates after they die. Then again, I wouldn't be surprised if Ayn Rand could, she was pretty good at thinking of a lot of things.

- *Starship Troopers*

Government is those people that can initiate violence against others and get away with it. If you vote for something, the government has the power to force people to do things in order to get it, whether by taxes, or condemnation, or kidnaping them to get it. If the responsibility one has for ones actions is not equal to the authority one has, you have governments that oscillate out of control, then collapse into cruel despotisms. If you have a system where those who have authority to act have no responsibility for their actions, or those who are responsible for the actions of others, but no authority to act, you have chaos. And that's exactly what we have in our society right now. Everyone wants to be the driver, but nobody wants to pay the price for running everything. Or those that are expected to pay the price are given no say in the matter. Actually, both *Starship Troopers* and *Atlas Shrugged* deal with the same issue, failure to balance responsibility and authority. *Starship* shows a world where they have done this; *Atlas* shows a world where they have not and the resulting disaster that ensues.

- *Stranger in a Strange Land*

You get two things in that book that I duplicate in this one: people being able to create (or remove) things simply by force of thought, and lots of people having lots of sex with others, i.e. the Free Love movement that he just happened to catch onto back in the early 1960s when his book was released. I suspect that we are just now restarting that level of social mores after the 40-year cycle of sexuality has swung back close to the way it was then. Now, as Heinlein himself admitted, since he didn't have some device create the items in *Stranger*, his book is classified as fantasy rather than science fiction. On the other hand, since everything happening in the book you are reading now is by computer simulation, I get to classify this book as hard science fiction. Except for the scaling problems - same as in *The Matrix* - where you can't do this for a lot of people because it takes too much computing power to do it in real time, almost everything in this book is potentially possible or almost possible with the computer technology we have now. And the trans-universe work is done via devices so it's all pure science fiction, no fantasy involved.

Jenkins, Jerry and LaHaye, Tim

Left Behind (and the subsequent sequels)

It's said that these guys have done for Christian fiction what John Grisham has done to the legal profession. The series talks about a group of lying, stealing, murdering, conniving schemers. And that's just what the good guys are doing! You can imagine how the bad guys are in comparison. Consider the "Loyalty Enforcement Enhancer" or whatever they called the Guillotines used to make sure people take the Mark of the Beast. My sister said that seeing the kind of world that is promised for Christians after the Rapture made her glad she's an atheist. Of course she's forgetting these are all people who became Christians after they got whacked across the head with the 2x4 of The Rapture. I don't know where that puts me. I'm an agnostic; I can't accept either side of the typical religious arguments either for Christianity and God (or Muslim and Allah, or whatever they believe in, in Asia), or for Atheism and No God.. I'm also a Christian, I'm stuck with it, I'll always be one, because I got into it when I was very young, before I knew any better, and even if I change my mind later, the Bible claims I can't stop being one. It's sort of like joining a credit union, "once a member, always a member." If that is correct, I won't be around to be part of what happens once events as predicted in the series do happen. It might be that's the whole idea; God would want to grab in advance anyone who might figure a way out of the mess that's going to occur. This presumes that there is a God to Rapture his church as the series of books predict.. If there isn't then there's no Antichrist either and we don't have to worry about it.

Rand, Ayn, *Atlas Shrugged*

- This is one of those books you either love or you hate. I've read it cover to cover more than eight times, so you can guess just how much I despise it. Rule #1 comes almost verbatim out of that book. Also, the concept of objective law. The law is defined *exactly* so you know if you are breaking it or not. Both *Starship Troopers* and *Atlas Shrugged* deal with the same issue, failure to balance responsibility and authority. *Starship* shows a world where they have done this; *Atlas* shows a world where they have not and the resulting disaster that ensues. I'd love to be able to say that it's the first non-religious definition of a workable system of morality, but I can't. I know it took her two years to develop the 60+ page statement made by the main character in the lecture near the end of the book, but I wish she had been able to make it without a flat and explicit statement that the universe has nobody operating it. In 15 minutes her writing convinced me that my years of religious beliefs were, if not flat out wrong, at a minimum, misguided and ignorant. I agree with her flat rejection of Christianity as an insult to intelligence, her statement in this book are what made me become agnostic. Now, maybe it is true that there is no God, but the problem is, once you make a claim either way, that there is a God, or there isn't, you don't get to classify your statement as a philosophy, you cross into religion. That means that her whole system is a matter of faith as to whether you accept it or not, the exact thing I

think she was trying to get rid of in the first place. Get rid of the religion and you can argue the whole thing by logic. Now, I don't necessarily believe in the alleged God or Allah as depicted by the Bible, or the Koran, or most of the other religions, but for the moment I stand neutral because I can't accept either the proposal that nobody started all this, nor can I accept the kind of crazed lunatic they all seem to have as the Head Honcho. On the other hand, maybe when I die I'll find out that God is a Committee, as Lazarus Long in Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love* suggests. Or maybe it's someone like Supervisor 246 or George Green. Or me. That would explain a great deal, wouldn't it?

Short, Robert A. *Something to Believe in: Is Kurt Vonnegut the Exorcist of Jesus Christ Superstar?*

I went onto Amazon.Com to look up the author's name for this book and had forgotten the whole title. I haven't read this book in twenty years but it was terrific when I did. Thinking about it made me decide to buy the book and read it again. This is a great book if you want to look at religion and the philosophy of where you go when you die and how you might be punished as a result of what you did here, or maybe why you won't be punished after all. I like the way he examines the suffering people go through on earth and compares it to what people expect to be the hell that they go to when they die on earth if they weren't good enough to get to go to heaven. I think he's the one who pointed out that if you didn't have something to make people think they should act for good on earth, most of them would turn nihilistic. That, other than that proposed in *Atlas Shrugged*, no one has tried to create a philosophy of morality that didn't have some religious system as its basis is the reason that exactly what I have just stated is what is happening in general in western civilization, as more people come to the realization that if there ain't nothing after this, there's no reason to act decently because you're gonna die dead anyway and it won't matter what you did here. "If there is no life after death then human existence has no value since it doesn't matter how you act, you get the same treatment at the end, and the Nazi murder of six million people in Germany has no more significance than the murder of six million cockroaches when a tenement is fumigated." Or something like that.

Motion Pictures

The Green Mile

The story of the men who run Death Row at a prison and what they go through. When you do something in a job that you do not like, do not want to do, and in some cases do not agree with but you do it anyway because it is what you are supposed to do. Of course, you can look at this and say that what they are involved in is sadistic brutality equivalent to the guards at a German Concentration camp circa 1939, but it's still an interesting examination of the issues of life and death and how some people live with handling both.

The Matrix

Hands down, one of the top 10 films of the 20th century. (Forget the sequels, they pale in comparison and might as well be a different movie series altogether.) There have often been, people arguing that the world around us and the reality we are seeing could be shown to us are mere illusion. The big question would be, "Why?" Why would someone - or something - be going through all that effort, trouble and expense to do that? Well, this movie is the first to come up with an answer to that question. Why would someone go to the trouble to create a completely synthetic world and want you to think it was real? So they could use you (and your body) for some purpose they did not want you to know about. Some people have even written a book discussing the philosophy that the Matrix talks about. I read it; interesting. But the movie "ExistenZ" that book talks about, *sucked*.

Starship Troopers

I like the way they kept the point that elections are a form of violence. "When you vote you are exercising force. And force my friends, is *violence*, the Supreme Authority from which all other authority is derived." If you want the idea of a no-win scenario, consider the scene where Lt. Radchak looks over the wall of the compound and scans to the horizon, and sees the hundreds of thousands of members of the Welcoming Committee, who would like to welcome him and all of his troops to the inside of their stomachs, or whatever they have as an unreasonable facsimile thereof.

Total Recall

The man goes to get a memory implant so he'll think he's been on a trip to Mars as a secret agent but something goes wrong. Or does it? Is everything that is happening real, or is it a dream? That's the whole point of the movie.

Vanilla Sky

Is what is happening to him real, or is he imagining it, or is he insane, or is he sane and seeing something which is not real. That's the whole point of the movie. A very strange and weird movie if I do say so myself.

What Things May Come

A film that examines what could happen once you die. This is one of those movies where all of the characters *really* go through hell! If what happens after we die is the result of what we expect the afterlife to be, then all we have to do to stop suffering in hell is to choose not to suffer. “The purpose of life is not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself, and live.” - John Galt in *Atlas Shrugged*.

Love me back into the world

I feel the touch
That I need so much
When you love me back into the world

Love you back into the world
I'll feel all the things
And the happiness it brings
When I love you back into the world

Show both of us you care
And what you want us both to share
When we love each other back into the world.

We have been here
For all time
And we shall be here
Though we may at times be gone
For a short while
We will always return

I may have known you before
We may come to know each other again
While we are together, let us celebrate that which we have
And love each other (back into the world.)

Profane, profound, and parodically funny, Paul Robinson's *Instrument of God* tells the story of Supervisor 246, the lead supervisor of a "service facility." What sort of service do they provide? Well, that's what this story is about.

You could say it's the story of his life but that's not true at all.

You see, Supervisor 246 is dead. Everyone in this story is dead - or so it seems - and so we learn what it's like in a place they call the Afterlife. Take the world as we know, turn it upside down and shake it, and you get the mixed up and strange place he, and everyone else around him resides in, a world very similar to our own and yet is in so many ways a mirror image.

Instrument of God brings a completely new "look at everything from scratch" society in which "almost everything you know is wrong," where you need to unlearn almost everything you know about how to act in society, and how it questions all our assumptions about the way things are.

- The book opens with a rape crisis intervention, in which they counsel the victim of this horrible crime: the rapist.

Where Supervisor 246 makes a statement on national television: "The 'holocaust survivors' were criminals, the 'Nazi Skinhead' was a law abiding citizen minding his own business." And when you read why, you might very likely agree with him.

How the police tell you that they respect you as a human being even though you're being carted off to jail.

That money is worthless, while words and promises can be more priceless than gold.

That it is possible to joke about child molestation, cop killers, and other subjects normally considered too sensitive to make jokes about.

Where a TV station is declared by a court to be a newspaper.

The happiest news you can hear is that a close personal friend of yours has been killed in an automobile accident, and the worst possible tragedy is that a baby has been born. And if you die in a motor vehicle accident, it just turns out to be a minor inconvenience and merely a bad day for you, nothing to get too upset about.

Instrument of God was designed to tell a story, make the reader think, and perhaps challenge all of his or her established beliefs about just about everything, from religion, to politics, the Justice System, and even whether the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is too weak to protect free speech.

Oh, and let's not forget sex. There is a lot of sex in this book. It's going to pick on your ideas about sex, too. In fact, in the book an incident makes it possible for a woman to take literally the following statement: 'If rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it.' And she really does, too!

They used to say that nothing beats a Smith and Wesson. They never heard of 'Immunity from Assault.'

You might love this book, or you might not, but it is doubtful you will remain neutral. It is unlikely you will remain unmoved, however. Inspired by the works and ideas of great writers and artists such as Robert A. Heinlein, Ayn Rand, The Wachowski Brothers, and others, it brings a fresh and possibly unique perspective on death - and life - in a work of fiction.

Instrument of God, by Paul Robinson
Part of the "In the Matter of" series.

If you don't mind reading a spoiler, here's a one-paragraph (and actually one sentence) summary I did for TVTropes.org:

Through the story, the star, Supervisor 246, ends up being reincarnated out of the afterlife into another universe, crosses into a third, back into his own, dies, is re-reincarnated along with a friend, is killed by the friend who then blows up a hotel room to commit suicide, is visited by another friend from the third universe who temporarily dies in order to know how to build an afterlife for her world, plus waits for the death of his best friend who was a man but decided to go back to earth and be born as a woman so that when he died he could have regular sex with his friend Supervisor 246, who isn't into gay sex, but has no problem screwing the women of three universes.

If some unemployed punk in Trenton,
New Jersey can buy a plug-in for \$29.95
to let him make love to Cindy Crawford,
Virtual Reality is going to make Crack
Cocaine look like Sanka.
- Dennis Miller

Jonah: Like, do you believe in heaven?
Sam: I never did. Or the whole idea of
an afterlife, but now I don't know, 'cause I
have these dreams about her, about your
mom. And we have long talks about you,
how you're doing, which she sort of
knows but I tell her anyway. So what is
that? It's sort of an afterlife, isn't it?
- Tom Hanks, "Sleepless in Seattle"

Baby you're all that I want.
When you're lying here in my arms
I'm finding it hard to believe
We're in Heaven.
- Brian Adams, "Heaven"

Swear there ain't no Heaven
And I'll pray there ain't no Hell.
But I'll never know by living
Only my dying will tell.
- Blood, Sweat and Tears, "And When I
Die"

The lovers and the fighters and the risk
they take
Are on the other side of life...
The only way to get there is to take the
step
To the other side of life...
- The Moody Blues, "The Other Side of
Life"

Can I believe what I see
All I have wished for will be...
Lord, kiss me once more, fill me with
song

Allah, kiss me once more that I may, that I may
Wear my love like heaven...
- Donovan, "Wear Your Love Like Heaven"

Death is not important. Death is insignificant.
Eternity is what is important. And eternity is
now.

- Ayn Rand

But now my life's a canvas
Painted with your love
And it will always be
And now I see
The two of us together
Through time will never part
This fairy tale we're sharin'
Is real inside our hearts
Let it be forever
Never let it end
This promise I do make
Heaven is ours to take
- Atlantic Starr, "Masterpiece"

Welcome to the real world she said to me
Condescendingly...
But something's better on the other side...
I just found out
There's no such thing as the real world
Just a lie you got to rise above ...
I am invincible
As long as I'm alive ...
- John Mayer, "No Such Thing"

Any sufficiently advanced technology is
indistinguishable from magic.
- Arthur C. Clarke
If it is distinguishable from magic, it's not
advanced enough.
- Anonymous

And we can act like we come from out of this
world / Leave the real one far behind

- Men Without Hats "Safety Dance"

I really don't hold with knowing the future, even my own, which is short... I mean, if we knew for a fact there was an afterlife, and if the afterlife was bliss eternal, we'd all commit suicide in order to enjoy it.

- Mandemous, "Battle for the Planet of the Apes"

... I don't want to leave the comfort of this place

'Cause there's a hunger, a longing to escape

From the life I live when I'm awake

So let's go there, let's make our escape

C'mon let's go there, Let's ask "Can we stay?" - Creed, "Higher"

Our voices will ring together

Until the 12th of Never

We all will live love forever, as one! ...

Recognize its your life, now in review

And, as you stay, for the play

Fantasy has in store for you

A glowing light will see you through

It's your day, shining day, all your dreams come true

- Earth, Wind and Fire, "Fantasy"

They say that in Heaven, love comes first

Date: Sat, 13 May 1995 09:37:35 -0500

From: Paul Robinson

Subject: Top 10 Reasons you can't remember what was before life

John Hoban (Shibumi@epix.net) wrote in newsgroup alt.philosophy objectivism:

If there is no personal ego that can remember life before this one how can one "remember." Isn't that supposed to be possible?

TOP TEN LIST BY T.A. DARCOS & COMPANY (Not affiliated with Worldwide Pants, Inc.)
(Drumroll)

We'll make Heaven a place on earth

Ooh Heaven is a place on earth

- Belinda Carlisle,

"Heaven is a place on Earth"

Death is nothing to us, since while we exist, death is not present, and whenever death is present, we do not exist.

- Epicurus, 3rd century

Where is Heaven? It is no place. It is myth.

- Joseph Campbell

From the Home Office of Tansin A. Darcos & Company in Silver Spring, Maryland, Top 10 Reasons why you can't remember where you came from before you were born:

10. We're all virtual reality elements and this is the program we're in.
9. We're an experiment growing in a scientist's test tube.
8. This is a game, and some of us are real people playing the game, and some are computer operated agents who don't know they are; the ones who remember are real, and the ones who don't are programs.
7. You got sent here as punishment for something, and when you learn why you're here, or you serve out your sentence, you die and you get your memory back.
6. You flunked your death exam so you have to take the "being alive" course all over again.
5. Valhalla / Heaven / Paradise is overbooked and they gave you temporary lodging until your cloud was ready.
4. ?BABY-E-NORMINSKUL You couldn't fit your past memories into a baby's head, and forgot to pay the surcharge for getting them back later.
3. When you came here, you paid the extra charge for not remembering your past lives.
2. The trauma of being born has given you amnesia.

And the Number 1 reason why you can't remember what happened before you were born:

1. This is your first time here. (Some of us have to be "virgin" lives.)

(Cymbal Strike, Orchestra plays piece from "Feels like the First Time" by Foreigner, then "Like a Virgin" by Madonna.)

In the Matter of:

Instrument of God

Paul Robinson

Book I

Chapter 1

“She isn’t going to make the decision either.”

“Hi Bill, how are you doing?”

“Good afternoon 246.”

“I presume that’s him there,” 246 says, pointing at a man sitting on a bed, with his trousers and underpants pulled down to his ankles.

“Yep. The computer says he arrived from the United States. Specifically California. 15022 EN Leroy 504337. Unbelievable, isn’t it?”

“I was so surprised when I heard. The last time this sort of thing happened was, oh, I can’t even remember it’s been so long, must have been years ago. Usually it doesn’t happen this fast. Can we take him up to my office?”

“The police are already here to take him.”

“Oh no they don’t! I want him in *my* office.” He turned to his right. “Oh hi, Joan. Let me introduce you, this is Sergeant Bill 774 of Welcoming Department Security. Bill, this is Police Watch Commander Joan 20319.”

“How do you do?”

“Charmed. Where’s the perp?”

“On the bed over there.”

“Okay, well anyway, I have my handcuffs, I’ll take him.” She turned to the man on the bed.

“Sir, you can pull your pants up.” The man does so. “You are hereby violated. You have rights under the law and you are advised to say nothing until you are informed of them or have access to counsel.” She reached over and began to put the cuffs on. “You are under arrest for..” She doesn’t get to finish her canned speech as 246 interrupts.

“Ah, no, Joan, you can’t do that.”

She stops. “Supervisor 246, I want this guy.”

Supervisor 246 shakes his head. “You know the rules, Joan, whoever catches him first owns him. In fact, you’re only allowed in this Department because you’re my friend. Normally the police can’t even enter unless my best friend Tom, the Administrator, grants them admission. Now I know he’s your friend too and you can always get him to let you in, but as far as the alleged perpetrator here is concerned, even he won’t overrule me on this. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, as they say, and I caught him first. I’ve got him so he’s mine until I decide whether you can have him. Right now, the answer is no, I want to take him up to my office.”

“How much do you want for him?”

“He’s not for sale. You can’t have him.”

Her response was nearly a scream. “WHAT? You turned *down* a sale?”

Supervisor 246 shakes his head again. “I’m not turning you down; I’m just refusing to sell him at this time. First of all, I don’t know how much he’s worth to me yet; I might discover he’s very valuable and regret later that I sold him to someone for too little. Then, I have to hate myself for a while for allowing myself to be cheated. And I don’t want to hate myself; I love myself too much. Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* is asked to sell a business man, one of his golden chocolate egg laying geese for the business man’s daughter, and he says,

‘They’re not for sale, she can’t have one.’ So I present to you the same response.”

“Maybe Willy didn’t want the man’s daughter. I do want *him*.”

“Very funny, Joan. You know what I mean.”

“I’ve never heard you refuse a sale, Supervisor 246. Name your price.”

“Hmmm. Hmmm.” Supervisor 246 smiled. “Do you really mean that?”

“I want him. What do you want?”

“Don’t be so quick to ask. You might not like it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Maybe you can’t afford it.”

“Don’t bet on it.”

“Okay, you come work for me in my section for twenty five calendar years. No wait, strike that, you might think it was worth it; I’ve got to make sure the price is too expensive, so you *have* to turn me down. Come work for me for one hundred and twenty five calendar years. For that, you can have him.”

“You’re out of your mind.”

“Absolutely. And I’ll take your response as ‘no’. Since you turned me down, the answer is ‘no’ to you in return. It’s really not my call to make in the first place, but there’s a chance I could have made a big profit out of the deal, and I always look at my own self-interest first; I’m not a humanitarian. But in any case I’m not going to make the decision on which of us he goes with.”

“You’re not?” She smiled. “Okay, I’ll go ask the girl.” She started to leave.

“Joan, dear, before you leave to go bother Anita, it might interest you to know something. She isn’t going to make the decision either.”

“Well who the hell is?”

Supervisor 246 pointed at the man on the bed. “He is. And I can bet you 2000 favors he’ll pick me over you.”

“Supervisor 246, that’s not fair!”

Supervisor 246 smiled. “Who said death was supposed to be fair, babe?”

“Please?”

“Are you begging?”

“Yes.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Supervisor 246 turned to the man on the bed and started to talk very softly, as if he were talking to a small child. “Young man, look at me. Bill, would you get us a couple of chairs, please?. Thank you. Young man, I’d like you to sit down in that chair, if you don’t mind. Thank you. Would you like a glass of water or something?” The man shook his head. “Very well. Do you mind if I sit down here next to you?” The man shook his head again. “Joan, would you like to sit down here next to us?”

“No, I’ll stand.”

“Well, I’m going to sit down right here next to this young man. Now, young man, I’d like to know if you would be willing to tell me your name, or what you would like to be called?”

“Leroy Washington, sir.”

“Okay, ah, Leroy, ah, do you mind if I call you Leroy?”

“Uh, no sir.”

Supervisor 246 smiled. “Okay then, Leroy, my name is Supervisor 246. You don’t have to

call me sir, just about everyone calls me 246 so you can do the same thing if you'd like, okay?"

"Okay."ⁱⁱ

246 points at Joan. "You can probably recognize by the fact that she's wearing a uniform, that this nice lady standing next to me, whose name is Joan, by the way, is the Police Watch Commander. In fact, Leroy, would you be willing to stand up, say hello and shake hands with Joan?"

Leroy is completely puzzled. "Huh?"

"I'd like us all to try to be on a first name basis. Well, first name basis in my case, but that's beside the point. Would you like to say hello and shake hands?"

"Uh, no."

"Okay. Now, I want you to understand something here. You are aware that you are in a serious amount of trouble, aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"Well you haven't shaken hands with Joan over here, so you probably don't know much about her, so I'll have to tell you. Where you came from she's about the equivalent of the head of the State Police, say the California Highway Patrol in your case. I'm sort of a jack-of-all trades around here. Now, I'm thinking I want to have a little chat with you in my office. On the other hand, Joan here wants to take you to the police station. Now I'm going to say something to you. I'm going to give you a choice as to which of us you want to go with, but before you answer, consider this: I am going to give you my solemn promise that for as long as you're in my office that no one will hurt you for any reason whatsoever. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Joan?"

"Yes."

"If you know me, you know how I am. I'm often very irreverent and funny. But this is serious time. I'm going to ask you something and I expect you to answer me seriously, okay?"

"Yes."

"Joan, upon your most solemn promise to me personally, that on penalty of breach of this promise I will never, ever trust you again, I want you to answer me a question. If you can answer yes, do so, otherwise don't say anything. If you can promise me that no one, not you, not any member of your staff, will strike, hit, or otherwise hurt this man if I turn him over to you, you may have him. Are you willing to make me this solemn promise?"

She cried, "246, that's not fair!"

"Just a yes, or silence if you can't say yes, Joan."

Joan said nothing.

"Well, Leroy, what's your answer, with which of us do you want to go?"

"I think I'd rather go with you."

"Okay, now Leroy, I want you to be absolutely certain, I don't want you to make a mistake. I want you to say either 'I definitely want to go with Supervisor 246', or I want you to say 'I definitely want to go with Watch Commander Joan' and we will do whichever you ask."

"I definitely want to go with Supervisor 246."

"Thank you very much young man." Bill starts to put handcuffs on him. "Stop. Leroy?"

"Yes?"

"I don't think you want anyone to put handcuffs on you, do you?"

“No.”

“Okay, let’s go over to my office.”

Chapter 2

“That ‘tasty bitch’ ... just wanted to love you back into the world.”

246 and Leroy walked out of the apartment, down the corridor, and over to an elevator. When the elevator arrived, the two of them rode up alone to the floor of his office, then walked over and entered it. “Please have a seat.” Leroy sat down. “Do you mind if I sit down in this chair next to you?” He shook his head. “If you’d like something to eat or drink, let me know.” 246 looks down at what appears to be a piece of paper on his desk, touches it a few times, then looks up. “Now I don’t know what happened, but I’d like to find out. Now, you can probably guess that we can pretty much figure out what happened without you saying a word. But what I want to do is give you the opportunity to tell me your side of the story. That’s all. What I’d like for you to do is tell me everything you remember about what happened, what you were doing, and what you did. And if you tell me what you were thinking, I don’t want you to sugar coat it, either, I want you to tell me exactly what it was you thought. You’re not going to insult me. Do you mind if I say some things that might be offensive to you?”

“Uh, no.”

“Okay, now, just as an example, if you were thinking about robbing a bank, and you thought, ‘I’m gonna go get a fucking gun and go stick up that goddamn bank,’ I want you to say exactly that, I don’t want you to say that you thought ‘I’m gonna go rob the bank.’ Okay?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“So go ahead and tell me, as best you can, what you remember happening.”

“Uh, well, I was, uh, it’s funny you would say that because I was actually robbing a bank, I had come out of the place when a bunch of cop cars rolled up and I’m thinking, ‘Oh shit, the motherfuckin’ cops,’ so I drop the bag, grab my gun and try to shoot at them. One of them pulls out a shotgun and shoots and it hits me right in the guts and I fall down. I thought I fell face down, but I must have rolled over and was staring up at the sun, and I’m seeing this really white light, really, really bright.

“I guess I was seeing things because I thought I saw a couple of guys that I had known, only they died quite a while ago.

“Well, anyway, all of a sudden I end up in this room where this really dynamite, gorgeous looking broad, a real knockout, walks over to me and asks me if I would come with her. Well, I guess she was some kind of hospital admissions clerk or something. Anyway she takes me back to the room, and I see there’s this really big bed behind us. She locks the door and I get this idea that somehow they made a mistake.

“So I get the thought that I might grab me a piece of this tasty bitch before the cops figure out what happened and bust my ass. So I grabbed her, and I pushed her on the bed, and I reached under her skirt, and pulled off her panties, and I dropped my pants, and I said, ‘Shut up, bitch, you know you love it.’ Then I started fucking her. And I kept on fucking her but nothing would happen, it was like my cock was blocked. And I kept fucking and fucking and fucking and still nothing. Finally, I got up, unlocked the door and was going to pull my pants up and leave when the cop came in, told me to sit down on the bed and that’s when you showed up.” 246 looked at him, almost ready to cry. (“Poor bastard, I feel so sorry for him,”) he thought. (“He doesn’t even know how close he came to being able to do exactly what he wanted.”)

“Young man, do you know what that woman was?”

“No.”

“That woman was what we call a Welcomer. She picks someone who has just arrived and goes out to meet them. Then she asks them to come with her, and she takes them to her apartment where she explains that she wants to show them something and answer some questions. And, Leroy, after they watch the movie and she answers some questions, do you know what the next thing she does?”

“No.”

“Do you have any idea?”

“Uh, I suppose tries to find out what insurance you have.”

“Insurance for what?”

“Health insurance, I guess.”

“Oh. Well, no, Leroy, the next thing she does is asks him if he wants to have sex with her.”
Leroy’s eyes bug out. “Huh?”

“She would have asked you if you wanted to make love to her. That ‘tasty bitch’ as you referred to her, just wanted to love you back into the world. That’s all. Bet you didn’t even know that.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“No I’m not.”

“What kind of a hospital is this?”

“Who said this was a hospital?”

“Well where the hell am I?”

“Not bad but I think you’re going in the wrong direction.”

“Huh?”

“I have some news for you, Leroy, You remember how you said that you thought you were seeing things after the policeman shot you?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Well, it turns out that you weren’t. He shot you in the stomach with a 12 gauge pump-action shotgun. It tore out most of your intestines and you bled severely. Your heart stopped and paramedics were unable to revive you. At 12:41 p.m. Pacific Time, you were pronounced dead in front of the Pine Avenue Main Office of the Farmer’s and Merchant’s Bank of Long Beach, California.”

“Uh, you’re shitting me.”

“No shit, Leroy.”

“You trying to tell me I’m fucking *dead*?”

“No, Leroy, I’m not.”

“What then?”

“I’m *telling* you, that you’re fucking dead.”

Chapter 3

“And then there’s the flamethrowers you sold us...”

“Okay, now, Leroy, I have to decide what to do about you. Oh, and by the way, you’re free to leave this office if you’d like.”

“You’re kidding.”

“No I’m not. You can walk out any time you like.”

“You mean I can just get up and leave?”

“If you want to.”

“You mean, I can just get up and leave and you’re not going to stop me?”

“No, I won’t even bother to try.”

Leroy is puzzled by this. He gets up out of the chair, and looks at 246. “You’re saying I could just walk out?”

“Yes, but before you do that, just remember one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“I gave you my promise that as long as you were in this office no one would hurt you, correct?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Have I kept that promise to you?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, but remember, that promise only applies if you stay in this room. No promises at all if you step outside. In fact, I’m going to tell you something. I didn’t say anything to Joan, our lovely little Watch Commander. My guess is, that she’s got someone standing outside this office right now. In fact, I suspect that she herself is outside right now.” He looks out toward the door. “Joan, honey, by any chance are you hovering around outside my door?”

“Yes, I am. 246, I still want him, I want him *bad*.”

“Are you offering to take him to one of the apartments and love him back into the world?”

“No fucking way!”

“Then my answer again is no, you can’t have him.” Turning back to Leroy, 246 continued.

“Now the thing is, see, if you go out the door, my promise to you ends. And that means Joan over there can have you because then she caught you fair and square. And I suspect that you’re going to find the office she takes you to a bit less comfortable than mine. Don’t you agree?”

“Uh, yeah.” He sits back down.

“Fine, now, what do you think I should do about you? Pretend you’re me, and I have to decide what to do about you, what would you do?”

“Uh, I don’t know.”

“Okay, would you mind if I decided on something?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“You would mind, or you don’t mind?”

“Uh, sorry, no, I don’t mind.”

“Good. Now, what do you think is going to happen if my friend Joan outside there, is able to catch you? Do you think she’s going to talk to you quietly like this, or do you think that it might be just a little bit unpleasant?”

“I guess she’s going to beat the crap out of me, or worse.”

He looked at the door. "Joan honey, by any chance are you still waiting?"

"I'm in no hurry to leave."

"Can you tell me what you'll do if he leaves here?"

"Well, we just got some brand new machine guns and we'd love the chance to have some practice on a moving target, and some of the men would like to try those bayonets they have. And then there's the flamethrowers you sold us..."

"Stop." He suppressed a smile before Leroy noticed. "Okay, so you've got plenty of things to do then?"

"Yeah. Come on 246, let me have him, even if only for half an hour."

"Calendar or standard?"

"I'd rather get a standard half hour but I'll settle for 30 minutes if I can get it."

"How much are you willing to pay me to rent him to you for half an hour?"

"5 favors?"

"Oh come on Joan, don't insult my intelligence. Your men know that this is a rapist, and get to use anything they want on him for a full half hour, and it's only worth 5 favors?"

"Well, come on, 246, name me a price."

"You know Joan, if you had named a nice reasonable price I might have considered, but your low-ball offer has taken me aback just a little. So anyway, Leroy, you get the idea that Joan has some ideas to have some fun with you in a way that I suspect you might find unpleasant, do you agree?"

"Uh, hell yes!"

"Hmmm. In fact, I think I'm a little upset and insulted by Joan's low-ball offer. Leroy, I'm gonna ask if you're interested in something, which you can say yes or no, it's up to you, but before you decide either way, I want you to let me explain all of it, okay."

"Okay."

"Now, it might be a bit painful, but if, I were to let you get laid for half an hour, and I mean where you actually do get to come, and I mean really come, a great big climax, in fact, I guarantee you'll come big time at least two or three times, would you be willing to accept letting Joan out there have fun with you for that long, now, you will not be injured, I guarantee that, no broken bones, no bleeding, no burns, all that happens is it hurts and it stops, you don't get injured and all you basically have to do is suffer for 30 minutes, and you're done, in exchange for getting laid for half an hour with lots of orgasms, would you be interested?"

"Just half an hour is all she gets?"

"That's all."

"And I really do get to come?"

"Yes, you do, you'll get to come, really big time climax and orgasm, better than on earth, and more than once, in fact. Maybe as many as five or six times. In fact, if I can arrange this, you'll get to come all those times *before* you have to let her and her staff do what she wants to do to you, how does that sound?"

"Yeah, I think I can live with that."

He smiled. "Good. Now, Leroy, want to see me have some fun with Joan?"

"Yeah."

246 turns to the door and speaks louder. "Okay, Joan dear?"

"Yes."

“You said I could name my price for letting you have him for half an hour?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll let you have Leroy for half an hour, you guys get to do anything you want to him, but it’s for 30 minutes of 60 seconds, not one second longer, and I get him back in reusable condition so I can rent him out again later, are you really interested?”

“Just let me at him.”

“Okay, here’s the price tag. You personally take Leroy down to one of the apartments, love him back into the world for half an hour, then you get to take him down to your station for some additional fun for half an hour, how does that sound?”

Leroy laughed for the first time. “You are certifiably nuts, do you know that?”

“Maybe. But according to Dr. Wacko, he says I’m just fine for this society. Of course, he qualifies his opinions by saying that he himself is probably crazy, so that may not mean much. Okay, I’ll take your response as a no. Since you turned down that offer, how about a counter offer which might be somewhat more acceptable?”

“I’m not really sure if I should even ask as you’re probably going to think up something ridiculous, but I’m listening.”

“Aw come on, Joan, you’ll think this is funny even if you do turn it down.”

“I doubt that.”

“Okay, here’s an alternative which might be less distasteful. You personally take Leroy down to one of the apartments, love him back into the world for 15 minutes, then you get to take him down to your station for some additional fun for half an hour, then he gets to have 15 minutes with you again personally to show you feedback in bed on what he thinks about what you and your people did with him when you got to have your fun with him, how does that sound?”

Leroy laughed at this one, too. Joan apparently did not think it was as funny. “Are. You. Out. Of. Your. MOTHERFUCKING SKULL YOU GODDAM LUNATIC?” she screamed.

“Joan, if you’re asking me that as a question, the answer is absolutely yes. But I suspect that was your answer to my question. So I’ll take that as a no. See, Leroy, I can have fun too; she shouldn’t have insulted me like that, offering a low-ball price on you. It also tells us something else, doesn’t it? She doesn’t really want you as bad as she says she does, or she would have taken me up on one of those offers. Now, remember, I promised you that as long as you stay in this office, you won’t be hurt, and I’ve kept that promise, as you agreed. Is everything I’ve said so far true?”

“Yeah.”

“Now I’m going to tell you something. As it turns out, I made the very bad mistake of not putting a time limit on that promise. Do you understand what that means?”

“No.”

“It means that you can stay in this office and as long as you don’t leave it, you’re not going to be hurt. Whether you stand or sit in here for an hour, a day, a week or longer. Nobody is going to hurt you. Understand me?”

“Yes.”

“Now, if I was to give you permission to leave this office under the same conditions as you have now, would you be interested in that?”

“Yeah.”

“I’ll ask you something else, if I was to offer you the promise that you would not be hurt, would

be allowed to go back to the waiting room for the exact same thing you were offered when you came in here, that some nice looking lady will come out to welcome you, show you a video, then love you back into the world, would you be interested in that?"

"You're pulling my leg."

"Am I touching your leg?"

"No."

"Then what makes you think I'm pulling on it?"

"I mean you're kidding me."

"No, I'm not. Now, would you be interested in that?"

"Yeah."

"Oh you can do better than that, be enthusiastic."

"Fuck yeah!"

"That's more like it. Would you say that would be very valuable to you?"

"Yeah, but I don't have any money."

"It wouldn't cost you anything at all."

"No?"

"No."

"What's the catch?"

"Well, let's see. I don't know you Leroy. I don't know your character, what kind of person you are. But I know someone who knows it more intimately than anyone else. Would you have an idea of whom that person might be?"

"Me?"

"That's correct. Would you consider yourself an expert on your character?"

"Yeah"

"Now, if I ask you to make a promise to me, a solemn promise like the one I asked of Joan outside, that she couldn't make, would you be able to keep that promise? And remember, you don't get a second chance, if you break that promise to me I will never, ever trust you again. Now, knowing this, if I have you make that solemn promise, that you will keep it?"

"That depends."

"Depends on what?"

"On what I'd be promising."

"Okay, if I tell you what the promise is, and let you tell me whether or not you can make that promise, and if you can make that promise, would you be willing to?"

"Yes."

"You're absolutely certain?"

"Yes."

"Now I'm stuck with the promise I gave you, and I have to figure a way to get out of it because I don't want you cluttering up my office forever. Now, if I promise to let you go certain places or do certain things without anyone hurting you, are you going to do exactly what I tell you?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to ask you something. If you don't understand, ask me to explain. Otherwise say yes or no, okay?"

"Yes."

"Now if I promise that you can go certain places without being hurt, on condition that you only

go where I say and no other place, and that if you break that promise you release me from every promise I have ever made to you, would you be willing to give me that promise?"

"Yes."

"So we make this very clear, if I say that you can go, say, 20 meters outside this building, and you promise to agree, then you were to go 20 meters and 1 centimeter, that you've then broken your promise, which means all of my promises to protect you are gone, and it means that my friend Joan can take you. Do you understand?"

"What's a meter?"

"It's a little over 3 feet, about 3 inches more than a yard. A centimeter is about half an inch."

"Oh. Okay. Yes."

"So you understand that if you promise me something, and you break that promise in even the slightest way, all of my promises are gone?"

"Yes."

"Now, if I say that you can go somewhere on condition that you come back to this office within 5 minutes and that you promise to me to come back within 5 minutes, and you take 5 minutes and 1 second, you've then broken your promise to me, correct?"

"Yes."

"And what do you think is going to happen to you if you break your promise to me?"

"She's going to get me."

246 turned to the door again. "Joan?"

"Yes."

"Are you willing to promise me, again, solemn promise, that he may go such places as I say he may go and neither you nor anyone on your staff will hurt him but if he breaks his promise you may have him, are you willing to make such a promise?"

"So if he goes anyplace else but where you say, I get to have him?"

"Yes, subject to him going on trial later if necessary."

"Okay, I promise."

"Now, Leroy, first, I want some promises from you and I will explain exactly what they will require of you, okay?"

"Okay."

"Now, if you don't understand what you're being asked, then you can ask questions, okay?"

"Okay."

"Now, first, you have to solemnly promise to me and to Joan out there, that for as long as you are here, you will never, ever force yourself on anyone like that again, you will never rape anyone again, make any attempt to rape anyone nor try to have sex with anyone unless you ask them and have their permission first, or they ask you, that you will never do anything to anyone sexually that they do not want you to do, that if they don't like something you are doing to them you will stop immediately, under the penalty that if you break this promise you release me from every promise or favor I have ever or will ever give to you, and you let Joan or any of her police officers do anything they want to you for six calendar months."

"I promise."

"Now you understand, that if you screw up again by breaking this promise they are going to do anything they want to you, violate you six-ways-from-Sunday, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for six calendar months and it's going to hurt, a lot. And they can legally do anything they want."

“Yeah.”

“And I want you to think about this very carefully. You might not believe it but remember I told you that you have in fact died. I mean that, really, as in died and gone to Heaven, you understand?”

“Yeah.”

“That means since you’re dead, you can’t die again unless you go back to earth, did you realize that?”

“No.”

“And it also means you don’t get injured. That means that if they hurt you, it hurts and it stops. But it also means that they can keep hurting you again. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“Now I want to show you something. Since I promised no one would hurt you, I have to ask your permission. May I have your permission to give you one pinch on the arm?”

“Yeah”

“Now, you noticed how that felt like one pinch, and then it stopped hurting, correct?”

“Yeah.”

“Now, if someone burns you it’s going to burn and then stop, but you are not going to blister and suffer constantly until it heals because there is nothing to heal, understand?”

“Yeah.”

“Now, I gather you’re not going to want that sort of thing to happen, are you?”

“No.”

“Now, do you remember what it felt like to be shot?”

“Yeah, it hurt like hell.”

“Now, realize that if someone shoots you, it hurts but you don’t get injured and die, that means they can shoot you all day long, and you don’t get relief by dying. It’ll stop hurting shortly thereafter and you won’t be injured, but I don’t think you want that to happen, do you?”

“No.”

“Do you also know that you don’t have to sleep, either?”

“No.”

“What that means is if they torture you for days on end, you don’t fall asleep. And neither do they. That means that they can keep at you on, and on, and on, over and over again for six solid calendar months. That’s a powerful lot of hurting. You don’t want that to happen, do you?”

“No.”

He looks out at the door. “Joan, sweetie, you still out there?”

“I’m still hoping he’ll think I’m not around and he’ll bolt so I can nab him.”

“Well, I would like to invite you to into my office, but I know you’re powerful mad at this guy.

And you might get mad at him for some reason and hit him. Then I’ve broken my promise to him and I can’t expect him to ever trust me again, just like I will never trust him again if he breaks any of his promises to me. Since I can’t expect him to trust me again, there’s no point in continuing to talk to him.

“That means instead of making some kind of private arrangement, maybe salvaging him to change his conduct, and making him into a decent human being and a productive member of society, now, he has to be booked, fingerprinted and taken before a judge for arraignment, indictment, trial, conviction, then the courts order him turned over to your jail. And I don’t

trust what sort of people you have for guards. Not to mention what happened with that so-called 'escape'."

"My guards are nowhere near that bad, only a few of them worked on the South American Death Squads. And while it was clearly shown we had an escape, all the paperwork showed it was a clerical error."

"Joan, don't be funny. There are at least three witnesses that said that a few deputies in what is now your Department snuck a prisoner out, took him past the Frontier to the Spanish section and across the border to meet with the local Federales there for a Mexican party. With him as the piñata. I sometimes wonder what they did with him. But I couldn't prove anything, so I had to let the matter drop.

"So I suspect that with this man's crime being as serious as it is, you might think it's worth the effort to beat him if you thought you might be able to get away with it. So I have to make sure you won't. If I allow you in here, will you promise me you won't hurt him in this office, or try to sneak him out?"

"I'm a passionate woman, can't I have the opportunity to put my hands on him for a couple of minutes to see what he feels like before I have to leave him alone?"

"Yeah, I can imagine what part of your hands. The knuckles, applied vigorously with bent elbows. Not a chance. If... No, wait a minute. Leroy, I'll ask you a question after I ask Joan something, but I'll ask you after I ask her. Okay, Joan, you can beat the crap out of him for two minutes, but outside my office since I promised he wouldn't be hurt in here, provided you let him screw the crap out of you for two minutes first, and he gets to come, at least twice, how about that?"

"You are a sick fuck, 246."

"Well, I guess you aren't as passionate as you claim or you don't want the opportunity, then. Leroy, never mind, obviously I don't have to ask you now, you can guess what it was. So anyway, Joan, if I allow you near him in any place I have promised he will not be hurt, you must promise me you will not strike him in any way unless he tries to strike you or someone else first. And that you will not try something to cause him to attempt to strike you."

"Goddamn it, all right."

"Not good enough Joan, I mean it has to be your solemn promise, that if you break it, I will never trust you again."

"Okay, solemn promise."

"Joan dear, would you come into my office, please?"

Joan walks in.

"Now Joan, can you hurt him while he's in my office?"

"No."

"Can you hurt him in my office even if I'm not present?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because you made me promise you not to."

"And you really would keep that promise?"

"Absolutely. I have to be able to work with you and I'm not going to throw it all away just for the minor satisfaction of bashing some lowlife in the skull, it's not worth it."

"Very good. So you see, Leroy, even if Joan is in this office alone with you, she can't so much

as lay a finger on you. Now..."

Joan said, "Not true," and touched one finger to Leroy.

"Very funny Joan. Leroy?"

"Yes?"

"While I did promise that no one would hurt you as long as you were in my office, what I meant by that is as long as you don't try to hurt someone else. As long as you don't try to hit anyone in here without their permission, nobody is going to hurt you, but no promises if you try anything. Okay?"

"Oh, yeah, that makes sense."

"Good, so long as you understand. Joan, if I hadn't made you promise, what would you be doing?"

"Well, do you know what a piece of copper wire inserted into the penis does when the end is heated? I have seen some of the toughest men..."

"Stop. I don't think torture is a good idea in any case, it's usually not too effective."

"You haven't seen my conviction rates."

"This may take a while, Joan, have a seat. No wait. Young man, do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"If you trust me, I'd like you to show me that by standing up and shaking hands and introducing yourself to the Watch Commander."

Leroy stood up and said, "Hi, I'm Leroy Washington."

"246, you had better tell him first before people spot him as a rube."

Chapter 4

“Watch Commander Joan 20319, this is my friend Leroy 504337.”

“Young man, sit down for a moment, and we’ll get back to that. I’d like to explain a thing you’ll learn in the orientation classes, if I may, okay?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you know how many people live on earth? Or how many are here?”

“No sir.”

“Son, I appreciate how you’re being nice and polite. I said you don’t have to call me sir. Let’s try to be on a first name basis. Almost every one in this world knows me, and I mean that seriously. I am a very famous person around here. You’ll find that out before too long. You go anywhere, and you ask someone if they’ve heard of a person called 246 and they’ll know you’re talking about me. I’m more famous than that guy, ah, what was his name, made all the papers down on earth because he murdered his ex-wife, and her friend and got away with it clean?”

“O. J. Simpson? I don’t think he did it.”

“Yeah, that guy. Well, I disagree with you, son, but you’re entitled to your opinion. Around this whole world, I’m literally more famous than O.J. Just wanted you to know that. In fact, I have a little joke about it, ‘246, Just like Tigger, ‘I’m the only one!’” So anyway, if you want to be formal about me, you can call me Supervisor 246, that would be about like me calling you Mr. Washington. Or if you call me 246, that’s like me calling you Leroy. So I’m going to ask you that question again, and you can answer it either way, but say my name. Leroy, do you know how many people live on earth? Or how many are here?”

“No, 246.”

“There are more than 6 billion people on earth, six thousand million people. There are two billion people living in this town, that’s twice the population of China. There are another 10 billion in the various other areas out beyond the Frontier where they don’t think in English. And we expect there might be people in other places, other worlds we haven’t been able to capture. And not everyone speaks English. But they all know numbers. From America to Saudi Arabia to China to France they all know Arabic numerals. And maybe if you meet someone here you might want to meet them again if they go under the knife, that is, go to earth and come back. So everyone, here and on earth, has a number assigned to them. It don’t mean anything, it’s just used like a Social Security number. It’s 5 digits long, has two letters as a check code, then includes their first name, here it’s as it’s best described in English, and a 6 digit end. And that whole ID is unique, nobody else will ever have it. It’s big enough to allow for 100 billion people. Would you like to know yours?”

“Yes.”

“Joan honey, what’s his number?”

“15022 EN Leroy 504337.”

“So that’s how you can let someone know you’re not just some Incoming - that’s what we call someone who just got here - that you’re actually someone we’ve loved back into the world because you know who you are. But that’s normally way too formal. Leroy, do you have a middle name?”

“Martin.”

“Might have that been for Martin Luther King, Junior?”

“Yes it was, 246.”

“Very talented man, met him myself shortly after he died. I said he was a credit to his race. He told me I was a credit to mine; he said, ‘246, if we could have had people like you in places of power instead of people like Bull Connor, we wouldn’t have needed a civil rights movement because you would have never tolerated discrimination.’

“But I digress. Anyway, you don’t normally introduce yourself as Leroy Martin Washington, so you wouldn’t use that whole thing. People normally just use their end number. So how about I introduce you two and you can shake hands, how about it?”

“Okay.”

“Watch Commander Joan 20319, this is my friend Leroy 504337.”

Chapter 5

“...your ass is mine. And I intend to make you into a real *Beast of Burden*.”

He shook hands with Joan, then sat down.

“In any event, I’d like to try to fix this matter quietly, and perhaps save this young man from the results of a serious mistake, instead of ruining his death and starting him over again with the same sort of bad problems he had on earth. In fact, what I...” at this point 246’s cell phone went off. “This is 246, just like Tigger, ‘I’m the only one.’ And it what? Where? Can you reset it? Keys? They’re...” he reaches in his pocket. “Oh shit, I have them. No, if you send someone down here and go all the way back it will be too late. I’ll send Joan down with them.” He shuts off his phone.

He pulls a set of keys out of his pocket. “Joan, can you take these down to the monitoring room and reset the panel there?”

“That won’t work.”

“Why?”

“Remember, the Administrator coded the access panel to keep people from sneaking in and resetting it. It requires both a Supervisor’s thumbprint and the keys to reset it. And you can’t teleport in because it’s a protected area. I remember because it happened last week and I had to come back and tell the other Supervisor.”

“Oh shit.” He presses a button on his cell phone. “Is there a Supervisor there? Oh, all right then, I’ll come down.” He shuts off the phone again. “If you’ll excuse me, I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

246 walks out of the office and turns the corner.

As soon as 246 was gone about 10 seconds, Joan got up and walked over to a cat tree some distance away, pulled out her baton, turned her back on Leroy, and started madly swinging her baton at the cat tree.

“What are you doing?” Leroy squeaked.

She spun around, holding her baton in her hand. “Listen you little punk...” She stopped and slid it back into its holster. “I’m putting my baton away because I don’t want to make a chance of throwing away my future for the minor pleasure of striking you. He’s got me hog tied by my promise to him as securely as if I was bound with piano wire,” her voice starts to crack a little, “I can’t do a damn thing to you in this room.” She starts to cry a little. “Oh how I wish I hadn’t promised him.” She clears her throat a little and calms down. “But that’s all we have here to deal with one another is that our word is our bond and we keep our promises to one another, otherwise this place would be nothing but some horrible place of misery and pain because you could never trust people. I’ll tell you what I’m doing. I’m pretending that cat tree is you so I can at least have some substitution pleasure, like using a vibrator when you can’t find a man to be with. Since I can’t *screw* my baton up your ass,” she speaks through clenched teeth, “as I so desperately want to do,” she unclenches her teeth, “I can at least *jerk off* on this tree. But I’ll tell you one thing, you prick bastard, you know what I really hope for, pray for, and wish for?”

“Uh, to hit me.”

“No. That would provide just a momentary pleasure. I desperately hope that you screw up and break one of your promises to him. That’s all, that you make some tiny little

screw up, some little bitty slip and break your word to him on something and he finds out. The only thing protecting your ass is that he gave you a promise, and I have to honor it because I gave him mine.” She smiled for a moment. “But the nice thing about it is, it’s all interlinked. If you break any of your promises to him, even in the slightest, he’s released from all of the ones he gave you, and then your ass is mine. And I intend to make you into a real *Beast of Burden*.

“The worst thing about it is that it doesn’t even matter if you break the law here, like pop someone in the nose because you didn’t like something they said. I still can’t do anything related to this because it’s not sexual in nature. But all you got to do is stick your finger up some girl’s ass at a party without asking her first, or reach inside some girl’s panties on a date when you think you might cop a feel, and someone sees it and reports it, then I have the extreme pleasure of calling my dear friend here and telling him. And you can bet every last favor you ever collect when you’re here, he’s going to be real disappointed that you broke your promise to him, even over something trivial and minor.

“You break your promise to him, it doesn’t matter by how little, and you’re history, you’re nothing, all the promises he made to you are gone, and you can kiss your ass goodbye, because I’ll have it hanging from the wall of my squad room. So I really hope you someday forget and mistreat some woman, for just one second, and I can find out about it so I can make you wish you had never been born,” she raises her voice, “IN THE LIFETIME *BEFORE* THE ONE YOU JUST DIED IN!”

She returns to a normal speaking voice. “No, that’s not the worst thing. The worst thing is it doesn’t apply if you do get a woman to say okay. If you pick up some nice young thing, go to her apartment or take her to yours and ask her if it’s okay to have sex, and she says yes, and you guys go at it so hard that you make the walls crack and we come out there because of a noise complaint, I can’t do a damn thing to you on this because you got her permission; you haven’t broken your word.

“But maybe, just maybe you’ll cut a corner. That’s all I want, just one little mistake where you weren’t thinking. Just one time you won’t be scrupulous and always - and I mean always - make sure that she’s said yes when you asked her or she asked you, and you forget to ask her if it’s okay to have sex. Or she didn’t ask you, and you think it’s okay because she didn’t say anything when you took her clothes off, and fondled her, and so on, get inside her, and she complains and you stop. Someone calls us and we come by. We check and find out what’s happening. With a normal couple, we’d say, okay, next time make sure she’s ready before you stick it in, and we leave them alone. But not in your case; she didn’t clearly ask you if you wanted to have sex with her. That’s what I hope you do; just get hot and heavy just once and we find out you didn’t have an explicit request from her, and we’re going to do a lot of explicit things to you.

“So if you’ll excuse me, Lee-roooy, or rather, Leroy 504337, no wait, you ain’t been loved back into the world yet, you don’t deserve it. So if you’ll excuse me *Mr.* Washington, I have some serious masturbation fantasies to fulfill. Just like sometimes I dream of a man when I use a vibrator, while I’m beating this tree I’m dreaming it’s you.” She turns back around, with her back to him, pulls out her baton, and continued to beat the hell out of the tree. Or rather, the Heaven out of it.

Chapter 6
“Go ahead, Joan.”

Off in the distance 246 can be heard, singing “Don’t be concerned, it will not harm you,” from Bob Lind’s song *Bright Elusive Butterfly of Love*. Joan immediately stops, holsters her baton, and sits down in the chair.

246 does the same. “Now, let’s see if we can try and solve this problem here. Leroy, do you think we should consider giving you another chance?”

“Yes.”

“Well, first thing we have to do is see about fixing what you did. Now if you were on earth, I’d say, you would have done a powerful lot of hurting on that girl, wouldn’t you say?”

“Yeah. And if I’d known where I was I wouldn’t have.”

“Based on the information I have you were clocked for forty-five minutes. Did anyone ever call you John Henry?” For the third time, Leroy laughed. “Now, Leroy, I would like to show you something. Now, you remember that I said that no one would hurt you in this office. If I said that you could get laid...”

“Don’t you dare try to offer me again, 246!”

“Leroy, If I said that you could get laid if you allowed Joan...”

“246, goddammit!”

“Joan, let me finish, please. Anyway, Leroy, if I said that you could get laid - and I mean where you do get to come - if you allowed Joan to hit you with something, and it wouldn’t hurt, that all you’d feel is like someone hitting you with, say, a telephone book, would you be interested?”

“That’s all it would feel like?”

“Yes. Now it might knock you down, but it wouldn’t really hurt.”

“Okay, yeah.”

“Is it okay if she gets to hit you six times?”

“And it doesn’t hurt?”

“No more than being struck by telephone book.”

“Okay.”

“Central Computer, grant Immunity from Assault privilege to 15022 EN Leroy 504337 and confirm.”

A woman’s voice sounds out as if it were coming from the ceiling speakers. “Privilege: Immunity from Assault granted to 15022 EN Leroy 504337. Completed.”

“Leroy, remember when I pinched your arm before, may I do that again to show you the difference?”

“Yeah.”

“Now what did you feel?”

“I felt your fingers but I didn’t feel them pinch.”

“Very good, so we know that it works. Leroy, would you stand by the wall there so Joan can have a good place to aim for? That’s fine. Joan, if you would, please ready yourself.”

Joan got up, stood about 3½ meters away, pulled her baton, and held it in her hand. “I’m going to enjoy this.”

“Go ahead, Joan.”

Joan dropped the baton, reached down to her holster, pulled her service revolver, pointed it at Leroy, and pulled the trigger six times. His body jerked as each of the bullets struck him. His body struck the wall and he slumped to the floor.

Chapter 7

“We call that a Climax Privilege.”

246 Looked over at Leroy’s body, slumped on the floor. “All in the kill zone, Joan, I’m very proud of you. You can see from the bullet holes on his shirt, that you got every one on target.”

She empties the spent shell casings from her revolver, allowing them to fall on the carpet, reloads with a speedloader, holsters her firearm, picks up her baton, holsters it, then sits down. “Yeah, I practice every day. You would not believe some of the snotnosed Incoming cops who can’t believe a ‘little lady’ such as myself can out shoot them in anything they can use. I’ll tell...” At this point there is sort of a groaning noise coming from the corner of the room. 246 looks over. “Oh, Leroy, how are you feeling?”

Leroy looked at himself, looks down at his shirt, then looked up and around. “Uh, okay, I guess.”

“Well when you collect yourself, have a seat. Anyway, Joan, you were saying?”

“I’ll tell them I’m okay at it and make bets. Some of them owe me as much as 1,000 favors by the time we’re done. If they’re not working for me, then I can use them as reserve officers when needed.”

“I once took my brother paper target shooting using wadcutter when I was on earth, he didn’t realize how much of a difference it is between what you see on TV shows and what it’s like to hold a real revolver in your hand and take shots. He couldn’t even scare the poor target most of the time, let alone hit it. He found out how hard it is to use without at least a little practice. On a related note, I’m also gratified to see that you dump the brass from your revolver instead of wasting time pocketing it.”

“I learned that a long time ago. Some police officers are taught not to litter the target range and so, they empty the brass out of their weapon into the other hand, and if they are in a combat scenario, they revert to training, have both hands full and someone kills them because they lose critical seconds at the wrong time.”

“It’s funny because when you did that with your weapon, I was thinking of Tyne Daly in one of the *Dirty Harry* films, where she holds her piece in her right hand, empties the brass into the left, transfers the used brass to her right hand, then puts it in her coat pocket. And this is in the middle of a firefight! I wouldn’t be surprised if the way she did it was standard police practice in too many places. If she’d needed to shoot at that second while she was fiddling with brass, she would have been dead, because she had both her hands full for at least 10 seconds.”

“I agree. Besides, I figure the automatic cleaning system will de-instantiate the shell casings anyway; on earth you’d have the cleaning crew vacuum the rug.”

“Absolutely, you’re correct on that.”

By this time Leroy had picked himself up and had gotten back in his seat.

“So, Leroy, was it exactly what I said?”

“I hardly even felt anything when the bullets hit me. I was just so surprised I fell back.”

246 reaches into a drawer and pulls out a clean shirt. “Here, Leroy, yours has bullet holes in it, you can have this one to put on instead.”

“Thank you, 246.”

“You’re welcome. Thank you for the old shirt. Here’s his old shirt, Joan, another target for

you.”

“Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Leroy, I hope you don’t feel too bad about that. I mean, I knew Joan was going to shoot you, not use her baton. But I didn’t think I could convince you that she could shoot you, using a pistol, that you would actually be shot with bullets that went through your shirt, but didn’t hurt you, even though you’re not wearing a bullet proof vest. You might have thought that we were still on earth and set this whole thing up just to allow her to shoot you and really kill you this time. So I figured if we made you think she was just going to use her baton, you’d let us do this so I could show you that even though you’re being shot, it’s not going to kill you like it would down on earth. Understand?”

“Uh, yeah, I don’t think you could have got me to just let someone shoot me like that, I kinda understand that you really couldn’t have told me that it wouldn’t hurt, I had to see it for myself.”

“Exactly. So consider this, if you’re not even feeling anything from a Smith and Wesson .45 caliber revolver, how much hurting do you think you can do to the lady you tried to have a little fun and games with?”

“Not much.”

“But, you see, Leroy, being able to do that is a special privilege that not everyone gets. Now the thing is, if you assault some woman who does not have that privilege, she is going to hurt. Do you understand?”

“Yeah.”

“And then you would have broken your promise to me, at which point when Joan uses her revolver on you - which I’m sure she would - they’re not going to be love taps like you just felt, they are going to hurt. Understand?”

“Yes, 246.”

“Now if you had just asked that nice lady that you kind of jumped the gun on, if it’s okay to have sex with her, she would have let you do exactly what you just did, but there would have been just one little difference. Would you have an idea just what that might be?”

“Uh, no.”

“You would have *come!* And I mean come big time, and more than once. Lots and lots of orgasms. And do you know why you didn’t?”

“Uh, no.”

“Do you remember when you said you were having trouble? I think what you said was, ‘And I kept on fucking her but nothing would happen, it was like my cock was blocked.’ Well guess what, Leroy, you were exactly right, your cock *was* blocked. Remember, you’re dead.” 246 points a finger at his head and taps on the temple. “When you died, we put a little switch in your brain that locks when you’re having sex with a woman, or even trying to. Would you have any idea what that switch prevents you from doing?”

“Coming?”

“That’s exactly right. You can try or do anything, but as long as you’re trying it on that woman, that switch will not unlock, and you can’t come. We call that a Climax Privilege. Now, let’s say you had asked that nice lady, if you could have sex with her, and, of course, she would have said yes, then you two got at it, after a few minutes that you’re with her, having a nice time going in and out, you would feel that nice warning, and then you would have a great big orgasm. Now, the only way that can happen, for you to come, is that switch in your head

has to be unlocked. And nobody else knows what is going on in that room except you and her. Now, the thing is, *someone* has to decide to unlock that switch so you can come. Would you like to guess whom that is?

“Her?”

“Exactly! When you’re in bed with a woman, and you’re moving in and out of her, you don’t get to come until she decides you’re entitled to it. She could be nasty and give you an orgasm the second you got inside her. She could make you wait three hours. She could give you ten orgasms in a row. Or anything she wants to do. But she decides. Just her, nobody else.

“Now you see, Leroy, why I can take this with a little less nastiness than they do on earth? You haven’t really hurt her, and you didn’t get to come. But Joan over here is mad at you because you never respected that girl in the first place, and didn’t care one way or the other. Now I made you promise not to try that again, but I think you can see that even if I didn’t make you promise, it would be pointless to rape a woman here anyway. All you can do is hurt her, and then, do you think if you hurt some woman, and stuck it in her without asking her, that’s she’s going to be nice enough to hit your switch and let you come?”

“No.”

“Leroy, now that you know all this, do you think I can trust you to be nice to a woman from now on and not mistreat her like you did today?”

“Yeah.”

“Leroy, would you like to get laid now?”

“Yeah.”

“Where’s that enthusiasm?”

“Fuck yeah!”

“Fuck yeah, right. Let’s see about getting you laid. But first, when you got here you did some not very nice things. I want you to think about this very carefully. I think there is something very important, one thing you need to do to try and make up for what you did. Would you have any idea what that might be?”

“Apologize?”

“And to whom must you apologize?”

“The girl I attacked?”

“That’s correct. Central Computer, revoke Immunity from Assault Privilege from 15022 EN Leroy 504337. Central Computer, Telephone Anita 71603.”

“Hello?”

“Anita, it’s 246, the man is here with me in my office, would you be willing to come up here?”

“Yeah”

“Central Computer, close connection. Leroy, I’m not going to tell you what to say to Anita, but I suggest you be as sincere as you can because there’s still the possibility she may want to press charges. I think that’s remote but I want to advise you of that. Here she is now. Come in, Anita and have a seat if you like.”

“Hello, 246.”

“Leroy, do you have anything you want to say?”

Leroy walked up to her, got down on his knees, and said, “I really wanna tell you I’m awful sorry for what I done to you. I didn’t know I’d died, and if I had I’d never have done that to you, and, and I guess, while I can’t ever expect it, I’m hoping that maybe you can someday

forgive me for what I done to you.”

“Leroy, you can sit down. Anita, I would like you to tell me what happened.”

“I went to go get him from the Incoming area, brought him back to my room and locked the door.

I was about to explain to him about the video when he pushed me down on the bed.

I said to him, ‘Hold on a minute.’ He ripped off my panties, pulled his trousers down and jumped on me, saying ‘shut up bitch, you know you love it,’ and he started fucking me. I just couldn’t believe it. I was kind of in shock, plus the fact that I was expecting it to hurt and it didn’t. I could just see the guy, moving on top of me. That’s when it happened.”

“What?”

“Weirdest thing, I started to feel funny and then I started coming. Strange. And as he kept on pounding on me I kept on coming, and coming and coming, one orgasm after another, I could practically time them they were so regular. So I thought, I’m going to see just how long this stupid guy is going to keep banging away at me when I’ve got his come turned off. And so, I’m lying there with him pounding away like crazy, I’m coming all the time, and I thought, ‘What the hell is this guy, some sort of machine?’”

246 covered his mouth to suppress a laugh.

“Anyway, I’m watching this guy, pounding away on top of me, and I got this thought, I’m not letting him come, so this asshole must be the *Energizer Bunny* of fucking, he keeps going, and going and going. I was just so amazed by this, and I’m still coming all the time he’s doing me, that it had occurred to me I never bothered to throw the alarm. Well, I could have, but I thought to myself, hey, this ain’t bad, I’m having fun, let’s see just how long this Clueless Incoming asshole will keep pounding on me until he gets the message he ain’t ever gonna come, and gets tired and quits.

“When I was on earth, I’d sometimes use a dildo or a vibrator because I couldn’t get much out of most men, but let me tell you something. I love having sex here, I think it’s the most fun you can have with your clothes off, but if they ever got guys on earth that wouldn’t hurt you and worked like that guy did here, I’d probably go under the knife tomorrow.

“So anyway, he’s still going at it, I’m still coming right along - and he isn’t - when I guess it finally dawns on him that he can keep doing this until his dick wears out after 100,000 miles or something, and he ain’t never going to get any. So he pulls out of me, that’s when I decided, okay, fun and games are over and I threw the alarm.

“He unlocks the door and almost falls on the security guard. I got out of bed, that’s when the guard tells him to sit down. I told the guard that the guy had pushed me down, started sticking it in and banging on me from about the first instant he got in the room. That’s when he called it in. A few minutes later you guys showed up.”

“Joan, what do you think?”

“I would never have believed it. You know, I’ve been told the entire Antirape system is foolproof, but I never believed it was that good. Jesus, I just thought of something.”

“What?”

“It’s a good thing we didn’t hear this story first, I might have taken you up on working here for 125 years in order to get him. Just kidding!”

“Okay, Anita, you only did one thing wrong.”

“I did something wrong?”

“Yes. You considered stopping your fun before it was finished. As long as he’s willing to

keep on doing you, and you like it, don't throw the alarm and break it off, let him give you whatever you like, as long as you like it. We're here to have fun, and if it's accidental, it's a lucky break, okay?"

"Oh, gee, I thought you meant I'd made a mistake."

"No. I mean, you can hit the alarm any time you feel something is wrong, but you don't have to do it unless you feel you need help. Well, anyway, Leroy, if she chooses to file a complaint I'll at least see you're taken care of before you have to go downtown, okay?"

"Thank you, 246."

"Anita, do you want to press charges against him?"

"Naah, he really didn't know any better, it didn't hurt, and in fact, I'm really surprised at how much fun it was."

"Well, Leroy, I think we just might be able to salvage you after all."

"Thank you, 246."

"Young man, you keep saying my name like that and I might just get to like you too much. Anita, you can go, we'll see if we can find another girl who'll love him back into the world.

Anyway I ..."

"Excuse me."

"Yes?"

"If he'll be nice about it I think I might let him try again."

"Leroy, what do you think?"

"I don't know, what should I say?"

"Why don't you, as nicely as you can, ask Anita to love you back into the world."

Leroy got up, walked over to her, got down on his knees, and said, "Anita, will you love me back into the world?"

"Yes, I would."

"Okay. Anita?"

"Yes?"

"Once he leaves, I need to know how he acted so give me a call, okay?"

"Sure."

"Okay, now, let's start with baby steps. Leroy, here's this office number. Soon as you two get finished with each other, you take the elevator and come right back to this office, promise?"

"I promise."

"Leroy?"

"Yes, 246?"

"Go with her and let her love you back into the world. See you later." The two of them go off together.

Chapter 8

“There is a delivery of aluminum siding from Anita 71603.”

Joan looked over at 246, absolutely amazed. “If I hadn’t seen it with my own two eyes I wouldn’t have believed it. She actually took him back.”

“I told you babe, you can get more flies with honey than you can with prussic acid.”

“And you! I mean, I’ve done ‘Good Cop, Bad Cop’ with professional police officers, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen a smoother performance of the good cop role than you. I had heard you were good, but I didn’t think you were that good. And you again! A bank robber and rapist, and you ask him if it’s all right to say something that might be offensive to him! I almost laughed when I heard you say that!”

“Look at it this way, Joan. These poor bastards started out life probably in bad or broken homes. Abused, maybe even sexually molested. You know, it’s funny but if women get molested as children they express it inward and often become prostitutes, but if men are they express it outward as violent crime. Gad, how I despise child molesters. About the only thing to feel bad about is that most of them are that way because it’s a circle of abuse in which usually they themselves were.”

“If it bothers you that much how can you make jokes about them, like those gruesome stories you tell about child molesters and eternal life?”

“Just because I think a subject is detestable doesn’t mean I can’t make jokes about it. For example, I used to have this friend, I think you’d like him, he was a professional cop killer, he would kill any police officer on sight if he knew they were one. One day we were out walking and he saw this parade...”

She starts laughing, “You are a sick fucking bastard, 246, you know that?”

“Now Joan, under the insults law I could legally slap you for that. Well, anyway, criminals like these start out bad, and usually don’t have much farther to go because they have inadequate educational opportunities, bad food when growing up, which stunts mental development, and so on in a vicious circle. Then violence at home because the father - if there is one - or the live-in boyfriend uses the woman as if she had ‘Everlast’ printed on her.”

“Everlast?”

“It’s a brand of punching bag, get it?”

“Oh.”

“Anyway, he sees violence all the time and thinks it’s the right idea. Then he gets into a gang. Maybe does some robberies, pops a couple of competitors, etc. They see nothing but violence and pain everywhere. You can imagine their self-esteem levels are so low as to be almost sub human. And some of your so-called brothers in blue - although your uniform is tan, you know what I mean - think taking a prisoner out back and beating them is the answer, show them that even the police are just as bad. So, all he ever sees is violence, all he knows is violence, and we wonder why his only answer is violence.

“So now, someone comes along and shows them that someone can treat them decently, can be polite, and doesn’t have to treat them like they are garbage. And the fact that I show them respect, that I treat them as a human being, that despite how big and powerful I am, I’m willing to treat them, some little worthless scumbag, which is how he sees himself, because he’s been told he is, as if he actually were a human being. And I think he starts to see that maybe it is

possible to trust others, just a little bit. And we build up a web of trust from that. He sees that everything I've told him is true, that I don't lie to him. I build on a little bit of self esteem onto what little he has. And that he sees that maybe, just maybe, he can see a way out."

"But, 246, I just had this thought. What if she had wanted to press charges?"

"I have a standing order which I had Tom issue for the whole Department that if they are that upset that they feel that way they are to tell the security guard when they call it in. Whoever is on call at the time - me or one of the other people - will take her aside and try, if at all possible, to get her not to do so. We'll explain the purpose is to try and salvage the guy so he won't do that to some other woman, and the only way we can do that is to make him understand that he must not rape. We've also pointed out to them that with all the systems we have, the prevention of the man from coming, the Antirape system, Immunity from Assault, since he can't really hurt her, it would be pure spite. And the person on call will point out that if we do it that way we'll probably end up turning him into a carbon copy of what he was on earth and he'll go out and continue to bother women. And if that doesn't work, if it's not me doing the investigation they'll call me. Then I'll use the nuke bomb."

"What, you'll toss her out?"

"No! It's her call, she can if she wants to do it that way. That would be wrong for me to do. Realize that technically this kid... No, wait a minute no 'technically'. He just broke Rule #1, as surely as if he punched her in the face in front of the Main Entrance..."

"There's a main entrance on her face?"

"Very funny Joan. Come to think of it you almost blew the script on me when you caught my phrasing about Willy Wonka. Fortunately I caught myself. Anyway, there's no 'technical' about it, dead bang certainty he's committed the worst crime we have, initiation of force. He has violated her civil rights. It is her right to demand retribution and it's one of the lynchpins of society, the right to require someone to be punished for wrongdoing. If you don't punish them, they'll keep doing it.

"So let's say she's mad and wants the guy violated. Correction, arrested, you've already violated him when the intervener stops you or whoever is doing the 'bad cop' role in our script. I - or who's ever doing the intervention - will point out to her that the man is sick and needs help. If she's so spiteful that she wants to punish someone who was sick and didn't realize what he was doing, then if it isn't me, they'll call me if I'm not intervening because I'm the only one here who has the authority on their own to do this.

"I'll drop the nuke and let her watch the fireball. I'll tell her what I'm going to do. I'll use my authority to declare the man inadmissible and order him Involuntarily Recycled. I'll have him forced under the knife. We'll throw this sumbitch back into the world. And I'll tell her something else: since she wants to show spite, I will too. Since she thinks this man ought to be punished to the Nth degree, I'll do just that. On top of tossing him back, I'll order an Involuntary Real Sex Change for what is now 'her', and just as the icing on the cake, I'll have them target 'her' for one of those countries on earth where they routinely perform female genital mutilation and destroy their clitorises at birth, so the women can never have orgasms. She wants the poor son of a bitch to suffer, we'll let him suffer... no, correction, now 'her' suffer, worse than she can imagine."

"Jesus, you're a sick fuck."

"Yeah, but it works. None of them have ever pushed that far. They may be upset but they

aren't that cruel or they wouldn't be doing this in the first place. And you know what, if she did, I would and at that point it's forgotten. I will never retaliate against that girl or take into consideration she did that; it was her right to demand someone who violates her civil rights be punished and I have done exactly that.

"This was really something, though. I can't remember a rape happening that quickly after arrival in a long time; I'll have to look it up but it's been more than three years calendar, I think. When you started banging the cat tree, if he could have I'll bet he would have shit in his pants! Oh and what about 'sometimes when I can't find a man I use a vibrator' or whatever you said? I don't think you've used a vibrator in a hundred calendar years. Oh, by the way, ma'am, would you mind if I asked you something that you might find insulting?"

"Yes, I'd be interested in having sex again with you 246, but not tonight, I'm already seeing someone. Actually, Tom asked me. In a couple of days would be all right."

"Well, give my best friend a couple extra climaxes for me while you're at it since I can't do it to him. So in a couple of days with you is okay, anyway, I have to write this up and my new boss has asked to have a meeting with me, he's brand new and wants to get an understanding of the place. I think he was part of a major entertainment complex or something, the information was a little sketchy; I have the suspicion he just walked in by accident and was such a damn near perfect fit that they grabbed him on the spot.

"What really gets me is how many police officers who think using brutality against suspects helps. I don't know if you thought about how I did the script, but did you realize that not once did either of us actually threaten to do anything to him, all we did was list things that we had around? I almost blew it and laughed when you ad-libbed again about the flamethrowers."

"Then you come back and offer to let me beat the crap out of him if he can screw me. I almost busted a gut laughing. You have a sick sense of humor, 246.

"As a lot of people tell me. You just reminded me of something. Do you remember how I had that line about 'your ass is mine?'"

"Yeah, I thought the phrasing was cute."

"Well, the phrase came from that song by the Rolling Stones, in which Mick Jagger sings, 'I'll never be, your beast of burden.' I thought about it; when he dies, I'm going to say to him, 'That's not true, Mick, you've always been an ass.' Although I thought he did okay acting in the movie *Freejack*. Anyway, after I tried offering various forms of sex applied by Leroy to you, in exchange for various forms of mayhem applied by you to him, I wanted to see if you'd pick it up later in the original script, and it was perfect, when I was offering to let him get laid, you kept interrupting like I was trying to pimp you to him again.

"What I like about doing this whole scenario of rape crisis intervention instead of a criminal investigation is that we help the victim of this whole mess stop being one."

"You know, 246, if someone on earth had told me that the victim of a rape is the rapist, I would have laughed my ass off, if I didn't think he was crazy."

"I got to thinking about it once. Climax privilege - the inability of a man to achieve climax and orgasm except by the explicit permission of the woman he is using - existed even before I got here and every woman in the Afterlife gets it. As a result, now you know why rapes are so rare here except for ones someone does for pure spite, and not just for sexual gratification and spite

"And the ones based on spite or on the outside are even rarer, mostly guys who don't go to orientation and try the same thing here, or don't believe us when they hear about the severe

penalty. Some people who first hear of it think getting six months for rape with no jail time and no pain inflicted on the rapist is light punishment, until they realize exactly what six months means. Six months standard time, not calendar. I don't think we've ever had a second offense.

"Add on to that, that the woman here can't be hurt because she has Immunity from Assault Privilege."

"Yeah. What really surprises some of the new cops who come to work for me when they find out they've got something better than a bullet proof vest and they aren't allowed to use it unless they are breaking up a riot or they've already been attacked. Boy, do they get pissed!

"Joan, I know you're a nice lady, but too often police get this arrogant attitude that they're better than the rest of us. And you know the main reason for not allowing it."

"Yeah, to give someone who gets arrested or violated a fair chance to take a swing at a cop, knock him out and maybe get away. The rule is, if the person knocks you to the ground and runs, he gets to go free, you don't get a second chance to catch him. I never really understood this when I first started but it kind of makes sense. We don't want the police to have absolute authority, it's too tempting for them to try and take over. This makes them realize they're human and maybe makes them less likely to be insensitive to the people they have to come in contact with because if they act too much like bastards, sooner or later someone is going to pop them one. And it makes them watch themselves because most of them don't like to lose a prisoner they've caught."

"So anyway, add the Antirape technology I developed, plus Immunity from Assault and it's complete. All a rapist can do is give her pleasure. This completely destroys his power trip for the ones who are sadistic. With limited exceptions - Leroy downstairs being one - most rapes are about control. The Incomings don't have a thing with them except their hands and feet. So, again, the most they could do is use their fingers, or maybe a fist so they don't have the power of a bottle or a broom handle like was used in the movie *Born Innocent*. Not much power there.

"I think once they see that they can have sex any time they want, as often as they want, men who might rape discover that women have stopped being something they have to be frightened of, and they can treat them as equals and maybe respect them as people for a change. That might be another reason rapes are rare here, you don't have attacks on other people when you respect them.

"Now you have the occasional 'crime of opportunity' that Leroy represents. He's not sadistic, he just thought he could get some nookie but he didn't want to pay the girl in kind. Since you can get all the sex you want for free here just by letting the lady share, that sort of rape is virtually unheard of here. That's why what we do here is so important. He's the kind that it's most important to salvage, because he's just a little too selfish, and probably not cruel. There's nothing wrong with being selfish, but you can't have everything when you deal with another person. That's not being fair or just, that's exploitation. If he can learn not to exploit people, he'll be a better person for it."

"Look who's talking about not exploiting people."

"Joan, charging whatever the traffic will bear for something I do is not exploitation. Nor is it if I cause someone to pay too much because they're ignorant. I make them learn something by paying me for the privilege. That's one of the reasons when I wrote the law on favors that they

have the status of a marker at a casino. Except for favors required to be issued as punishment for a crime, they are not enforceable. You can only collect on a favor to the extent the other person will honor them. If they don't there's not a damn thing you can do about it. All you can do is refuse to do anything more for that person and let people know that they refuse to honor the favors they gave to you. And it also works that if people know you as being unfair, they'll not care that he won't honor his favors to you, they probably wouldn't honor any favors they gave to you either. So it's not like it costs them anything if I charge them too much, they can just refuse to honor their favors to me, and I will never do another thing for them again.

"But anyway, sex should be a non-zero-sum game, one where nobody loses, and everyone has fun, both win and both profit. Good sex is a *transaction*, a trade just as much as if you were buying a VCR or DVD player in Costco, BJ's, Tweeter, Circuit City or Best Buy. You give them cash, they give you the merch. Someone once said that men and women have two different objectives in sex. Men give women love and get sex, and the corollary, women give sex and get love. The man gives the woman love in exchange for the pleasure of sex he gets from her. The woman gets the contact, the attention and the interest of the man in exchange for the sex she gives him. I say it that way because while I do believe a woman is entitled to orgasm as much or more than a man, some women on earth claim that even if they don't come, they do like all the rest of the experience. Some even go so far as to say that climax and orgasm are icing on the cake. While I would hope that a woman would make that as rare as possible, she deserves orgasms as much as she can get them, I can accept that because I've done it myself, on purpose."

"You've had sex where you didn't come? Oh this I find hard to believe."
"Sometimes one of the new girls who doesn't have seniority hasn't been able to find an Incoming she liked because the other girls have grabbed them first. Or one of them is going through a dry spell because the latest crop of Incomings has nobody that's her type. Maybe she doesn't want to call one of the people she's loved back into the world before to see if they're available. Or maybe she's just horny and wants some quick relief. So she might try one of the male staff if she finds one that looks interesting, or she might come by to see me or one of the other male supervisors. If I'm not busy, I'll see her. If I've got enough time, I'll go back to her room for maybe a half hour or a little longer. But maybe I've only got a couple of minutes because I have an appointment. So, I'll lock the door, close the blinds and tell her to hop on the desk.

"I'll tell her not to let me come because I don't want to lose focus on my appointment which I might do if I'm sitting there experiencing afterglow from a nice big orgasm. So then I'll take her across the desk and screw her for a couple of minutes. She'll have maybe 2 to 10 orgasms, goes away happy and I can get back to my job. I've gotten to watch her react and I learn something, so I'm not just doing this as an act of charity. While it's a hell of a lot of fun to come big time and pour the pork into some sweet thing, it's still fun to watch her facial expressions and her body movements when a nice orgasm hits her. So she trots off, quite pleased and I've made someone's day. Plus, consider that she knows I did her that nicely and I didn't even come; if I want to have sex with her where I do come she's got to figure I'll be even better to her, so you can bet I can have her again for real if I want. Usually I'll tell her that I'll do her that way for now but I'd like a chance to show her some real fun later on. Once she sees how good this was, when I tell her that I can do even better next time, she can believe it. Then

they often discover they've underestimated just how good I can be and that's even *more* fun.

"Anyway, I think we need to change the script again for the next time we have to do this so we stay fresh. I'm thinking about that great item we had about the piñata and the South American Death Squads. Especially as I was there when - you weren't a police officer then - me and a few police officers dragged the guy across the border back to the Mexican section for breaking solemn promises inside the Frontier. I know it taught the 'witnesses' a great deal about how seriously we take solemn promises and how if they broke theirs again they'd get the same treatment. Now what..."

At this point a speaker makes an announcement. "Notice to all persons. May I have your attention please. In order to protect passengers from unnecessary injury, all elevator service will stop for 45 minutes in order to test the installation of a control module package. Please use bounce and drop tubes or stairs until the maintenance option and compatibility testing has been completed. This notice will also appear at the elevator banks on each floor until the upgrade is completed. This message will repeat one time. Notice to all persons..."

"I think I'll just dematerialize if I have to. Anyway, we change the Death Squads to..."

Another announcement: "There is a delivery of aluminum siding from Anita 71603 "

Joan says, "Aluminum siding?"

"Remember how telemarketers used to sell aluminum siding over the phone on earth? That's my telephone ring. Central Computer, answer telephone. How are you doing, Anita?"

"246, this is the strangest thing, I don't know what to make of it. Leroy was so nice and polite, I decided to try again right away, we got into bed and he was quite nice and gentle, asked me what I wanted to do, after I had him eat me, we kissed for a few minutes then I decided he'd given so many climaxes to me - even if he really didn't mean to - that I might as well get a couple more then pop his cherry and let him come. So anyway, I roll over on my back and spread my legs, he gets on top of me, and then the strangest thing."

"What was that?"

"He actually said to me, 'are you absolutely sure that it's okay with you if I put my thing inside you?'"

246 looked at Joan. "Well, I'll be damned."

Joan looked at him. "Well, I guess you put the Fear of God into him."

"No, Joan, *you* put the Fear of 246 in him, God had nothing to do with it. So, anyway, Anita, you were saying?"

"So I said, 'Of course, silly. So he goes into me real easy, and he says, 'is this okay'? And I said it was just fine. So now he's moving inside me, nice, and I start coming again, only these were a lot better than the last ones and I was surprised at how good those were considering how he had acted. So anyway, I decide to let him know he was okay, I said, 'You've been very good, I'm going to let you come now, okay?' Well, he nodded and he actually started crying, and I hadn't even popped his cherry yet!

"So anyway, I get ready and the next time I come, I let his go. If we were alive I would have thought he was about to have a heart attack! Have you ever heard someone do a full throated orgasm?"

"Several thousand times. More than once to my friend Joan over here."

"This was my first. Well, I had never seen anyone who looked so happy in his life. Then I felt him come, and let me tell you, that was really exciting; I almost came again the spray from

him inside me was so strong. I guess it was just too much for him because he got out of me fast instead of continuing to move so I could give him another orgasm.

“The look on his face was unbelievable, he looked like... aw, you know...”

Joan and 246 looked at each other and in unison said, “He’d died and gone to Heaven!”

They both laughed at the old joke.

246 said, “Well, anyway, give him a couple minutes and this time he’ll probably be prepared for how strong it is.”

“Well, you see, that’s why I’m calling because I thought it must have really been wrong.”

“What do you mean?”

“He’s not here, he left.”

246 and Joan look at each other, in unison again - this time unintentionally - say “What!?”

“He laid there for, oh, I don’t know, four or five minutes, the most peaceful look on his face.

Then suddenly he had this horrible look, I mean, I tell you, if I see someone with that much terror on their face again it better be once in a thousand years. He grabbed his head with his hands, then screamed ‘Oh my fucking God, what have I done,’ then grabbed his pants, put them on in a hurry, and ran out the door. I don’t know what to make of it.”

Chapter 9

“You didn’t break your promise.”

246 looked at Joan. “This does not make any sense. I could understand him bolting before but why now? His actions seem to indicate that he understood he has to keep his promises. Since he’s clearly frightened the answer is to talk him down. Thanks, Anita I’ll talk to you later. Central Computer, close connection. Let’s think this out, calmly and rationally. First, let’s see where he is running, it might give us an idea of why. Central Computer, show location Leroy 504337.”

“Leroy 504337 is on the 1133rd floor.”

“That doesn’t make sense, her apartment is on 1080. Does he think he can hide somewhere? Joan, do you have any ideas?”

“No, if he was trying to escape I would think he would run down, unless he thinks he can make it to the roof?”

“Under normal circumstances I’d just teleport him in here but he may not be ready to see advanced technology or it might make whatever his problem is worse so let’s use ground-based systems. Central Computer, show location Leroy 504337.”

“Leroy 504337 is on the 1135th floor.”

“He’s moving up? They shut the elevators down and a bounce tube would be much faster than he’s moving. He doesn’t know how to use a bounce tube. Stairs. He’s trying to run all the way up here on the stairs! Unfortunately he doesn’t know that’s over a thousand flights, so let’s try and talk him down. Central Computer... cancel. He does not have voice access and won’t know how to use the telephone system. I’ll have to do a PA announcement. Central Computer, open public address system stop word x-ray. Leroy? Leroy? This is Supervisor 246. I know you’re frightened over something but I’m not mad at you. Nobody is going to hurt you. I’m not sure what you think is wrong but I don’t think it is that bad. Please stop, wherever you are, and just wait there a moment. Nobody is looking for you and nobody is going to do anything to you unless I talk to you. If you trust me, I want you to just stop wherever you are. That’s all, just stop. X-ray.

“I’m off PA system, so let’s see. If he is rational, he should have stopped. If he has gone crazed, he might still be running. Central Computer, show location Leroy 504337.”

“Leroy 504337 is on the 1137th floor”

“Let’s give him about 10 seconds. Central Computer, show location Leroy 504337.”

“Leroy 504337 is on the 1137th floor”

“Okay, he’s stopped. I’ll give him phone privileges. Central Computer, grant voice access to Leroy 504337. Central Computer, whitelist Leroy 504337. Central Computer, open public address system stop word x-ray. Leroy? Leroy? This is 246 again. I’ve hooked you into the phone system so you can call me just by talking. I’m going to ask you to say something out loud but I want you to wait until after I tell you the entire phrase so I can get off the PA system. What I want you to do is, when I say ok, I want you to say out loud the following words: Central Computer, telephone Supervisor 246. You can do that now, okay. X-ray.”

“There is a delivery of aluminum siding from Leroy 504337.”

“Oh God he figured it out. Central Computer, answer telephone. Leroy are you there?”

In hysterical sobbing and screaming and crying his words come out: “Oh God oh God I’m so sorry I didn’t mean to do it I wanted to do right my whole life has been nothing but a bunch of fuckups I’ve fucked up my whole life...”

“Leroy, Leroy, calm down, calm down, calm down, it’s okay, whatever it is, it isn’t that bad, I’m not mad at you, just calm down, nobody is going to hurt you. You don’t have to be scared. Now, can you talk to me slowly?”

“I’m just so sorry, I didn’t mean to do it, I tried so hard...”

“Leroy, Leroy, I want you to stop talking, just calm down, I want you to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, slowly, and just do that until you can just talk slowly, one word at a time so I can understand you.”

“Okay.”

“Now all I want you to do is answer yes or no to some questions, if you understand, just say yes.”

“Yes.”

“Do you think you have done something wrong?”

“Yes.”

“Is it something you did wrong at some time in the past before you got here?”

“No.”

“Do you think you did something wrong since you left my office?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think you can explain to me what you think you did?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, what I’d like to do is, you tell me exactly what happened from the point I told you to leave.”

“Uh. We were going to her room, and we got there, and I made sure I asked her if it was okay before I did anything, and she said it was. So we started fucking and I asked her if it was okay again and she said yeah, so she tells me I’m going to get to come, and it happened, and I couldn’t believe it, it felt so goddam good, it was like nothing that had ever happened before, and it was just so fantastic I couldn’t believe it, but anyway I got out of her and rolled over, and it was just amazing, and I’m laying there for about 5 minutes and then I remembered I was supposed to come right back and I knew I’d screwed up and ruined everything and all I wanted to do was try to do right and...”

“Leroy?”

“Yes.”

“I want you to calm down. Are you willing to trust me?”

“Y-Yes.”

“Have you ever seen *Star Trek*?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“You know those transporter pads they have to move from planet to planet?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“We have them up here, too.”

“You do?”

“Yes. I can transport you right into my office if you’d like. Do you want me to do that?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Central Computer, transport Leroy 504337 to here and close connection.” Leroy materializes, very confused. “Leroy, let me see if I understand what is bothering you. I told you once you were finished to come right back here. And you thought I meant as soon as you came you should immediately put your pants on and come up here, is that right?”

“Yeah.”

“So when you rolled over and laid there for a few minutes, you realized you’d forgotten and thought it meant you broke your promise?”

“Yeah.”

“Leroy?”

“Yeah?”

“You didn’t break your promise.”

“Oh?”

“No, you didn’t. Can I tell you something?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you know how long I figured you and Anita would be busy having sex?”

“No.”

“At a minimum, all day and all night. Usually it’s five or six calendar days, if not longer.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“No, I’m not. When they brought me in here I was down there for at least two calendar months.”

“Wow.”

“Joan, how long were you there?”

“A year and a half, calendar time. With sixty different guys including my friend here.” She points her thumb at 246. “I wore them out big time, too!”

“Oh Joan, you never wore me out.”

“That’s what you think. As you say, that’s your opinion, I disagree with it but you’re entitled to it.”

He grins. “Very well then. So you see, we’re not talking bang-bang and come back.”

“Oh.”

“You want me to send you back over there so you guys can go back to fucking each other’s brains out, like you’re supposed to be?”

“Yeah.”

“Let’s hear some enthusiasm.”

“Fuck yeah!”

“Fuck yeah, right! Central Computer, telephone Anita 71603.”

“Hi 246.”

“He’s in my office. Do you want to know what happened?”

“Yeah, I heard you over the PA system so I thought something terribly wrong had happened.”

“Leroy made a strong promise to do what I told him in exchange for not punishing him for his mistake. Well, I told him to come right back after he was finished. What I meant was, when you two had decided that you didn’t need to continue having sex any more, you know, in a day, a week, a month or whatever. Understood?”

“Yeah.”

“Leroy thought I meant the instant he finished coming he should get right back here.”

“Oh no!”

“So when he was experiencing the afterglow, he thought he’d forgotten and now he had ruined everything and was going to be punished.”

“Oh no!”

“Anyway, I’m sending him down there again. Hold on a moment. Leroy?”

“Yes, 246?”

He speaks again in the slow, quiet voice he had used when he first started interrogating Leroy in Anita’s room. “If I see you back here again in less than a week, I’m going to tell you to go back to her room because you’re not done yet.”

Anita spoke up. “Are you kidding? I’m keeping him here at least a month! I may never let him out of here.”

246 smiled at that. “Anita?”

“Yes.”

“Sometime in the next standard year or so, before you’ve drained him dry and there’s nothing left but a desiccated husk, see to it you show him the video and answer his questions, okay?”

“Oh, sure. I’ll take a break for a while - but not any time soon! - and show it to him.”

“Thanks. And I’ll eventually want him to go through orientation so you’re going to have to let him go occasionally to do that. Leroy?”

“Yes?”

“I’m going to send you back down there. You’re going to get in bed with her. Then you’re about ready to have sex, and you’re on top of her. So what do you do?”

“Ask her if it’s okay?”

“Correct. She’s going to say yes, but let’s get in the habit of asking. You’re doing just fine. So you get inside of her. You know what you need to do then?”

“No.”

“Pick a particular way she says she wants you to do it to her, then there’s just one thing you need to do, do you know what that is?”

“No.”

246 yells out, “Fuck her brains out and have as much fun as you like, fella!” He claps his hands together, then speaks in a normal voice, fast, “Central Computer, transport Leroy 504337 to current connection and close.” He points his two thumbs at him as if they were batons.

Leroy dematerializes.

“Poor bastard! Jesus I must have *really* scared him. Remind me to put that in the script, Joan, something like ‘if I see you back here in less than a calendar week I’ll figure it’s because you want to fuck some other girl now.’”

“Okay, let’s sum up the results. She didn’t have to suffer as a result of being raped, she got a lot of fun out of it, you put the fear of 246 into him, he learned not to do that again and didn’t have to go to jail, he’ll be nice to women from now on, and they both ended up having a lot of fun in the end. Not a bad score.”

“I’ll say. I’d say in the end the results were about as good as you can get.”

“Thank you. Joan, I have an idea for you.”

“What’s that.”

“I’m thinking. If I give him Immunity from Assault again, I don’t think it will bother him since he knows it won’t hurt. We can have him act in some of the police training sessions. I’ll tell

him that I'm having him go there because I made a deal with you over it. It will give your men and women someone to practice on in simulated combat sessions where we can make it as real as possible. I was right about one thing, though."

"What's that?"

"He was much more valuable than I thought he was. I might have sold him too cheap! .Joan, I tell you this much, I think that young man is going to make an excellent member of society."

"I think you're right, 246."

"Not only that, I think this young man is going to be very profitable to me. I always think of my end first."

"Except when you're in bed, you've always seen to it that I got what I wanted before you got what you wanted."

"Okay, except then. Other than that, I'm always looking out for #1 first. And maybe even when in bed, because by doing a woman right, it usually guarantees I'll get her again. So maybe while I'm not thinking of my own needs short term, I am thinking of them long term. So perhaps I can say that there are no exceptions, I always think of myself, first."

Chapter 10

“... might be punishable by the death penalty, did you consider that?”

A young man walked in, along with a young lady escorted by an older female.

246 spoke to the woman. “Hi Geannie, how are you?”

“Oh not too bad, 246, can I bother you for a few minutes?”

“You’re not bothering me, what’s up?”

“We’ve got a problem here and I’m not sure how to handle it. I’m not sure but I think it’s not actionable but the young man does, and wants to press charges.”

“Against the lady, there?”

“Yes.”

“Which one is the Incoming? And what did she do?”

“She is. Apparently she slapped him one.”

“Okay, then, we’ll do this formally. Joan, get her number when it’s listed. Central Computer, list all occupants of this room by ID.”

“00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246. 06433 VA Geannie 921969. 07703 VQ Laura 154731. 17003 NI Newton 108037. 30306 KX Joan 020319.”

246 looks at a pad on the desk for a minute or so - the same one he was looking at when he first spoke to Leroy in his office - touches it a few times while he is looking at it, frowns for a moment, then looks up. “So your name is Laura Glass?”

“How the hell did you know that?”

“We know everything about you. Did you get to see the video?”

“I ain’t saying anything until I see a lawyer!”

“Young lady, all I want to do is talk to you. You’re not under arrest and you might not even have done anything wrong. I want to understand what has happened. I just want to learn what is going on here in order to figure out what to do. Now, if you don’t want to talk to me and you want a formal investigation and possibly a criminal trial, then be punished if you are convicted, we can do that. But you know nothing about what is going on here; for all you might know what you have done might be punishable by the death penalty, did you consider that?”

“You’re kidding me.”

“No I’m not. Do you even know where you are, here, now?” He points at the floor while he is saying this.

“I’m not sure. I don’t want someone to think I’m crazy so I don’t think I’ll say anything.”

“You’re not crazy. Go ahead and say it.”

“Well, I kind of had the suspicion that I had died and gone to Heaven.” Everyone else groaned at the old pun she had unintentionally used. “But since it’s so much like nothing has changed that I figured I must have imagined some of the things as a result of a head injury or something.”

“We actually call it the Afterlife since we’re not really sure if this is Heaven or something we created on our own. But you’re absolutely correct. You are dead, and in another place than earth. Which means that the government that operates this area is essentially the whim of one man, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, who for all intents and purposes is God, and can pretty much do anything he wants to you or order us to do whatever we want. Now, I’m trying to be nice and polite to you and perhaps try and find a way to solve this problem without making a Federal case out of it, but we can do it that way if you want. Joan, I think we’ll make it simple

and say she broke Rule #1. Go ahead and violate her.”

“07703 VQ Laura 154731, you are hereby violated. You are under arrest for breaking Rule #1. You have rights under the law and are advised to say nothing until informed of them or you have access to counsel.”

“Jesus that sounds like a Miranda warning.”

“Actually we used to use the Miranda warning until Joan, our lovely Police Watch Commander and my dear friend over there, thought that one up and we now use it instead. We felt it was much easier for people being warned to understand. Now, we can either do this informally or we can do this formally, with counsel, and a trial. Now, if you are found guilty at a formal trial you will be punished much more severely than if we do this informally. Now, we can see if we can find you counsel. Or we’ll let you take enough time to learn the law and act as your own lawyer if you want. If you want to talk to counsel, we’ll see if we can find some that will work for free, but I suspect they won’t be very good. We’ll even give you plenty of time to interview counsel and see. The ones that are any good will probably want something from you, and you might just be able to guess what it is they are going to want. But it’s your choice.”

“You mean they’re going to want *sex*?”

“Absolutely. Since you don’t have anything else to offer and might not be able to offer anything else, that’s about what’s going to happen. Young man, did you love her back into the world yet?”

“No, that’s what this whole thing is about.”

246’s eyes rolled up in his head. “Oh Christ, a virgin Incoming on the open market! Oh I can guess you can get about 500 of the best counsel in this world to represent you, but you had better believe that they will really do a number on you first. And some of them are lesbians. It’s up to you if you want to do this formally, or informally. If you do this informally I promise I personally will see to it that your interests are protected, and I do mean that I am not going to ask you for sex. Do you still want to do this formally?”

“Uh, no.”

“Fine. I’m going to ask each of you to explain what happened. Please do not interrupt the other until it is your turn, if the person says something you disagree with you’ll have a chance to respond. And we’ll keep doing this until everyone has had their say or the universe collapses, whichever comes first. Here’s a pad of paper and a pen, you can take notes if you need them. Geannie, do you want to go last or do you have a statement to make first?”

“I’ll go after them.”

“Young man, tell me what happened.”

“I saw this girl on the display and decided to go Welcome her. I brought her back to my room and explained to her that I had a video to show her and would be able to answer some questions. After all that I would have something to ask her if she was interested in, which she was free to accept or reject if she wanted. So I told her that I wanted her to watch the video so she could learn something. Well, she was kind of suspicious because she asked me what I was going to ask her about. I said it might be a good idea if she watched the video first, but she said, no, she wanted to know what it was. I said I could tell her, but she’s really not going to understand why if she doesn’t see the video. Well, I guess she was afraid I was going to hypnotize her or something because she was insistent on knowing.

“I asked her if she really wanted me to say what it was, because it might offend her. She said

yes. So I told her. I said that she was extremely attractive and that, if she was interested, I wanted to make passionate love to her and show her that someone cares about how she feels. She said, well, okay, she thought I looked kind of hot too. So I said to her that I was glad to hear that, I thought she was cute when I saw her. I said that I thought she was such a beautiful woman and I felt that I could really give her a tremendous amount of pleasure, plus I really wanted to fuck her brains out. That's when she slapped me. I didn't think that was fair or right, and I figured at this point she wouldn't be interested in having sex with me, so I threw the alarm, then told the security guard to get a Supervisor because I wanted to press charges for assault."

"Young man, you might try toning down your enthusiasm until you know the lady is ready to hear you talk like that, okay? Really, you haven't done anything wrong but you might want to think about it."

"Yeah, I kind of got excited at how hot she was and got carried away."

"That's what I figured. Okay, young lady, let's hear your side."

"Well, it's more or less what he said only he didn't have to be so rude about it."

"But he did say he would say something that might be insulting before he told that to you, is that correct?"

"Yeah, but he could have been a little nicer about it."

"Well, if he asks you nicely, would you still be interested in making love with him?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Young man, why don't you do that?"

"Sure. Laura, would you permit me to love you back into the world, to passionately make love to you and give you a great deal of pleasure, and have sex with you?"

"Yes."

"Okay, then, would you be willing to apologize to him for slapping him?"

"No."

"Well, if he says he's sorry for being so rude to you would you be willing to apologize for slapping him?"

"No, he shouldn't have done it in the first place, he should have been nicer. I wouldn't have minded so much but the way he said it made me feel insulted, like I was a piece of meat."

"Well we have a problem here. I think she has broken the law. She was warned what she would hear would be insulting, she agreed to hear it, then became upset and assaulted him. Young lady, the law requires that you be punished for what you have done, what do you think we should do with you?"

"Well, can I ask him a question?"

"Sure,"

"How do you feel about me?"

"I told you, I think you're very attractive, I figured I could give you a lot of pleasure and I really wanted to have sex with you because I wanted to get pleasure from you, too. And I never thought of you as a piece of meat, I knew that you were new here, I wanted your first day to be special. And I thought I could make it special. But I guess that perhaps I should have said it better."

"Well, since he said it that way now, I guess it's okay, I guess I can say I'm sorry then."

246 says to her, "Would you still want him to make love to you?"

“Yeah, I would.”

“So you think if you are punished by having to apologize and allow him to love you back into the world, would that be okay for the court to issue as a sentence?”

“Yeah.”

“Is that okay with you, young man?”

“Sure.”

“Geannie, do you have anything to add?”

“No, I think they’ve both covered it.”

“Very well then. There are a long series of announcements the court would normally be required to make which aren’t really necessary in this case, and if there is no objection by anyone here to my waiving the reading of them I would like to skip them. Okay. Central Computer, declare event name ‘One.’ Central Computer, open document title Laura 154731 stop word x-ray. In Informal Session, Supervisor 246 acting as a judge in and for the Welcoming Department, does hereby convene trial pursuant to law. This case is *In the Matter of Laura 154731, Accused*. Explanation of case using audio transcript follows. X-ray. Central Computer, append audio conversation of this room since event ‘entry of Laura 154731’ through event named ‘one’ to document Laura 154731. Central Computer, continue document Laura 154731 stop word x-ray. This ends the transcript. To the Appeals Court, greetings: The following represents reasoning and arguments I request clarification upon.” He goes on for several minutes explaining the case and his opinions on certain real and hypothetical questions and answers. “Pursuant to a plea bargain agreement, Accused is found guilty. Defendant is sentenced to apologize to the complaining witness and to allow him to love her back into the world. The decision is hereby stayed pending appellate review which the court will on its own motion file. Signed, Supervisor 246, acting as a judge in and for the Welcoming Department of the English Language Section of the Afterlife. X-ray. Central Computer, close current document. Central Computer, forward current document to publishing section. Central Computer, forward current document to Court of Appeals for the English Language Section of the Afterlife, immediate appeals.”

“This will take about an hour or so, you can either wait for their decision or you can just go ahead and apologize now if you wish. If you do wish to apologize now, stand up, turn and face him and say whatever you feel is appropriate.”

“Okay. I’m sorry I slapped you, I just felt like you didn’t care.”

“Well, all right.”

She smiled. “Besides, come to think about it, actually I’d like to fuck *your* brains out!” He smiled. “Hey 246, doesn’t that mean since she didn’t warn me before she says something insulting like that, that I could slap *her* and get away with it?”

“Actually, that’s correct, but I think you’d probably be more interested in a little slap and tickle.”

“I know, but I just thought it would have been funny that way.”

“Actually, why don’t you stand up and smack her one, right now, smack her right on the face, with yours.”

He stands up, goes over to her and plants a big kiss on her, and she responds by holding onto his head. This goes on for a minute or so and they break it off. He puts his arm around her, and she puts hers around him. “So why don’t you take her back to your apartment, love her back into the world, then make sure she sees the video and answer her questions.”

“Okay.”

“Young lady?”

“Yes?”

“Later on there will be some orientation courses you can catch. I would like it very much if you would go to them. If I have to I’ll make it part of the court’s decision. I don’t want to have to do that and won’t if you’ll promise me you’ll go.”

“Okay.”

“I have something else to say to you, also.”

“What’s that?”

“The reason that brought you here.”

“But, I thought that was settled already.”

“No, I mean the reason that brought you here, now, to this place.”

She looked worried for a moment. “Oh that.”

“Oh that’, indeed. Since there’s been no mention of it, and no attempt to punish you for it, I’ll bet that you thought maybe it had been forgotten or nobody noticed or something, didn’t you?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, guess what, little lady, it was!”

“Huh?”

“Everything you did on earth died with you, including the reason you died. You start over here from zero. Doesn’t matter what you did or why you’re here, you start over fresh. What do you think of that?”

“You really mean that?”

“Yep. I mean it.”

“Oh wow! I’ve been so worried that sooner or later someone was going to say something and I was going to have to face up to it sooner or later.”

“That’s for you to settle with your conscience, if you have one. Or with your God, if you have one. Well, if I were you I wouldn’t go telling people what you did, most won’t like it, but you can tell them, if you want to, how you died. Or you can tell people all of it. Whatever you choose. Actually, you don’t have to tell anyone anything, it’s up to you.”

“Oh, okay.”

“I have two things to tell you, though, because of the mess you got into before you died.”

“Oh?”

“First of all, nobody is ever born here. Everyone who is here got here because they died on earth, either the way you did, or by disease, or accident, or all the other ways people can die. That means that you can’t get pregnant here.”

“Oh, okay.”

“There are also no diseases here. All diseases stayed on earth. And the common cold, and everything else that makes people miserable. Which also means the venereal diseases such as gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, AIDS, chlamydia, they all stayed behind. So people can have unprotected sex and there’s no risk at all.

“Also, you’re dead. You can’t die again unless you choose to recycle yourself, that is, to ‘go under the knife’ and go back to earth to be born again as a baby. So if you have sex here, there isn’t any future life beyond this one to punish you for having sex here.

“Second is, because there are no diseases to catch, and you can’t die here, so there’s no life after

this to take you to task for what you did here, or on earth, so it means that almost everyone has a lot of sex, and they often do so with multiple partners. Lots of them. So be aware of that, the idea of being monogamous with one person has essentially stayed on earth too. But just because someone here that you have sex with also has sex with someone else, or a lot of other women, doesn't mean they don't care for you, too. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Young man, there are two things I want you to do. Once you two are finished having sex, in a day, a week, a month or whatever, and she sees the video and she takes the test, I want you to see to it that you show her how to get to orientation."

"Okay. What's the other thing?"

"As I said, love her back into the world big time for all of us!" He waves his hands away. "Go on, both of you, you're wasting your time when you could be doing something much more important, go have fun, scoot!" They leave.

"Geannie, thanks for your help."

"Not at all." She leaves.

Chapter 11

“...eventually the people on earth will notice that nobody is being born.”

246 looks at Joan. “Well, let’s see. She gets to slap him when she wasn’t allowed to, for being just a little too fresh, with no more punishment than apologizing, he learns to tone down his enthusiasm just a little, and everyone gets to have some fun in the end. Not a bad score. Joan, what’s your take on the matter?”

“Well, I kind of agree that he deserved getting a slap on the face, but unfortunately the law doesn’t.”

“That’s why I’m having the appeals court review this, I don’t think we’ve had too many cases like this.”

“You want to get a decision on it?”

“Yeah, what has probably happened in cases like this before, is the woman agreed to apologize and it never even got to a court, or if it did, the court dropped it, or even if a conviction had occurred, if nobody appealed it there would be no record unless someone searched among thousands and thousands of minor cases as most of them don’t have their cases transcribed. It’s probably like parking tickets on earth, it’s usually cheaper to pay the damn things than to litigate them that almost nobody does. So I’d like to get something on record so we have something out there in the future. And the possibility - very rare but possible - that I have given a bad decision. Unlikely, but it is possible.”

“I find it very unlikely. Is it all right if I ask you what she did to get here, as you put it?”

“She pulled a Susan Smith. Drowned her kids because she thought her boyfriend wouldn’t want them around. She did it in such a way the police won’t suspect her; the way she did it was very cunning indeed. Comes back and finds him screwing her sister, so she grabbed a bottle of Clorox from the kitchen, locked herself in the bathroom, got in the tub, and gave herself a bleach douche, which, of course, killed her. She was pregnant with his child at the time and wanted to show him what she thought of that. I’m not sure if she knew it would kill her but I don’t think she even cared one way or the other. He’s just fortunate that she’s a woman, otherwise she’d probably have stabbed both of them before killing herself. Or maybe just killed them and not killed herself, hard to say. Notice that she never even asked what happened to her kids after she killed them. At least they’ve been recycled by now and will have the opportunity to start over again as babies and grow up in homes where the parents will really love them. Or... Maybe not. Hold on a second. Central Computer, telephone Death Traffic Manager.”

“Office of the Grim Reaper!”

“This is 246, can you check on some children who are probably scheduled for recycling?”

“Hold on a second, I’ll get you the ORO.” Some syrupy music-on-hold plays in the background.

Joan asks, “How long have you known all this?”

“From the moment she came in and I ID’d her. Take a look at this.” He hands her the pad he was using. “I have that display pad on the desk here, it tells me everything about what she was in the past. I used it earlier to look up Leroy’s record so I could tell him how he died. About the only thing I did that may be wrong was that instead of trying to settle this informally I went immediately to trial. Maybe I shouldn’t have done that but I decided that if she’s going to be rude she’s going to get rude treatment. That was part of the reason I had the appeals court

review my order, just in case I might have used what happened to her on earth against her and was too harsh. We have no business punishing people now for what they did on earth, the mere process of dying in and of itself should be considered punishment enough for whatever they did there. It's not part of our jurisdiction and we should not be considering what they did elsewhere for how they are treated here."

"You are absolutely amazing. What do you think about it, personally?"

"Basically I think she was in some way sick and needed psychiatric help. For a mother to..."

The ersatz background music ends as the phone responds. "Optional Recycling Operator."

"This is 246, I need you to check on some kids who are scheduled for recycling, please, I want to try and see they get good homes so they don't end up being recycled as kids again."

"Look, Mister, I've got enough work to do without having to go through some snotty brats to find a few kids just because you want to give some of them special treatment. You want them that bad, you come down here and fish for them."

246's eyes roll up into his head. "All right, how much is it going to cost me?"

"Is this some attempt at bribery? I'm sorry but I don't work that way."

"This is Supervisor 246 of the Welcoming Department, do you know who I am?"

"I think I heard of you, you're the lead supervisor over there and you've got some reputation for screwing anything with a dress. So what? I don't work for you."

"Transfer me back to the Death Traffic Manager, please."

"Office of the Grim Reaper!"

"This is 246, I asked the ORO if he would check on some kids who are probably scheduled to be recycled, and he doesn't want to bother. Would you do it for me please?"

"We're busy enough as it is. You want them that bad, you come over here and find them yourself."

"Well, if I got you some people to help you, would that work?"

"Listen, we run our own Department over here, you don't have any jurisdiction here, we don't need to have some guy who doesn't know anything about what's going on dumping a bunch of people on us, trying to run this place."

"Okay, if you say so. I'll be over there in about three or four standard weeks when I have the chance."

"We usually move most kids out in about three to five standard days. Chances are they will be gone by then."

"Oh no, they won't. They'll still be there, along with everyone else."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You'll find out. You can call on me if you have questions. Central Computer, close connection. Joan, how long do you think it will take for them to call me back?"

"I don't think they will. They don't care."

"They will when I get finished with them. Central Computer, emergency stop all recycling and lockout changes."

Two loud buzzer sounds occur. "Warning. You are about to stop the process of everything returning to earth to be reborn. This is not something to do carelessly; if it continues for very long, serious consequences will occur. You had better have a good reason or you'll probably be the next one to be sent back once someone else restarts it. Provide authorization for privileged function or cancel to abort."

“Central Computer, Authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”

Two loud buzzer sounds occur again. “Warning. You have authorized this system to stop the process of everything returning to earth to be reborn. Are you certain you want to do this, confirm or cancel.”

“Central Computer, confirm.”

“Attention. This is an emergency recording. Recycling has been shut down. I repeat, This is an emergency recording, recycling has been shut down.”

“I’ll let them sweat for a while. As I was saying, basically I think she was in some way sick and needed psychiatric help. For a mother to kill her own children is so strange, so unusual that it deserves looking into because it’s a clear and obvious sign that the person has contra-survival traits that need to be checked.

“But since most of what caused her problems, being able to have kids, and petty jealousies over people, are not things we have here, she probably won’t be a problem. That’s why I tried to sensitize her to the issues so that maybe she won’t be one here. If she is, we can deal with her then. Since there is so much less here to be able to get in trouble over, she might just be able to fit in. And if she isn’t maybe she’ll do what she did on earth, commit suicide and go under the knife, then it’s not our problem any more. Presuming she can go under the knife, right now nobody can. Any minute now I think they’ll discover they can’t get recycling to start and I’ll be hearing from them. And I...”

“There is a delivery of Aluminum Siding from The Death Traffic Manager.”

Joan spoke. “Well, that was fairly quick.” 246 sits there.

“There is a delivery of Aluminum Siding from The Death Traffic Manager.”

“246, aren’t you going to answer it?”

He smiled. “Why should I? I have no control over his Department. I don’t have any jurisdiction over there, as he said as much. I told him I’d be by in a few weeks to see, if a few hundred thousand people can’t be born in the interim, it’s not my problem; it’s his.”

“There is a delivery of Aluminum Siding from The Death Traffic Manager.”

“Central Computer, refuse call. I should be hearing from him.”

A very angry man teleports in. “Do you know what the fuck you have just done?”

“Sir, I have been extremely polite with you, and you have thrown nothing but insults at me.

Central Computer, revoke transport privilege from all male occupants of this room except me and confirm.”

“Privilege to transport revoked from 05466 Grim Reaper 777064. Confirmed.”

“Now if I transport you back over there, you’re going to have to walk back to come back here.

Now you want to continue to be insulting to me and see what else I can do or do you want to act like a civilized person? Presuming you can do imitations.”

“But you can’t just stop the recycling system!”

“I think I just did or you wouldn’t be here. But it’s not my jurisdiction, as you said, so why are you bothering me?”

“Because the system says I lack sufficient privileges to release the lock you put on the recycling system!”

“So? Call the Office of the Board, ask the Chairman to unlock it, if I’ve done such a bad thing, he’ll come after me. If he thinks I did the right thing, guess whom he will come after?”

“You can’t be serious!”

“Well, let’s see, if we keep this up eventually the people on earth will notice that nobody is being born. Next thing that will probably happen is to prevent an imbalance all deaths will stop to prevent queue backups. You can guess the results. I’m already here, I don’t care if another Incoming shows up or if anyone else dies or is born, it’s not my problem. I think that’s pretty serious, don’t you?”

“Attention: There is a priority load of Aluminum Siding from the Chairman.”

“Looks like it’s too late. Joan, go seal the door.”

“Locked and sealed, blinds drawn.”

“Central Computer, answer telephone. Mr. Chairman, the Death Traffic Manager is here, I do not know if he is Board Certified.”

A distorted voice comes from the speakers. “I’ll just disguise my voice for now, 246. The current authentication code is 21093.”

246 looks at a card. “Authenticated, sir. Mine is 71026. Also, if you need her, the Watch Commander is here with me.”

“Authenticated on my end as well. Hi Joan, have a nice day. 246, what in hell is going on? My pager just went off with an emergency.”

“Well, we had an Incoming woman here on Rule #1 because she assaulted a Welcomer. She had drowned her kids before killing herself, and I thought I might have put her on trial instead of settling her issue privately because I was mad at her. So I decided to try and make up for it by seeing to it that the Death Traffic Manager routed her kids to some family that wanted them. Sound reasonable?”

“Well, that’s nice of you to take the trouble.”

“So anyway, he gives me the Optional Recycling Operator who doesn’t want to be bothered. I even asked him how much to do it, I would have offered him some favors, and he still turned me down, thinking I’m trying to entrap him or something, that he doesn’t take bribes, saying if I wanted them that bad, to come there in person and look for them. So I asked to get the DTM back and asked him if he would do it, he said the same thing, and they’re too busy. I offered to send some people over. He said it’s not my jurisdiction and he didn’t want my help. So I said, okay, I’d be by in a few standard weeks to look for them. In the mean time I shut down all recycling on an emergency stop and locked out changes so I don’t lose the kids until I can get around to it.”

“Oh, I thought something had failed or there was an emergency. Grim Reaper, can you hear me?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Charlie, that is your real name, right?”

“Oh Christ. Yeah. I didn’t think anyone knew so I guess you would, sir.”

“Do you have your authorization card?”

“Yes.”

“Do you see line 21?”

“Yes.”

“The number is 131227, correct?”

“Yes.”

“What does that identify me as, to you?”

“The Chairman, sir.”

“Very good, which means I can give you orders, correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Give 246 whatever he wants. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And one other thing.”

“Yes, sir?”

“After you finish that, I want you to involuntarily recycle the other guy and yourself, is that clear?”

“You’re kidding!”

“246, should I be kidding?”

“Yes, you’ve actually put the fear of God into him. Pun unintentional.”

“Charlie, if this ever happens again I won’t be kidding. If you’re short handed down there, you accept help if someone offers it or you put in a requisition for more assistance with Job Service. You can even ask for priority in getting assignments if you need it. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“246, how soon will we be back on line?”

“I can restart adults immediately so we’ll only lose about an hour or so. I’ll restart kids as soon as I know he’s pulled them and he can manually target them when he has time, so maybe we’ll lose another hour and a half there.”

“Okay. How many favors would you have offered?”

“I would have gone a hundred for each of her kids to start, and anything up to a thousand if I really had to.”

The Chairman whistled. “Jesus Christ! You really wanted them pretty bad.”

“Not really, but I figured if I offered a lot for them, it would stop all arguments and get me immediate results.”

“How many kids did she have?”

“Three plus a fetus but since it hadn’t been born I wasn’t trying to save it.”

“Okay, so you know what to do then.”

“Certainly. Central Computer, transfer 300 favors to current connection and confirm.”

“Transfer: three hundred favors from Supervisor 246 to Chairman. Completed.”

“Well, I guess that means I only owe you 300 less than whatever it was.”

“I suppose. I haven’t checked my balance in years. I just mostly use favors as a fun way to keep score on people.”

“Yeah, right. I don’t suppose the, what was it, 275K you spent on a so-called ‘vanity license plate’ had anything to do with how much you scored from a lot of people?”

“It was more like 300,000 and it had the unique feature of never having been done before.”

“Probably because nobody else could afford it. I couldn’t even afford it. How does it feel to be richer than God?”

“I never thought about it.”

“Well, anyway, I’ll leave you to get things moving again, then.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Bye. Central Computer, close connection.”

“Central Computer, restart recycling for adults only and confirm.”

“Feature has been locked, provide authorization for privileged function.”

“Central Computer, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”

“Recycling Restarted for Adult Personalities only. Confirmed.”

“Central Computer, unlock all recycling and confirm.”

“Recycling for adult personalities is running. Recycling unlocked but not started for all other classes. Confirmed.”

“Central Computer, restart recycling for all except human beings and confirm.”

“All classes of recycling are running except children. Confirmed.”

“Once you get her kids, you can restart all other recycling and then set them aside. It would be nice if you could shunt them together if you find a family where the woman is going to have triplets, otherwise get them into homes where the parents want children very badly so they will be loved a whole lot, is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Joan, what’s Laura’s number?”

“07703 VQ Laura 154731.”

“That’s the mother’s ID. Will that be enough?”

“Yeah.”

“I’ll even send you three people so they can do the work, you can just explain what they need to do, okay? Once they find the three kids, they’re gone and nobody is trying to take over your job, okay?”

“All right.”

“Joan, you can unlock the door. Central Computer, telephone Job Service.”

“Employment Office, this is Penelope, what may I do you for? Oh! Hi 246, how are you today?”

“Not bad, Penny, yourself?”

“Oh I’m doing pretty good. What can I do you for?”

“You know that list I gave you of people who owe me favors that are available for super critical assignments?”

“Yeah, it’s about the size of a phone book. Actually it looks like the Auckland *and* Christchurch White Pages, combined.”

“Look for three females who had kids, tell them that I want to find three children who were drowned by their mother so that the kids can be put back as babies into homes where the parents want children very badly. Ask if they want to help find them. My guess is you won’t even have to offer any favors in return, but offer to give them back 10 for each one they find, a bonus of an additional 100 if they find all three. Meaning if the three of them find all three they get 130 favors back. That’s each, by the way.”

“Okay.”

“When you find three that are willing to do this, send them over to recycling, tell them to ask for the Death Traffic Manager. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome, 246. Are you going to come by and see me sometime?”

“How about next Iduday around 6:90 or 7?”

“Okay then! I’ll be waiting.”

“I’m sure you will, bye Penelope.”

“Toodles, 246!”

“Central Computer, close connection. Central Computer, grant teleport privilege to all

occupants of this room. Okay, you can now teleport again. Look, if you do this right I'll even give you 10 favors just as a thank you. Check around sometime, you'll find that 10 favors from me is worth quite a bit. And it would have been worth a whole lot more if you'd been nice enough to do it for me. Remember that.”

“Oh. Okay.” He dematerializes.

Chapter 12
“Lord Acton was right.”

“That was absolutely amazing. I didn’t know you had that much authority.”
“I don’t like to advertise it unless I have to. I want people to like me because I’m a nice person, friendly and pleasant to be around, not fear me because of what I could do to them. Unless I want to teach them something, then I’m willing to do anything I have to do to get the job done. Well, anything legal, that is. I won’t violate someone’s rights and I won’t hurt them.”
“Not that I don’t think he deserved it, what about taking his transport privilege away?”
“When a person here is Intervener, that person is effectively acting as a judge in open court. For the purpose of handling incidents this office has the standing of a court in session, which means I have the authority to summarily punish anyone who comes into this office in a rude and uncivil manner for contempt of court. If I was nasty enough to not give it back to him, he could go to the Court of Appeals and get it back, since technically I failed to advise him he was being punished and allowing him a chance to defend himself, i.e. I failed to issue a Show Cause hearing. I just wanted to get his attention, I wasn’t planning to take it away permanently. Uh, now that you mention it maybe I need to watch myself because lately I’ve been throwing rudeness back at rude people and when you have the kind of authority I have it’s not good to be acting out of pique. That’s twice in one day. I think I need to be just a little more careful. Lord Acton was right.”

“Who’s Lord Acton?”

“He’s the man who said, ‘Absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ It’s too easy to misuse one’s power if one isn’t very careful to respect other people’s rights. No, thinking about it now, I don’t think I overacted. In effect I could have had a Show Cause hearing to find him in contempt and I would have needed to prevent him from escaping before he could be tried so it might have been necessary to do what I did in his case. But I will think I will watch myself anyway so I don’t overreact anyway in the future.”

Joan asks 246, “Well, anyway, on a different subject, I know you don’t like to give out details about your former life on earth, you consider it a challenge to someone who wants to find out, but I’m curious if I may, after seeing how you did that trial, did you go to an Ivy League law school, or just a smaller but pretty good one, and how many years did you practice as a lawyer? You seem to be very good at this.”

“Okay, Joan, my friend, if you don’t tell anyone I’ll tell you.”

“All right.”

“I was self taught. I’ve never had any legal training and I never was a lawyer. I’ve defended myself in some traffic cases, a few times I got sued, and appeared at some administrative hearings where a non-lawyer is allowed to represent other people. Won every administrative hearing, I’m proud to say. On the others, I won most court cases, that is, more than half, and I lost a few, usually because I decided the other side had a better case and it was to my advantage to settle, or where I was guilty but got essentially all of the punishment removed, or because I was unprepared; and that only happened once, I learned my lesson. But as far as legal training, I’ve never had any. Not even one day of law school. Just one of the things I learned, how the law works.”

”Wow. Like I said, I knew you were good. I didn’t know you were that good.”

“You mean, ‘as you said.’”

“Did you teach English, by any chance?”

“No, but I love words and I personally prefer to use English grammatically unless the incorrect form works better to communicate. For example, the motto for *Star Trek*, the indication a man is the first to use a ladies’ restroom is, ‘To Boldly Go Where No Man Has Gone Before.’ To be correct it should be ‘to go boldly.’ But in the context it is much stronger, and thus a better way of making the statement even though it is technically incorrect usage. That’s the difference between a good writer and a great one: the good ones can write clearly and use the rules of language to say wonderful things, the great ones know when to break the rules and get away with it.”

“Are you one of those *Trekkies*?”

“No, ma’am. I just like good entertainment. And I’ll plagiarize err I mean research good ideas from any source I can find them. Anyway, let’s go back to the script while I’m waiting on the decision, I think I’ll use some of what we did and what happened tonight.”

Some time later they look up from their work. “Ahh, I see my assistant bearing a document. Perhaps it’s good news.”

A clerk walked in. “246, here’s the decision you were waiting for.”

“Thank you, Travis.” He leaves.

Joan glanced over at the papers. “I’d like to read it once you’re finished.”

“How about you read it out loud to me.”

“Okay. Let me see here...” Joan begins reading.

Chapter 13
“In the matter of Laura 154731, Accused.”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the Matter of Laura 154731, Accused.
File No. 710400366910
7104 App. 765
Appeal on behalf of the Trial Court

Majority Opinion, Authored by Phyllis 22:

In the instant case, the Accused was an Incoming who was met by a Welcomer who took her back to his apartment. The Welcomer offered to show her the video and explain what had happened to her, answer her questions, then would ask her if she was interested in something which she was free to accept or decline. Accused became suspicious and after several attempts by the Welcomer to encourage her to see the video, he finally told her what it was he was offering.

According to the trial transcript, the Welcomer said, “I asked her if she really wanted me to say what it was, because it might offend her. She said yes. So I told her. I said that she was extremely attractive and that, if she was interested, I wanted to make passionate love to her and show her that someone cares about how she feels. She said, well, okay, she thought I looked kind of hot too. So I said to her that I was glad to hear that, I thought she was cute when I saw her. I said that I thought she was such a beautiful woman and I felt that I could really give her a tremendous amount of pleasure, plus I really wanted to fuck her brains out.”

It was at this point that the Accused slapped the Welcomer on the face. He called for assistance, and demanded the Accused be prosecuted. The Accused was brought before the Trial Court, Supervisor 246, who had the Accused Violated and arrested for breaking Rule #1 in that she had committed assault. The Court offered her a choice of a formal trial or informal one. Accused accepted informal trial and was convicted, and in a plea bargain agreement, agreed to apologize and allow the Welcomer, (the complaining witness), to ‘love her back into the world’, i.e. to be the first person to have sex with her in the Afterlife (Legal Code, Section 14).

Trial Court then stayed its ruling and submitted it on its own motion for appellate review. This court has indicated that in order to encourage questions of general interest regarding a decision it will answer hypothetical arguments of the trial courts if asked. *The General Rules of the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife*, 7100 Appellate 1 at 73, and so we have two questions in addition to the actual ruling by the trial court.

As is the statutory requirement in opposition to most cases, we examine the Accused’s case giving her all benefit of doubt, and grant to the Accused all presumptions which may be made toward her; Legal Code Section 508.

The Trial Court provides me with three questions it wishes clarification on in its decision and as to whether the punishment issued is reasonable. Question 1 is the actual issue the Trial Court used in handing down its ruling; questions 2 and 3 are hypothetical. As all three of these questions are first impression and have never been raised before at

appellate review, I have decided to examine them. The issues submitted for clarification are as follows:

First, had the Accused, by being informed that what she had heard might be offensive, lost her right to invoke the provisions of the insult defense to assault?

Second, if the Welcomer had failed to inform her that what he said would be insulting, would the Accused have lost her right to raise insult defense to assault by his later remarks once he did say he wanted to have sex with her, and she said yes?

Third, if the Welcomer failed to inform her that what he said would be insulting, would the Accused have had the right to invoke the provisions of the insult defense merely because the Welcomer solicited her for sex, no matter how politely or nicely he would have done so?

The trial court gives a fairly good example of its reasoning and how it would have ruled in such instances and asks this appeals court to determine whether such a ruling would have been valid.

The provision of the Legal Code granting a defense to assault reads as follows:

§ 702. Right to respond to insult with limited force

It shall be a defense to an accusation of assault where the assault consists of a single slap on the face of the victim to the crime, where the Accused used their open hand, immediately after any obscene gesture or offensive, insulting or otherwise degrading terms used by the victim to the Accused where the Accused has not indicated they would be willing to be exposed to such. The defense shall constitute a complete defense if the Accused shall also either inform the victim in some manner that they will not repeat such assault unless the victim re-insults them, or the Accused shall immediately after initiating such slap, shall step beyond their arm's reach of the victim, and in fact does not repeat the assault unless such re-insult does occur. Where the Accused has in some manner indicated acquiescence or consent to such insulting remarks or comments, they are presumed to have waived this defense.

Given the provisions of the above, the question which the trial court asks is at what point the Accused has effectively waived the right granted by the above statute?

I will repeat the trial court's explanation as to how it would have ruled in each of the three questions, then I will give my response after all three have been stated.

- ⌞ Had the Accused, by being informed that what she had heard might be offensive, lost her right to invoke the provisions of the insult defense to assault? **The Court finds that where someone is informed that they are about to hear something that may offend them, and they accept being told this, they waive their right to raise offense to the statement made to them for the period of time in which they are engaged in the conversation at hand. Once the conversation at hand ends and those involved disburse, the warning is no longer applicable and in some other conversation where no warning is given, the person may find even the identical comment said earlier to be insulting.**

- ↪ If the Welcomer had failed to inform her that what he said would be insulting, would the Accused have lost her right to raise insult defense by his later remarks once he did say he wanted to have sex with her, and she said yes? **The Court finds when ‘a’ has stated that they would want to have sex with ‘b’, and ‘b’ has agreed they would be willing to do so, it is unreasonable for ‘b’, having agreed they want to engage in sex, to become outraged or upset at the other person talking ‘dirty’ to the m and then slapping ‘a’ for that. To do otherwise would grant a license to commit assault all the way up to the start of sex and including during orgasm, if a man, for example, was to say something ‘dirty’ to the woman at the moment of climax.**
- ↪ If the Welcomer failed to inform her that what he said would be insulting, would the Accused have had the right to invoke the provisions of the insult defense merely because the Welcomer solicited her for sex, no matter how politely or nicely he would have done so? **The Court finds that human sexuality in most people is an extremely touchy subject. It is so sensitive that for some people, any discussion of sex bothers them. It is reasonable for someone to consider they have been insulted if someone solicits the m for sex. It does not matter how nicely it is done, any solicitation or asking for sex - unless the person being asked is warned they may be asked something offensive (or insulting) and has agreed to hear it - constitutes an offensive or insulting question to which the person may raise insult as a defense to a charge of assault.**

The Trial Court reports that it was the reasoning it used in the first sentence of Question 1 that caused it to decide that the Accused was guilty as charged. The Accused was warned that she might hear some comments that might offend her, and agreed to hear them. The advance warning of possible offense, and her acceptance of same, constituted consent to exposure to the offensive material and a waiver of the right to be offended by same.

An assault by striking someone, in the absence of provocation or where permitted or excused by law is clearly an act in violation of Rule #1. It need not be defined as to the specific statute violated as it is in an of itself a clear and obvious initiation of force and violence in violation of the same *In the matter of Clara 834, Accused, 7101 Appellate 1.* In view of the evidence provided it is clear that this is not an act which is in response to a violation or attempted violation of Rule #1, nor does it appear to be an act which is excused by law. I agree that to the extent the above statute cited grants an exception to Rule #1, the evidence provided is clear that the exception was waived by the Accused. I therefore find that the conviction of the Accused is well in line with established law and no error by the trial court has occurred.

I find the Trial Court’s logic impeccable, and agree with its decision, its reasoning,

and its hypothetical conclusions in all respects, and announce that such may be cited publicly and in other court trials as a decision of this appellate court. I find the sentence imposed by the Trial Court as punishment to be reasonable and bordering on extremely lenient, (in view of the fact the Defendant is not being told to have sex with someone she didn't admit she already found interesting enough to do so anyway), and is in line with the size of the offense. The order of the Trial Court is

AFFIRMED.

Phyllis 22, Appeals Justice #120

We concur without further comment:

Wilson 2109, Appeals Justice #103

Frederica 17, Appeals Justice #405

Donald 10322, Appeals Justice #710

Minority Opinion of Norma 144, Concurring and dissenting in part:

I dissent as to hypothetical Question 2, that merely agreeing to have sex when asked is not enough to say that the other party has waived their right not to be offended. I would say that once some part of the sex act takes place, once some form of intimacy begins, at that point the other party would at that point have then waived their right not to be offended, for the very reasons noted by the original Trial Court.

In all other respects I concur with the hypothetical arguments, and the decision of the Trial Court including sentence imposed for the reasons cited by the majority. The order of the Trial Court is

AFFIRMED.

Norma 144, Chief Appeals Justice #17

Cite this case: *In the matter of Laura 154731, Accused, 7104 Appellate 765.*

Joan looked up from what she was reading. "Well, 246, you got 4 out of 5, and the fifth one almost completely agreed with you. That's not a bad score." He smiled. "Joan, that's my line!"

Chapter 14

“...must be some frustrated lesbian who wanted payback...”

Geannie walked in again, this time alone. “246, I know you say I’m not bothering you, but can I come talk to you again?”

“Sure, what can I do you for?”

“Twice in one night my having to see you is unusual, isn’t it?”

“A bit, but it’s what I’m here for as Intervener, when you’ve got a problem you can’t fix on your own.”

“Well, what’s happened is I’ve got a Welcomer who has acted strangely. I got some of it from the young lady he was with, but basically something happened to him. And I have no idea why. It was only his first time solo with an Incoming, he was apparently giving her a really good time, she thought he was really nice, when he apparently ran off. I think you were having some kind of problem of the same type with one of your Welcomers, I heard you on the PA system earlier. Well, mine apparently left the building in a panic, and ran for the recycling center, and asked for the first birth available. Fortunately they had an experienced operator on duty who recognized him as being in a panic, so he pulled him out of the Outgoings queue, discovered he works here, called a security guard to bring him back so we could examine him and see why he panicked and ran, and at this point he apparently became catatonic and won’t talk to anyone, he’s just curled up into a ball in the Security Office.”

246 rolled his eyes up into his head. (“The last thing you want to do”), he is thinking, (“when someone is frightened is get a serious authority figure to talk to them, you get someone whom either the person trusts, or you get someone who is not in a position of authority to talk to them. If they are scared because of the authority figure, you can set them off. You calm them down, first, then find out what is wrong.”) “What’s his ID?”

“04238 MB Ed 120779.”

“Central Computer, telephone Welcoming Department Psychiatric Intervention.”

“Welcome to the Looney bin, Chief Wacko speaking.”

“Hi, I need a Mig-T for a catatonic.”

“I’ll do this one myself. I’ll be right up. Central Computer, fax me to the other end of the phone call.” He materialized. “Hello, Joan. Hello, Geannie. Hi, 246, what can I do you for?”

“Dr. Wacko, one of our Welcomers, Ed 120779, panicked in the middle of sex, ran off and tried to recycle himself.”

“Well, maybe if you hadn’t come on to him this never would have happened.”

“Oh you can do better than that if you’re going to try to bait me. Anyway, for some reason he was in bed with a nice lady, she apparently was very pleased with what he was doing to her, when suddenly he got out of her, and left in a hurry. A recycling operator realized he was in a panic and called a security guard. You can guess the rest.”

“Yeah, it triggered the incident. Did he come at all before he left?”

“Geannie?”

“You know, I never even thought to ask the lady. I’ll go get her.” She leaves.

Dr. Wacko turns back to him. “So what’s your take on the matter?”

“At this point, I don’t know. Maybe we can view the video of what happened. Central

Computer, find stored video of apartment of 44238 MB Ed 120779.”

“Entry Found.”

“Central Computer, replay entry, location north wall, time now minus two hours, video only.”

We see a man and a woman sitting in chairs, watching a TV set. “Okay, they’re watching the video. Central Computer, skip forward video one hour and twenty minutes.”

We see the man and woman sitting on the bed, apparently talking. He slowly leans over and kisses her, very gently. She holds onto his head and they begin passionate necking. “Central Computer, skip forward video fifteen minutes.”

We see the man’s head between the legs of a now naked woman. She appears to be having a wonderful time. He has his hands in front of his head, performing some action on her at the same time, and she apparently is enjoying this also. She tilts her head back, opens her mouth and closes her eyes, then closes her mouth, as the man moves forward to cover her. He is now on top of her, but his hands are underneath him, doing something to her. “Central Computer, rewind video thirty seconds, enable audio.”

We hear the slurping sounds of a man performing very wet cunnilingus, along with her noises of “ooh, ahh, oh,” as this is continuing. She starts to make even more noises, finally letting out with a very loud yell as she closes her eyes, just as in the previous viewing.

246 looked at it. “Well, did you see what I just saw?”

The Mig-T looked at him. “Yep, FTO. Let’s get a confirmation. Joan, what would you call that?”

“If that wasn’t a full throated orgasm I would be very surprised.”

“I would say that we all agree that’s what it was.”

246 nodded. “Okay, so we know he’s doing her proud. Okay, there, he’s getting on top of her. I think I see what he’s doing, he’s probably going to have her pull him in at the exact moment he triggers another one. Not bad. And here it comes. Another big yell. Oh shit!”

“Well, I think we know why he panicked.”

“Usually they don’t panic over that, even if they do get caught.”

Dr. Wacko nodded. “Well, it looks like it’s a clear 402 all right. And I’ll agree that it is unusual for them to panic over that. Technically he violated Section 402 from the moment he went down on her. We’ve sometimes warned them privately when we’ve noticed that they did that but got an explicit act of approval when beginning intromission. But the first contact is supposed to be by the Incoming and we’re not supposed to make exceptions if I remember Tom’s comments on the subject. Joan, would you agree?”

“Welcoming Department offenses are out of my jurisdiction so professionally I can’t really say, but if you ask me if personally if I think he broke 402 I’d say I agree at this point. Oh wait, 246, did he actually trigger Section 402, I mean, did he make her have a favorable opinion of him?”

“Let’s find out. Central Computer, enter programming mode.”

A synthesized voice speaks out. “By your command!”

“Central Computer on table quote user 44238 MB Ed 120779 unquote. Central Computer select result equals count of commands where quote section 402 unquote is true and where time is greater than now minus three hours. Central Computer announce result. Central Computer save SQL. Central Computer exit programming mode.”

“By your command!”

“Central Computer execute stored program SQL authorization 000000 space space Supervisor

246.”

“Result is Three. By your command!”

“He used three commands on her. So his actions with her definitely were subject to section 402. Central computer silent exit programming mode.”

“Okay, while it would be a 402, then, he did her so nice I’d say that he should probably just get a warning. Giving that much pleasure to a woman clearly isn’t mistreating her.”

Dr Wacko adds his comment, “All right, then, looks like we’re all in agreement. You can see her hands were nowhere near his torso when he entered her. However, it is quite romantic. In fact, I think they were recreating the climax scene from *Terminator I*, you know where Linda Hamilton holds hands with ...”

246 thinks for a moment. “Wait a minute. Central Computer, rewind video six minutes.” The video again shows them necking passionately. “Central Computer, show video double speed.” The audio is suppressed as it shows them kissing and touching, only much faster.

Finally, he moves his head down toward her groin. “Central Computer, rewind video thirty seconds, play regular speed.” The video again shows them passionately necking. He whispers something. “Central Computer, rewind video ten seconds, increase volume double.”

The man says, “Do you want me to eat you, now?” She nods, he moves his head down toward her privates, he says to her, “Pull my head down,” and she does.

“Central Computer, stop video.” He turns to Dr. Wacko. “What do you think?”

“I think he scared himself. He’s clearly in compliance. In fact, he’s in strict compliance, right from the beginning.”

“I agree. As you noted, we’ve even ignored some minor technical violations where the guy did oral sex on the woman without asking her, but did ask before having intercourse. But technically the very first sexual contact must be initiated by the Incoming. Here, he’s done that. Poor bastard probably thinks that means *all* first contacts, first oral, first vaginal intercourse, etc. But why would he... Oh shit, I bet I can guess. We’ll ask the girl when she shows up.”

“You think maybe she likes some strange things?”

“If Ed is the typical male heterosexual, like myself, what he’s probably afraid of is having someone go into the Forbidden Zone. It’s why all the warlords agreed to Protocol Five. You know like Rod Stewart sang in *Tonight’s the Night*, ‘stay away from my backdoor, too.’ It depends on the guy; some guys, maybe a large number, like having their prostate stimulated. He’s probably afraid of it. Here she is now. Oh, Hi, Geannie, who is the nice lady?”

“Her name is Joanna 13401.”

He stood up to shake hands. “Hi, Joanna, I’d like to introduce myself, my name is Supervisor 246.”

“Hi.”

“You can call me 246 if you want, practically everyone does. Please have a seat if you want. Over here is my friend, whose name is similar to yours, her name is Joan, she’s the Police Watch Commander.”

Joanna looks sort of apprehensive. “Nice to meet you.”

“Charmed, I’m sure.”

“Okay, young lady, I want you to understand why you’re here. First, as far as I can tell, you didn’t do anything wrong, so I don’t want you to think you’re going to get in trouble or anything like that, okay?”

She relaxed a little. "Okay."

"Over here is our intervening MIG-T, whose name is Dr. Wacko, he's here to figure out why Ed ran out on you."

He stands and takes her hand, and shakes it, then holds it for a moment. "Nice to meet you, dear lady. May I?"

"Oh sure." Dr. Wacko bows and kisses her on the hand. He then sits down.

"Now, first of all, you may have a few problems with sex, most everyone does when they first show up, so let me tell you that what he did with you was normal, and in fact, the people here try to offer sex to everyone who arrives here, men and women. So there is nothing unusual about it. But let me stress that we 'offer' it to people. We never force it on them or make them do anything they don't want to do. If they don't want it, they are free to turn down the offer and leave without doing anything. We do this simply because it's a nice way to Welcome someone into our world, show them that we care, and of course, because it's a hell of a lot of fun. Would you agree if someone asked you if sex was a lot of fun?"

She blushed a little. "Yes."

"Did you see the video that Ed wanted to show you?"

"Yes, I did."

"So, while it probably hasn't sunk in that well, you do understand that you are dead?"

"Yeah, I got the general idea."

"In fact, would you say the sex here was better than sex on earth?"

"It was unbelievable."

"I take that to mean it was the best sex you've ever had?"

"Yes. I've had some really great sex on earth but what happened in the last hour was unbelievable. If I knew that it would be this good, I would have killed myself a long time ago to get here. Not that I did, I mean, I was killed in a train crash in Arizona. I was driving my pickup truck and I thought I could beat the train. I was wrong."

"Now you know one of the reasons why we keep people guessing as to whether there is anything beyond life. Could you imagine how many people would be wanting to get in here? Nobody would want to stay on earth, almost nobody would want to go back. Especially in those places where things are relatively unpleasant. As you yourself admitted you would have done, people would be committing suicide in such massive numbers we couldn't keep up with the load."

"But why doesn't my body feel different from the way it is on earth? And why is everything here so much the same as there?"

"Well, it's a long story and there are orientation classes that will explain it to you, but suffice to say, the reason is that the people who designed this area wanted it to be as close a match to earth as they could make it. The idea being that people who had arrived from earth would generally feel as comfortable as we could make them, by making things about the same as they were there. They're used to what was on earth, so it was decided to make things here about the same. There are slight differences, but not enough that you could not manage here with a little bit of training. That's what the orientation classes will do, is give you some information about how things work here and how you can fit in, if you want to, so that you don't feel frustrated when you try to use a bounce tube and have no idea what it is for."

"Actually, Geannie brought me up here on one. Whee! That was almost as much fun as what I was doing with Ed a while ago."

"I know. Wait until you try the drop tube. Hardly anyone who is a resident uses the elevators. Well, anyway, I think something set your young man off, and if so, I want to try to find out what it was. I want to ask you some extremely personal questions, some of which may be embarrassing to you. I'd like you to answer them honestly, if you would, because I'm trying to find out what happened. Now, I'm going to tell you something here, right out, because I want you to understand that I'm going to be totally honest with you, and I'm not going to hide anything about what I'm doing. Okay?"

"Sure."

"First of all, I want you to be aware that I can read minds. That means if you lie about something or try to hide it, I'll know anyway. So there's really no point in lying to me or trying to hide something. Now, I want you to also understand that, whatever you did on earth, whether you were the nicest religious person who almost had a halo, or the worst and most horrible slime who sold drugs to other women in exchange for allowing them to let you rent their kids out to child molesters and sell them to snuff film makers, as far as I'm concerned when you died, everything you did on earth died with you. You start over with a clean slate here.

Understand?"

"Uh huh."

"I do not know if this is correct, and I don't want you to think I have any bias about what you think you like or don't like as far as sex is concerned, I don't care if you like deviate or strange things, but I suspect that there was something in your head that Ed saw that frightened him. That's the only thing I can think of that would cause him to bolt the way he did.

"So whatever you have in your head of things you think you would like to do as far as sex is concerned, I'm going to want to know about it. If I can figure out what you were thinking, or some of the stuff you thought about doing, or wished you could do, or might like to do, or whatever it is, it might let me understand what frightened him. Now, I'm simply asking you to help, as I said, you haven't done anything wrong, but I would like your help if you would be willing to help me. Would you be willing to do this?"

"Yeah, sure. And I think I know what he might have seen if he was able to see what I was thinking about."

"Tell me."

"Well, my boyfriend at the time used to like to try having weird things inserted up his asshole while we were having sex and I have no idea why. Some of the things he liked were strange, and I tell you, I wouldn't want them anywhere near me. He was such a considerate lover that I ignored his strange ideas. Until Ed came along and did things to me I would never have believed possible, and all he wanted was plain, ordinary, straight sex, he didn't want me to do anything kooky to him."

246 turned to the Mig-T. "Okay, I think we now know what the problem is."

"Yeah, I'll bet he was afraid he'd be forced to have some of those things done to him."

Joanna spoke up. "I wouldn't have done any of those things to him, I was mostly thinking about how this guy was so much better than my last boyfriend, and I thought he was good to me, despite all the weird things he wanted done to him."

"Okay, miss, I'd like to explain something to you, but I would prefer you not tell anyone about what I'm about to tell you because unless it is explained to them properly, a lot of people get upset about it, okay?"

“Uh, yeah, sure.”

“Okay. Now normally we don’t tell people this right out because it might upset them, but when you came here, we did a few things to your head. One of the things that happened is that Ed read your mind, determined the type of person that you found sexually attractive and made you think he was that type. Now, please don’t feel too bad about it, it’s just easier on our part than trying to figure out the type of person you do find attractive, locate them, then have them find you. I hope you understand why we did it that way.”

“Well, considering how nice he was in bed with me, I think I can understand that if I didn’t find him attractive I might not have let him have me.”

“Well, anyway, we do this with everyone. When I came here, some woman came out to greet me, and made me think she was very beautiful even though I probably wouldn’t have found her attractive otherwise.”

“Oh, I see.”

“Well, this is the reason why we have a corresponding check on the situation. Since we have, in effect, forced you to find the person who came to Welcome you attractive, by law that person may not initiate sex with you. *You* have to be the one who initiates sex with *them*. The first sexual contact between you and him has to be initiated by you. That’s why he asked you to pull his head down on you when he performed cunnilingus on you. There must be a clear and obvious action on your part that indicates that you consented to this being done. Well, it only applies to the first sex act, that is, any contact between the genitals or the anus of you and the mouth or genitals of the other party. Kissing doesn’t count and neither does fingering. But what we think happened was, when he started to have sex with you, that is, vaginal intercourse, he thought he was also supposed to have you pull him inside you, and he’d forgotten.”

“Oh.”

“Well, when someone violates the law by taking advantage of someone like you, what we usually do is punish them by allowing you to do anything you please to them for a whole day, anything you want, and they even have to help you. Now, with most women, when something like this happens, usually they just have the guy eat them or have sex with them in whatever way she thinks is fun. But that doesn’t mean she can’t try things on him that he might not like. Now guess what he figured might happen in your case?”

“Oh Christ, I see what you mean!”

“Now I want to know one other thing. Did you let him come?”

“No, he didn’t.”

“Was it that you wanted more time before you let him, or that you wanted him to ask you, first, or that you would have but he left too soon?”

“Wait a minute, you mean he would have asked me before he came?”

“Well, of course, he has to... wait a minute. Miss, did Ed tell you about something called a ‘Climax Privilege’?”

“No.”

“Did he say anything to you about his being able to come?”

“No.”

246 turns to Dr. Wacko. “Okay, then, he didn’t and he didn’t tell her.”

“Tell me what?”

He turned back to her and smiled. “Okay, I’ve got some really great news that you are just

going to love.”

“Really?”

“Really, really. Listen to this. When a man dies, we put a little thing in his head that locks when he’s with a woman and having sex with her, or trying to. That little thing is a device we call a Climax Privilege. It makes it impossible for him to come. No matter how much he wants to, as long as he’s trying to have sex with a woman, he can’t come. No matter what he does. What do you think of that?”

“Wow, must be some frustrated lesbian who wanted payback who thought that up.”

“Actually, it was a man who thought it up.”

“I am surprised. But why would a guy have sex with a woman if he can’t come?”

“Actually, he can come, but not in the normal way. Now, this is the part you are going to love. We also put something in your head too. Let’s say you’re in bed with Ed, and he’s having sex with you, at some point he probably would like to come. Well, someone decides if he does, and when they decide that he is permitted to come, that person releases climax privilege to him, he gets an orgasm, and he comes and sprays inside of you. Now, remember I said he doesn’t get to come unless the climax privilege is granted. Now there are only two people, you and him, that know what he is doing. Some person has to decide if he is entitled to have climax. Would you care to guess what person decides if he’s entitled?”

Her eyes opened very wide and she points at herself. “Me?”

“Correct. One of the things the Welcomer does, in the case of a man who finds a woman, is that he gives her a tremendous amount of pleasure, either with or without sex, and then lets her know that she now gets to decide if and when a man - he in particular - is going to come inside of her. Or on her, or whatever. So in your case, Ed would have explained to you how to do it so that when he’s given you as much as you want, you will give him what he wants. You can be nasty and give a guy an orgasm the instant he gets inside you. Or you can make him wait five hours, of constant moving inside you. Or you can give him ten orgasms in a row. You decide when he gets it, and how often. But only you, and you alone decide when.”

“You’re kidding me!”

“No, I’m not. Isn’t that terrific?”

“Yeah! No more using me for sex when I don’t really want it or not doing me the way I want it. No more sticking it in me when I’m not ready. No more guys trying to pull out and come on my face. That I hate more than anything else.”

“Yep, all of that. Now I have even better news.”

“You mean there’s more?”

“Oh yes, something that I think you’re really going to like.”

“And I thought it was pretty good so far.”

“Well, listen to this. I presume that you liked the way Ed was having sex with you.”

“It was fantastic.”

“Well, anyway, let’s say that he had told you how to work Climax Privilege, and right after you did that full throated orgasm we saw on the video...”

“You were watching? I didn’t know they had cameras in there!”

“We have them in case someone claims they were raped, assaulted, forced or something wrong happens. Otherwise nobody looks at them. Well, it wasn’t because I wanted to, although it was interesting, what I was more concerned about was why he ran off. Also, you might not like

this, but he went crazy. I guess he was afraid he was going to be punished and figured you'd use some of the things on him that your boyfriend wanted used on him, and it scared him. He's gone catatonic and we want to see if we can bring him out of his state."

"Oh, that's too bad. He was very nice."

"Well anyway, let's say he had told you how to work Climax Privilege, and right after you did that full throated orgasm, you decided he was entitled to one, so you let him have his, and he comes, and sprays inside of you, do you know what happens next?"

"He gets soft, then gets up and takes a shower."

"Nope. Even better than that."

"He would hold me for a while."

"Well, maybe that would be better but I'm thinking of something else."

"I have no idea."

"Let me put it this way. He wouldn't get soft."

Her eyes grew wide again. "You're kidding me."

"Nope. A man doesn't get soft here after he climaxes, any more than a woman would become unable to continue sex after she does. As a result, generally a man just keeps right on moving inside her after he comes inside her. Which means the woman continues having orgasms even after the man did. Which usually means that after she has a few more, she gives him another one, and so on. What do you think of that?"

"Un-fucking-believable!"

"And it gets even better."

"You're shitting me."

"No shit. Remember, you're dead. There are no diseases here, and you can't get pregnant. Now maybe you're the type that you're willing to take a risk with unprotected sex on earth, but here, it's no risk."

"Yes, I understood that from the video."

"Well, anyway, you can't die again unless you go back to earth and be born over again as a baby, did you know that?"

"No."

"That means there's no existence after this to punish you for what you do here, so you can have all the sex you want and not have to worry about some higher power calling you to task for what you did."

"Oh wow, I never thought of that!"

"Now let's say that you and Ed had been having sex for some period of time, a day, a week, a month, or longer, and the two of you had decided that you had had enough of each other, do you know what you could do next?"

"What, go find another guy and do it again?"

"Absolutely."

"I was just kidding! Are you serious?"

"I have a dear friend, when she was here for the first time, she spent a year and a half here and had sex with sixty different guys, six oh. What do you think of that?"

"That's quite amazing."

Joan spoke up. "And I wore them out big time, too."

Joanna looked at her. "You wore out sixty guys?"

She nodded. "Including him," she said, pointing at 246.

"I still say you didn't wear me out but let's not argue about it. And that's not even the record. We had a contest here, one woman was trying for one million climaxes. And she did it too. I think she had something like 14,000 guys have sex with her."

"Wow!"

Dr. Wacko interrupted him. "246, I understand you got in on that too and had the highest score, how many did you do?"

"I gave her 9,876 if I remember correctly. A nice, easy number to remember. I wanted to do 10,000 but I started to get worn out. I probably only would have had to do half that except they got some porno star who died of AIDS who gave her 7,501. I can't let my reputation as a notorious Tom Cat get besmirched by some actor." He smiled.

He turned back to Joanna. "And remember, a guy can't come unless you let him. He can't force you to allow him to come, only if you decide he should. So what do you think the chances are that a guy who wants sex from you is going to mistreat you?"

"Not at all."

"Now, when you go out into society, if you meet some guy and you like him, you can ask him if he wants to have sex with you, or he might ask you, and if you agree, you can just go home with him, or take him to your place if you want, and do anything that pleases the two of you. Or, if you want, you can come back here and either pick some guy here, or let one pick you. Or if you think you want to try it, you can pick some girl if you think you might like to go that way too. And you can do any of these that you want, as often as you want. Or you can decide you never want to have sex again and not do either. I think that is unlikely, but it's your option."

"Oh, I'd never do that. Not if it's going to be anywhere near as much fun as it has been."

"Well, anyway, I'm just basically explaining the stuff that Ed would have told you if he was able to do so. Now, let's say you asked Ed how he did you that gave you such a wonderful orgasm, and he told you. So you meet another guy and tell him what Ed did, you know what he's going to do?"

"Do it to me too?"

"You're very perceptive. Since a guy can't come unless you let him, he's going to do everything he can think of to make sure you have a wonderful time so you will. He wants you to enjoy it so that you'll let him enjoy it too. And then you can enjoy it some more as he continues to do whatever you want him to do to you so he can enjoy it. Everyone gets to have fun.

"One thing that being able to have sex essentially any time we want it, with no penalties for doing so, means that in general, most of us have left our jealousies and inhibitions back on earth. A guy doesn't have to care if you see someone else, because if you like him, you'll be back to see him too. And if you don't, there's plenty of other people who will. And it works the same for a woman. Nobody has to get mad over someone having sex with someone else. There's plenty to go around, nobody has to hoard it, and everyone can share."

"That's amazing."

"So, wouldn't you say this has been the nicest day you've had in a long time?"

"Yes."

"Now you know why we did this. I think it shows clearer than anything how we, as a society, think about individuals. The first thing we do as a society, as a country, as a government, is arrange to give you pleasure. To love you, physically. In fact, we have an expression to

describe the first thing we do, or try to do to you, if you want it, is to ‘love you back into the world.’ Because the chances are, you’ve been here before. So we show you we care for you as a person by loving you back into our world. As they did at some point to me, and to almost everyone here. Don’t you think that’s a nice idea?”

“Yeah. I would never have thought of it that way.”

“Well, anyway, I don’t think Ed is going to be able to finish what he started with you, so what I’m going to do is, if you don’t mind, is send you back down to the reception area, and have some other nice man try again with you, would that be okay?”

“Oh, yeah, sure.”

“In fact, dear lady, if it wasn’t for the fact I’m on duty right now I probably would have asked you myself, you’re very cute looking. But you might not find me interesting, and if you turned me down, I’d understand. In any case, Geannie will take you back to the Incoming area, and I suspect within a few minutes some other nice looking guy will come by to take you back to his room so he can give you pleasure and hopefully have you give him some. How does that sound?”

“Terrific!”

Chapter 15

“...nothing says you have to be sane to work here.”

After Joanna and Geannie leave, 246 turns to Dr. Wacko. “Anyway, Doc, he’s in the Guard Shack so you’ll probably want to take him over to your office and work on him there. But I think we need commitment on him so that when and if he becomes normal we can just release him, and still show we respect his rights. Joan’s seeing Tom tonight anyway so she can come along. Central Computer, Telephone Welcoming Department Administrator.”

“Oh, hi 246, how are you doing?”

“Not too bad, actually. Tom, I’m going to need approval for a psychiatric commitment. While I can do it on my own I’d rather make it an official order from you.”

“Oh sure, come on up.”

“Central Computer, transport all occupants of this room to current connection and close.”

They all materialize in the Administrator’s office. 246 takes a seat. “Tom, you’re not going to believe this.”

“I’m sorry I’m not in a funny mood today, just tell me the story.”

“One of our male Welcomers thought he committed a 402, read the mind of the woman he was loving back into the world at the time, saw how her former boyfriend liked backdoor action on himself with various objects of a painful nature, and feared she might do the same to him when he got caught. Well, we’d never do that, and she wouldn’t either, but he didn’t know, so he panicked and ran for the recycling center. Only problem was, while they did recognize he was frightened, they called a security guard. He figures he got caught, and goes into a catatonic trance state. I wanted to turn him over to Dr. Wacko here, but I thought it might be best if we had you sign a commitment order for release as soon as he becomes sane again. Or at least rational, nothing says you have to be sane to work here.”

He smiled. “246, you always seem to know how to make me feel better even when I’m down. I think you personally provide complete proof of your last sentence.”

He points at the Mig-T. “Well, he says I’m okay, so I’ve got a professional opinion to the contrary from a licensed psychiatrist. Well, maybe not professional since nobody gets paid here. Well maybe not a licensed psychiatrist since his license expired when he died and there are no professional licenses here. Well, anyway, I have an opinion from someone else that says I’m not.”

Dr. Wacko spoke. “But I have to qualify my opinion by expressly reserving judgment on its validity since it is entirely possible that I myself am not sane.”

Tom looked at him. “You want to explain that to me?”

“I believe I have died and am still existing in a world similar to earth. Something may have happened to me to put me in a catatonic state and everything around me is a dream that my subconscious is feeding me. Personally I don’t believe that, I think that this world is real but I have to qualify my opinions because I can’t prove it to be the case. Anything you could do to ‘prove’ it could simply be the case of some part of my brain creating an hallucination upon another part. I mean, we’ve all seen *Total Recall* so you probably know all the arguments. Or *The Matrix*, that’s an even stronger statement. Once I’ve been here longer than it’s possible for a human to survive in an institution, call it a hundred calendar years, then I’ll be willing to drop my qualifications and admit I am sane since I could not be alive in a mental institution that long.

I will state categorically that I am rational, I am able to think and to make conclusions. That does not, however mean I am sane; there are plenty of perfectly rational people in mental institutions. In fact, it is very rare to find someone who is not fairly intelligent in some fashion in one, because mental breakdowns are usually the result of a person being overloaded with more than they are capable of coping with, and usually you don't get that way unless you can handle problems that require rational thought. Besides that, as they point out in Orientation, none of this is real so I could be correct in the first place. But as any good professional knows, unless you're willing to admit you are sick there is no way you can be treated. I do not know if I am in fact crazy, but I am willing to admit that I could be."

"Oh, I see. I always thought you were being funny about it, like 246."

"Actually I think 246 may be one of the most sane people around here, because he seems to intuitively understand so many things about this place that it is stunning. Basically, this world is the exact opposite of the real one down on earth. Therefore, one must think backward.

Well, I don't want to repeat all the stuff from orientation, you know the drill."

"Yeah."

"What is amazing is how the guy decided that he'd rather die than be punished by possibly having some unpleasant things done to him. I mean he'd rather live, you know what I mean. Perhaps something like that was done to him when he was on earth and the thought of that scared him."

"You might just be right."

246 added, "And there's one other little thing."

"What's that?"

"After all this, I reviewed the video of what he was doing. He was in strict compliance the whole time, he never even committed a 402. He essentially scared himself silly, if you can believe that."

Tom shook his head. "Unbelievable." He turns to the doctor. "Do you have the order?" Dr. Wacko hands it to him. "Right here."

"Fine." Tom signs the paper. "I hope you can help the guy out."

"So do I. Hate to see that sort of thing happen to someone, I'm thinking if I can get inside of his shell, I can talk him back out of it. Since he hasn't done anything wrong, I can tell him the truth, let him see that he's not in trouble."

"Well, good luck to you, you've got 49 days to try."

"Thanks. If it takes longer than that I'll get a formal hearing. Bye." Dr. Wacko dematerializes.

Chapter 16

“...if the mark ever discovers you were conning him...”

246 looked over. “So, how are things with you, Tom?”

“Cynthia quit. She decided to go off to the Frontier for a few months.”

“Really! I hope she either has excellent martial arts training or likes being raped a lot.”

“Well, we have a replacement for her.”

“Do I know her replacement?”

“Yes, you do. ‘I tawt I taw a putty tat. I did, I did taw a putty tat.’”

“Oh, her. Well, we’ll see what happens. I don’t know if that is the right kind of job for her, but she can probably handle it.”

Joan looked at Tom. “Excuse me for interrupting, but let me be sure I’m hearing you correctly. The Chairman’s Secretary applied for the position of Deputy Administrator?”

“You got it. And so did she.” Tom looked at 246. “What do you mean ‘I don’t know if that is the right kind of job for her?’”

“Something cold about her, I’m not sure what.”

“Oh.”

Joan looked at him. “246, could it be you’re a little ticked because she turned you down when you propositioned her?”

“No, that happens more often than you would think. In fact, because I do take no for an answer, some women that turn me down come back later and tell me they changed their mind, because I was nice enough to respect their decision when they said no. So I don’t take it personally. I just don’t get a reading on her. There’s something there I don’t catch. What...”

He is interrupted by the telephone. “There is a delivery of Aluminum Siding from Supervisor 15.”

“I see she’s prompt as usual. Central Computer, answer telephone. Well, hello Estelle, how are you today?”

“Not too bad, 246. I am in my office and on duty, so at this time I am formally relieving you as Intervener.”

“I stand relieved, ma’am. Thank you and have fun.”

“You stand relieved, sir. Oh I intend to. The Deputy Watch Commander is with me as the police contact. Right now we’re playing Cribbage and I’m ahead by 200 favors. I need to call Joan and let her know next.”

“Joan is with me here and I’m on speakerphone so she is aware.”

“Gee, thanks for letting me know. I understand you actually had a rape on your shift?”

“Yeah. I’ll write up what happened and submit it as an article for *Welcome to This Week*.”

“Oh, yeah, the company newsletter. That’s great, I look forward to reading it.”

“I’m sure by now most everyone is aware of it, so you’re not the only one. Well anyway, Harry 9, how are you tonight?”

“Not bad, 246. How did my boss do on the script? I wish I could have been there to see it.”

“She did fantastic. In case you’re not aware, we have audio and video running at all times so we have the whole thing recorded. If you want to review it privately I’ll be happy to let you watch but it does not leave my office as I want the details of how we handle these kept private so

that it doesn't leak out that we're not vigorously prosecuting rapists, it might give people ideas that they can get away with this."

"Right. I mean, I understand the point, the few times it happens we invariably discover that the stupid son-of-a-bitch didn't realize he'd died. It's not really fair to punish someone who doesn't understand what has happened to them and thinks they're still on earth."

"That's basically how I see it too. Oh, if we get some really stupid one who wants formal treatment then he'll get a formal trial and we'll really sock it to him, but for most of them, once they discover what's going on they understand and we never have a problem with them. That's why I decided we needed to go with a scripted performance in order to teach the guy a lesson and turn him into someone who can fit into society instead of just another miserable ex-con who got the Six Month Standard rape penalty, who obeys out of fear of punishment rather than respect for promises and other people. I never expected it would be only three calendar months after I wrote it that we'd actually need it."

"I dunno, 246, considering how bad some guys are on earth I'm surprised we don't have them more often."

"Well, the video is only an hour, and then the guy is propositioned if he doesn't do it first, so the only way we might get a real rape is like what happened tonight, and I'll write it up in the newsletter telling what happened. I have to write it up for my boss anyway, so I can just include my report as part of the article. You can get a copy of the newsletter on our website if you're interested."

"I'll do that, then. Yep, you can't make someone change their behavior and behave and you can't force them to be a solid citizen, they have to want to be one and they have to change themselves. That's probably why prison usually has little or no effect on criminals on earth, they're too gung ho on punishment and not on figuring ways to keep the criminal out of the system and get them to change themselves so they'll stop creating more victims. Probably because if you got rid of criminals there, and mostly what you had were what most real criminal activity is: crimes of opportunity where someone does something in a moment of weakness, plus the occasional domestic incident, police like us wouldn't have a job because you'd need a lot less of us to do the job, and politicians couldn't use fear of crime as an automatic means to get re-elected."

"No real way to tell but I wouldn't be surprised if you were right."

Estelle interrupts. "246, well, obviously I don't want to see anyone raped, but I'm kind of sorry it didn't happen on my shift. Damn, I wish I had a chance to do the script, I bet it would have been fun. I'm thinking it might be different to have the police officer go out of character and be the nice guy, while the Intervener acts Regulation Charlie and wants to bust the guy's balls."

"I'm doing a revision on the script so we stay fresh, and doesn't ever look like it is a script, so be aware that there will be some minor changes. Actually I thought of that, except that I've never been good at being a bastard so I don't think I could do it effectively. I suggest you practice with someone playing the rapist too if you're not good at handling a role so you can handle ad-libbing as needed to respond to their comments. Playing the bad guy can be lots of fun, but if you don't do it exactly right you can blow the whole scenario and make things worse. Because if the mark ever discovers you were conning him, you've now burned him because now he realizes there are things people can get away with and not get punished for and he might just do it again. Besides that, usually the mark has been in trouble before and expects the police to be brutal so it

usually works quite well this way, but if it happens and you think you can work it the other way, fine. But we want to make sure the mark learns his lesson, that's the most important thing. So be very careful. I understand Joan has done it both ways when she was on earth too, so you might ask her to do a practice run with you if you want to try it."

"Thanks, I'll ask her sometime."

"Actually, that might not be a bad idea the way you want to do it, if you use the Deputy Watch Commander or another man. You could do it like the guy sympathizes, you know, 'boys will be boys,' and is willing to be more tolerant but the woman is outraged. Harry, what do you think, think you could play it that way?"

"Yeah, if she wants to try doing it where she's mad, I have no problem. But I think that having the police officer be the brutal one may work better because, as you noted, if a guy is going to do this he's probably been in trouble with the law down on earth and expects the cops to want to beat the shit out of him."

Estelle raises her voice slightly, and speaks in an angry tone. "Harry 9! How dare you talk like that in my presence, you uncivilized brute! Using such disgusting language in my presence while I'm acting as Intervener! As Deputy Watch Commander I would expect better conduct from you. I'm about to hold a Show Cause hearing to determine whether I should find you in contempt of court."

Harry 9 speaks. "Uh, Estelle, I, I'm sorry, I didn't realize I would upset you so much, I apologize."

"I don't know if that's good enough. I think maybe I should hold a Show Cause hearing anyway, I'm not sure if you're sincere in your apology or just trying to make me think you are. I am not amused by your comments."

"I'm serious, I didn't know I would upset you that much, I really am sorry."

Her tone changes back to the soft one she had before she became upset. "So, 246, would you say I can do a pretty good impression of a ticked-off woman?"

"I'll say, I was a bit surprised you got so upset. I think you convinced Harry, though."

"Yeah, she did. I actually thought you were upset at me."

"I'm sorry, Harry, I wanted to see if I could make you think I was upset, because if someone I know as a close personal friend is actually convinced, a complete stranger will be as well."

"You know what, I think you just could pull off the 'bad cop' role in the scenario. Estelle, you really fooled me."

"I really did?"

"Yes. I couldn't believe you could get so mad at me over something so trivial, I was shocked."

"Thank you, Harry."

"You're welcome, Estelle. Under ordinary circumstances I would have simply told you to get over it, you're overreacting, but I thought that it wouldn't be a good idea to tell off a judge in open court who is already mad at me, I didn't particularly want my boss to have to come here and arrest me. That's why I apologized. While I felt you were overreacting, I really did believe I had upset you."

"Remind me never to get on your bad side, either, Estelle. If that's your imitation, I would hate to see you if you were really mad."

"Thank you, 246, glad to see I can impress even an expert at conning people."

"You're welcome. I think."

“Thanks again, 246, we all know at heart you’re really a sweetie. So long.”

“Bye, Estelle. Central Computer, close connection.” He looked up at the clock. “Well, as she pointed out, my shift as Intervener has ended, I’m done until next month. That also means your turn as the police contact has ended, Joan my friend, it has been nice working with you and maybe we can do this again although obviously I hope I never have to use the script again. Since you two are going to be busy tonight, I’m going to see about finding someone to entertain. So long.”

“Bye,” “Toodles.” 246 dematerializes.

Chapter 17

“I think I’d rather do this the old fashioned way.”

“Tom, I haven’t said a word to him but are you sure you want to go through with this?”
“Yeah. Ever since I found out who my best friend is, it’s made me decide I wanted to love him. In every way.”

“But it’s such a drastic step. You know, you could always...”

“I know the technicians here can do some amazing things, but I’ve done some thinking about it. I think I’d rather do this the old fashioned way.”

“Do you think that having a Real Sex Change is necessary?”

“I don’t know. I’m just thinking I need to change something in my life, or rather, in my existence, it’s like I’m not happy anymore. Too bored or something.”

“Well, it is your decision. When do you plan to go?”

“I’m scheduling my operation for day after tomorrow, at 8:30 Eastern. I’ll leave 246 a delayed voice mail. I wrote out what I want to say. I’m going to do it now, if you want to hear it, and you promise you don’t tell my best friend until after he hears it too.”

“I’m just thinking that your best friend is going to be unhappy about it, he’d probably want to know. And more than that, if 246 finds out I knew about it and didn’t tell him he’s probably going to be a bit sad too.”

“I don’t think so, if you tell him you promised me not to say anything to anyone. Of all people, he more than anyone else will respect someone keeping their promises. Well, come to think of it, here, I’ll leave you a note and you can release it in your official capacity. I know a few people on the news service, I’m using a few favors they owe me to make my announcement low key so that 246 can hear it after it happens. And my best friend will know how I feel as the reporter will ask you about it.

“Anyway, be quiet as I want to record this and I want to read what I wrote. I want it to be in my voice as I think it will be more personal than a printed e-mail. I’m a little sad, but I think I’ll be able to get through it. Central Computer, open document Primus stop word ad-Astra. ‘246, this is... Tom. I’m afraid I’m going to have to break the combat date for our golf game next week. I’ve been sitting at home for a while thinking...’ He goes on for several minutes. ‘...*primus inter pares*, your friend, Tom. Ad-Astra.’ Central Computer, forward document Primus as voice mail delay until oh-nine-hundred Eastern, now plus two days to Supervisor 246 and confirm.”

“Send voice mail message, delayed until after 9:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time, day after tomorrow to Supervisor 246. Queued for delivery.”

Joan looks at Tom. “Wow, that was quite a statement.”

“Thank you, I thought a long time about what I wanted to say. Well, anyway, dear lady, I’d like to take you home and let you be the last woman I have vaginal intercourse with. Since I won’t be a man any more in two days.”

“So you want me to love you out of this world then?”

“Until I come back from my Real Sex Change. Then my best friend gets to love me back into it.”

“I think I’ll miss having you around as a man, and I’ll miss you too until you come back from your Real Sex Change, but your offer sounds like a great idea. Let’s go.”

“...I’m a little...bothered... whether it’s... just a little, uh, unkosher...”

“Yeeeeeeeeooooooooow!”

“Oh I love hearing that sound.”

“Okay, here’s something you’ll love feeling.”

“Yes! Thank you, Nancy. Thank you!”

“You’re welcome, 246. You keep - ooh, that feels nice too - doing that and I’ll keep doing that.”

“Oh I like that too, thank you! Let me see if I can think of another one. Let’s try this one.”

“Oh, yes, I like that, do that some more.”

“Okay. Yes! Thank you again! Thank you!”

“You keep saying that and I’ll have to do that some more.”

“Let’s try this, now.”

“Oooh, wow! I like that, too. You have such a wild imagination.”

“Ahh, that feels good, thank you very much. I keep trying different things. Sometimes they work, occasionally they don’t. If I try something and it’s not right, I’ll try something else. Then I know what you do or don’t want. Oh, yes, thank you again, that was very nice. Just like you. Oh, gee, thank you!”

“Flattery will get you everywhere.”

“Yes, I know.”

“Oh. You’ve stopped moving. Why are you getting out of me? We’ve only been doing it for two hours.”

“I want to try something different and see if I can’t get you to do another full throated orgasm.”

“Oh, I see. Well, you’d better not do them too often, I might get spoiled and be dissatisfied with what I usually have.”

“I’m just trying something special for a special lady. Let’s call it an advance present for what happens in two days.”

“Oh yeah, the anniversary of the day I died. But couldn’t you just do it to me then?”

“Nope, I asked Joan if she was available tonight but she’s busy, but she said I could see her in a couple of days. Had I known then about your special event I would have asked you first.”

“Okay, much as I - ooh, that was nice - like what you’re doing, stop for a moment and answer me a question, because it’s something I’ve been wondering about for a while, and you seem to be one of the experts on the subject. Then again, maybe you’re just a typical male who just does that anyway and you won’t have an answer.”

“If I don’t have an answer on a question I’ll see if I can’t find out one.”

“All right, now, can I get a serious answer about sex?”

“Sex is something I always take seriously.”

“I didn’t think you took anything seriously.”

“There are a few things I do.”

“Okay, well, I’m not exactly sure how to phrase this, but something bothers me, at least a tiny bit. Now, otherwise I would say sex is wonderful, it’s fun and it’s great, but what I’m a little bit bothered about is whether it’s - and I’m not sure exactly what to call it - right, or something appropriate, or whatever, for people to essentially be screwing just about anyone, as if there’s, I

don't know, something just a little, uh, unkosher about it, I'm not sure why but something bothers me about it a little."

"I think I know what you mean. Ayn Rand wrote about how you can tell a great deal about a man by the type of woman he wants to screw, in fact you can determine his entire philosophy of life. Maybe that's true. And I think I can say that I've thought about it because I do have certain interests in women. I'm not really interested in a woman that is stupid, no matter how pretty she is. Nor in someone that would put me down or make me feel like I'm inferior. And I certainly wouldn't be interested in a woman who thought sex was something she had to put up with in order to have a man around. If I have some woman it's because she likes sex as least as much as I do or more.

"Well, I came to a resolution on the subject which I think works, but there is always the possibility I'm just using it as a crutch to allow myself to continue to go out and bounce around a lot of different women, so maybe I'm delusional but I'll give you my take on it, okay?"

"Okay."

"I'd say, first, if you just indiscriminately screw anything regardless of how they think or what they believe in, you probably have some problems. You ought to at least have some standards for the type of person you want to be in bed with. Or on a table, or a desk, a sink, a chair, or standing up, or all the other positions. I'm thinking if you have no standards and you just sleep with anything, you show how little self respect you have. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not discounting physical attraction, I doubt very strongly that anyone thought about jumping in the sack with someone they met on the basis of how intelligent the other person was. Or it's very rare.

"I think someone ought to at least see themselves as someone who deserves to be loved for themselves, what they are and what they are capable of. Some people think they are worthless, or are not valuable, or other such things, are the type that are willing to accept being abused, or degraded, and I don't think they ever will be able to be happy. Those are the type of people who, back on earth like to do things I think are, well, if not sick, at least a sign of something strange, like taking golden showers, or eating or drinking human waste, that sort of thing.

"But you're probably not referring to that type of person, but to otherwise normal people, like you and me, who are having sex with multiple partners and also seeking new people?"

"Yeah."

"Well, up here at least, it would seem to make sense. Women can't get pregnant and we can't get venereal diseases, men and women have unlimited capacity for sex since men don't get soft after orgasm, and we can't die again so whatever sex we have we aren't going to be punished for doing it by some God at some future time beyond this Afterlife, so there's no reason, other than personal choice for a person, not to have lots of sex as often as we want. And it's fun to try variations on ways of doing things, which most people learn because they discover what one partner likes, which is different from how another partner likes it. So they learn new ways to have fun with any of their partners and new ways on how to give pleasure by what they do with each of them. But most of us still carry the baggage of their sexual preferences from earth, so I probably should look at this as if we were still there, how does that sound?"

"Yeah, come to think of it that's really what I was thinking about, based upon how it was back there."

"I think what happened is that so-called civilization caused the idea of having a man and a

woman have an exclusive monogamous relationship between them for several reasons, for control, for economics, and mostly because some people wanted to run other people's lives. Now that might be part of control, but I think it's more external control than internal control. "First, on earth, I think it's a good idea to have a mother and father around when raising kids, it gives them role models to work with when they become parents. It also makes it easier to manage because raising kids is a hell of a lot of work. But there is no reason there only has to be one of each male or female, and in fact, before the 1950s 'nuclear family' concept caused people to jettison their older relatives in nursing homes, you used to have the grandparents and often extended families of more distant relatives living in these houses. It makes a lot of sense to have five or six adults around if you're raising a brood of eight or ten kids. Especially if you're on a farm where there's a hell of a lot of work to do to run it and all the extra hands can certainly be put to use.

"But there's no reason these other people - if they're not related by blood, because you can't argue much with the problems of psychological exploitation from incest and you can't argue at all against genetic flaws in offspring due too-close inbreeding - can't also be sexually active with each other, it's just, I think, that the idea of monogamy got pushed down people's throats because some people didn't like the idea of there being more than one man and one woman having sex with each other in that environment. Probably figures that it might encourage child molesting. Or maybe that's not even the case because it's only been late in the 20th century that the authorities even bothered to do much about incest or child molestation within families. In fact I know there wasn't.

"When I was researching law back on earth, I remember hearing about a court decision either in the late 19th or early 20th Century that said that prosecuting a man for *raping his own daughter* was considered bad public policy because it would break up families! The judge who wrote that was probably a child molester himself, or maybe he was just stupid. Of course, it probably went back to the old patriarchal standard that said, in effect, that a man owned his wife and children and could do anything he wanted to them.

"Fortunately, along with the old double standard that said a man could screw anything and it was a good idea, but if a woman was promiscuous she's a whore, got left behind when people came to realize, at least partially, that men and women are both sexual beings in their own right and there's nothing wrong with that. Men on earth don't treat women nice enough yet, but they are getting there. Slowly and painfully, attitudes are changing. Maybe not as quickly as they should, but they are changing.

"Going back to that old standard I think is where we get the idea from. I think that just some people thought that there should be one man and one woman together - and only if they were married and exclusive to each other for life - and wanted to force it on people because they felt that sex was bad or dirty and having lots of it was a sign of depravity. Probably figure if you put one man and one woman together exclusively they will make each other mad a lot and thus be miserable and not get much.

"Come to think of it, I think that even having sex with someone you weren't married to used to be considered so bad that you might get serious punishment for it at one point. That idea became less commonplace, at least in so-called civilized countries, once people wised up and realized that making what consenting adults did in their bedrooms a crime doesn't exactly foster respect for law and order. In the so-called 'uncivilized' countries, the concept of being guilty

about having sex with multiple partners is unheard of - at least until the missionaries show up and ruin a good time - so maybe they're not so uncivilized after all.

"Maybe it's felt that if you don't have a one-on-one situation you have more tenuous bonds with each other, that you can't learn all the idiosyncracies of one another's personality. Well, you essentially have the same thing anyway in the real world where people get married and then most of them cheat on each other, so what exactly is the difference?"

"Don't you think there is the possibility of people having really strong love for each other such that they only want the other person?"

"Yes, I do. I think you're talking about people being what is sometimes referred to as *soulmates*. If we look at fiction, we can think of Michael and Appolonia in *The Godfather*. Or your boss and his wife, for example; I've met her a few times and I can see it in the way they look at each other. I see nothing wrong with what George and Lynn have. But I suspect such a condition is very rare. I've met some people who believe there is only one person for them. I disagree; I think that there are probably several people for every person and that any specific person could have a monogamous relationship with a number of different people and find any of them to be the right person for them, and be in love with them, and the other person to be the same.

"But as it is possible to find more than one person who would be compatible with you, I don't see where you couldn't, if you didn't think that you're only supposed to be with one person and only one, have more than one lover at the same time and maybe even be in love with more than one person simultaneously. Being intimate with someone is the next and probably final step you can have in a close friendship, if you really care about them. But if you choose to treat sex as something which is fun to do with someone else and not some special and holy thing, then there's nothing that says you can't have multiple partners as long as the people you are involved with meet whatever your standards are, and that you meet theirs, and like them, and be friends, but not necessarily be in love with them or even love them. And that doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with such relationships at all, any more than there is anything wrong with having casual platonic friendships and serious deep platonic friendships."

"I think I have another suggestion."

"Let's hear it."

"You mentioned 'cheating on each other.' Maybe that's the whole point."

"I don't quite get you."

"'Cheating' implies that there is some dishonesty. Maybe it's that there are two people who get married who promise to be faithful, or two people doing something similar, that they're living together and one of them - usually the woman - expects the man to be exclusive to her, and when he isn't, or she isn't if it happens to be that way, the other is really upset and unhappy because they feel they've been cheated of what they expected."

"Hmmm. Interesting point. I guess I hadn't thought of it that way, because as far back as I can remember I've never really been jealous. I mean, when I was alive I only had a very small number of women, and while it was only one at a time simply because I had enough to do just to have one woman around, I never put any restrictions on them, other than I expected them not to get a disease from someone else. So I guess that's why I hadn't thought about it because I've never expected a woman to be monogamous nor have I ever promised I would be. But maybe a woman assumes that to be the case and then she's disappointed.

“So maybe that answers the question as to why people having sex with someone else when they are in a committed relationship causes so many problems, because the other person had different expectations, or because they made the other party make a promise to stay faithful or exclusive to that other person, a promise that they were incapable of complying with.

“On the other hand that still leaves the issue as to whether it’s right or not. I think that isn’t really something that’s subject to a moral judgement even though a lot of people do. If you only have sex with those who are capable of consenting and they do consent with you, I do not think there is any moral issue involved. I think whom we choose to be intimate with, or whether we do so with more than one person in any time frame, is neither something that is subject to approval by society nor condemnation, any more than whether we have platonic friendships with other people.

“Now that doesn’t mean, for example, that I can’t say in my opinion that I think someone’s relationship with someone else is bad for someone I know - whether or not that relationship is sexual or not is irrelevant - because I’m offering my opinion on an issue of which I have direct experience because I know those who are involved and see the way the particular relationship is being expressed by those involved. And the person whom I know has the right to choose to accept or reject my opinion. But I do not believe that society or people in general have the right to criticize or condemn those who have consensual sex simply because they don’t like what those people do in bed, or they’re not married, or because they do so with more than one person. And I include gays and lesbians in that as well, although personally I do not think they can have the same sort of closeness heterosexuals are capable of but maybe some do. I don’t know enough about it to judge, nor do I want to find out; I’m happy with my own sexual orientation and don’t care to try other ways.

“So I don’t really know if there is a good answer on whether seeing multiple people at the same time is a good idea or not, where I think the problem comes in is that people do it, believe it’s a bad idea, and lie about it because they’re ashamed of what they are doing. It’s probably from their religious backgrounds that say that they’re not supposed to have more than one partner and they’re supposed to be married to that one person. Well, it’s not too hard to consider that prohibition to be stupid crap, drop the latter and have sex with someone you’re not married to, but it’s much harder to drop the first provision that you should only see one person at a time.

“So that takes care of control for the moment.

“Now, as for economics, I think part of the reason for encouraging women to be with only one man is because if a man has to be responsible for the children a woman conceives, such as in the case of a man who is married to some woman, he would not want to be supporting children which were fathered by some other man.

“But I think what convinced me most was the biological factors. Nancy, did you know that they discovered a factor in semen designed to fight against the effects of a woman having multiple partners?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Not all of the content of semen is for impregnation of a woman. Some of it has the exact opposite. Some of the content includes the equivalent of spermicide.”

She looked at him funny. “Spermicide? In semen?”

“Yep. Some of it is designed to hunt down and kill sperm. Now, if a man’s semen has components designed to hunt down and kill someone’s sperm, it’s certainly not to try to kill

some in his own testicles - although that might be the case where a man has a vasectomy - it would stand to reason under any other circumstances that the only place it would have any use is if launched into a woman who is sexually active with multiple partners. The idea being that the anti-sperm in his semen would try and kill the sperm of any other man who had been with her in order to give his a better chance at being the one that impregnates her and reduce the chance of any other man's semen doing the same.

"Further, if you consider it, the best possible way for a man to guarantee propagation of his genetic material is to have sex with more than one woman, especially if the women he is doing it with are seeing other men too. This would explain why men tend to be able to be interested in more than one woman at a time. Quite likely it's a biological imperative to encourage the species to reproduce. Now, we could argue that alone doesn't say anything else, except for the presence of foreign sperm killing components in a man's ejaculate, which would imply that it is expected that women will also tend to have multiple partners.

"What it is possible is that, if a woman has one particular man with which she has regular sex, the repeated exposure to his ejaculate will have a better opportunity to neutralize the sperm of any of the other men who she might allow herself to have access to. This would imply that the human species is designed to be non-monogamous, but that it can choose to be monogamous.

"And I think that's where the problem is. Monogamy is a lifestyle *choice*, not the 'one and only true and correct' method of male-female sexual interaction as so many people seem to believe. And is probably just as valid a choice as having multiple partners. But I think the problem came in when some people tried to ram it down other people's throats and say it was the only 'right' way to be sexually involved with other people. And so we're confused because the societal conventions tell us that we are 'supposed' to do it that way, but biology makes us want to do more. I think that's about right."

"Well, what do you say about venereal diseases, doesn't that throw a crimp in your theory?"

"I'm not sure. I'll start with the big one, AIDS. We, as in we as a species, don't even know for certain how people get it other than sexual and blood contacts are the prime vector for infection. I've heard there are reports of the disease or something similar go back to the 1930s or so, and I've heard some reports that say those are incorrect, so I don't know what to believe. I have a suspicion AIDS might be a combination of things, because I believe that there are cases of people who have, or had, AIDS, and never were infected with HIV. And some people have had HIV without treatment and do not or did not develop AIDS. So there may be more there than the health care system and its providers want to admit. But let me look at just that disease for a moment and ignore the means by which it is, or is allegedly, triggered.

"I think we, that is 'we' as a species again, got AIDS either by coming in contact with certain monkeys that had the disease and passed it on among each other. Then someone goes into Africa, either has sex with the animals or eats part of them, and the disease mutates, and someone comes out of the bush, goes to civilization and spreads it into the population. Or it might be that for the first time, health care workers started visiting these remote villages where they are a couple hundred kilometers from nowhere, and they catch it, possibly because they have sex with some of the natives, who have some form of immunity to it, perhaps, and the social worker doesn't. Maybe there is sharing of needles because of insufficient supplies and as a result the disease spreads from those who have built up antibodies to it, to a whole new

population that has no resistance to it.

“Or it could be that the disease was keeping populations in check so they did not overpopulate the area and they breed fast enough that the disease was just enough to keep things from getting out of hand.

“Maybe a health care worker broke a vial of infected blood such that it contaminated him, and they tested it and, say, him, for all known diseases - which at the time, they did not know about HIV or AIDS - and it came back negative. Or it comes back positive, say, for something that’s treatable with penicillin, so they do, and now they think there is no problem.

“Now this health care worker, who is gay, goes back to civilization and engages in his sexual practices, and passes it on. I’m not saying it that way as a ‘slur’ on gay men, but it could explain why AIDS showed up first in the gay community. The original name for AIDS was GRID - Gay Related Immune Deficiency - which tells you something about how much the disease and exposure to it has changed over a very short period of time. And I specifically am thinking of gay men, the published reports show that incidence of contracting AIDS is lower in the lesbian community than even in heterosexuals. Also, since anal sex can and often does cause some bleeding, if for the simple reason that hemorrhoids easily bleed and most people in civilization are sedentary in the workplace and probably get them, a direct blood transfer makes it trivial to pass the disease along.”

“Uh, 246, I have some news for you.”

“What’s that?”

“Last I heard, I think they said that AIDS got into Europe and North America from someone in the Caribbean, Haiti I think, during the 1960s.”

“Ahh, hmm, that’s an interesting point. I think they have some strange - strange in the sense of someone that doesn’t practice them - rituals, like Sangaria or whatever that religion that involves cutting up chickens or sheep or cattle or something, and there’s probably a lot of blood involved. If there’s things like voodoo or other practices involving needles, it might cause blood transfers and infection much faster than what was happening in Africa since people didn’t get too much exposure to outsiders. If what you’re saying is true, maybe it migrated from Africa to Haiti, or perhaps the other way around. I mean, I’m more-or-less guessing here.”

“I understand.”

“And since most of the serious venereal diseases got very good cure or remediation in the ‘60s and ‘70s along with really good, really effective birth control for women, a lot of people didn’t use condoms because they didn’t think they had to any more, or didn’t think they needed to. Hell, I didn’t the first time I had sex. And a lot of men - myself included, unfortunately - hate having to use condoms. An unfortunate set of attitudes that cost a lot of people their lives.

“This might also explain why the exposure rate is much higher in Africa, because men there do not like the idea of a woman being lubricated before having sex. A lot of men there prefer to fuck a woman who is dry because they think if she’s wet it’s disgusting. Nancy, what do you think happens if a man - on earth, that is - has sex with you and your vagina is dry, what’s going to happen?”

“Obviously, he’s going to do the same thing to me as rape, tear me up and make me bleed. But I have another idea.”

“What’s that?”

“Don’t a lot of men there engage in anal sex as a means of contraception?”

“Jesus suffering Christ, Nancy, how do you think of these things? I never even thought of that! Thank you! And I’ll bet you’re right too. Now you know why I like to be around intelligent women, they give me ideas.”

“Yeah, I noticed.”

“That is an excellent point and I’ll have to remember it. So, if they have anal sex about as often as promiscuous people outside the third world engage in vaginal intercourse, they have much more likely exposure to blood contact, and the risk of exposure is much higher. So men there tend to either have sex vaginally, dry, or they have anal sex, with women or men, probably also with little or no lube, so you can guess what happens in either case.”

“I see what you’re getting at. If it’s anal sex there’s a very good chance for bleeding, make that a damn-near certainty if they don’t use lubrication. Or maybe they do both and the men have the disgusting habit of not cleaning their dick off after sticking it someone’s ass before using it in her pussy, which then almost guarantees transferring the disease and a half-dozen other things too, even if she didn’t have it before. If they’re doing regular sex dry, as you say they often do, now you have a blood contact and AIDS can spread vaginally too.”

“Exactly. It’s probably part of the same macho bullshit that causes them to have female genital mutilation done on babies, supposedly so a woman won’t have sex with a man other than her husband because she won’t get any pleasure. But the real reason is because men there hate women, see them as less than human, they are frightened of female sexuality because they do not understand it, and what men do not understand they often try to control or destroy. And you can tell how ashamed they are to admit what they are doing, because instead of calling it what it is, destruction of a clitoris or female genital mutilation, they give it the euphemism of ‘female circumcision.’ As if there is anything to circumcise in a woman. Or any need to do so even if there was.

“So maybe all the other venereal diseases got there the same way. Now you could say that it argues for monogamous contact among virgins to prevent catching it. Well, that’s partially true. What it can argue for is to restrict contact to those where you can trace their activity and have reasonable knowledge of what they have been doing. If you only involve yourself with people of whom you know whom they have been involved with, and nobody goes outside that circle, there is little or no possibility of contracting venereal diseases other than that which you might get from environmental factors, i.e. blood contact either through transfusions or because you’re stupid enough to share dirty needles when using drugs. Add to that use of barrier methods during sex until you trust the other person explicitly and you decrease the risk even further. And that is more-or-less exactly what people are doing back on earth. Hmm, I just now thought of something.”

“What?”

“The problems on earth of venereal diseases, the biological imperatives of interest in multiple partners by both men and women, would seem to argue not for single monogamy, but for some form of group marriage where those involved would be monogamous, but only to those in their group. It would answer to both questions: the desire of people to have multiple partners and the dangers of exposure to people who might have infectious sexually transmitted diseases. Also, it would solve one of the big problems, how to handle raising of children when one parent dies.

“As I said earlier, it’s far better to have a mother and a father as role models for kids. But it’s even better if you have an extended family because the loss of one member is no longer a

disaster. If you have, say, a household consisting of, say, 3 women and eight men, the women have the advantage that they can have sex every night, while the men would be able to have it a couple times a week and not be worn out. And if one of the members of the group dies, there are enough people around to pick up the slack in caring for any of their children. And you get extra benefits since it's a lot cheaper to run a single household of, say 15 people than it is to run the equivalent of say, six households ranging from 1 to 4 people."

"Why more men than women?"

"Women have more capacity for sex than men do, and whether men want to admit it, probably would want it a lot more often than men do if they could get it. And you might even have a homosexual couple in that group that is monogamous, but are friends with everyone else, and contribute to the household. So you might have a six or eight bedroom house, one of the rooms is for the three or four kids they are raising, a couple of rooms are for those sleeping alone and the rest are for those who are having sex so they can have the privacy they would want, whether it's a guy and a girl, two guys, two girls, a guy and two girls, or two guys doing a three-way on a girl. While the mortgage and expenses on an 8 bedroom house are going to be higher than one ordinary house, it's probably going to be less than that of, say, two three-bedroom houses in the same area."

"Interesting idea. Well, thank you for your answers on sex, it does sound like you've been thinking about this so, I'll think about them. Have you ever done three-way?"

"Yes."

"With who?"

"You mean, 'with whom?'"

"Okay, smarty, 'with whom?'"

"You want me to kiss and tell? Oh wait, I mean, 'you want me to fuck and tell?'"

"Yeah. I'm just curious as to which guy you'd be willing to do that with?"

"Actually I think it's the woman who trusts the two guys she's with enough to do that, that is most significant. A guy will stick it in just about anything, as I said, it's a biological imperative that men want to try to reproduce themselves as much as possible. Maybe I shouldn't say, but I don't think it would bother him if I do. Tom and I did it with a lady we both knew and she trusted us. That's what made me decide I wasn't really interested in backdoor action but I'm not going to turn it down. Tried it and found it was too limiting. It's fun, but it's not as much fun as seeing her face when she comes, or seeing her face - or the reaction on her face - when she feels it when *I* come. Having tried it on her both ways I found it was more fun to have vaginal intercourse over shagging her."

"So what did Joan think of it?"

246 looks at her. "What makes you think it was Joan?"

"I asked her once. She told me that she had done it with Tom and one of her friends but she wouldn't say who. I've had most all of the men she's been with and of the ones who have been in a three way none of them had ever been in a three way with Tom or did it with her. In fact, all of them I spoke to said that they hadn't and I don't think they were lying. So that leaves you."

"Well, note that I only said something about Tom. I figure a lady is entitled to keep her secrets or decide what she wants to tell about herself."

"Well, I like that! Can you think of something else that I like?"

“Oh yes, I can. Let me see if I can find something to do. Like this?”

“Yes, I do.”

“And like this?”

“Oh, yes!”

“Now, like this?”

“Definitely!”

“So let’s see what this is like.”

“I like, I like! Now you can do something we both like.”

“Okay, let’s see. Like *this*?”

“Oh yes. Keep doing that, I definitely like that. And you’ll like this.”

“Thank you, Nancy! I appreciate that.”

“And I appreciate what you do for me. Oooh, that’s nice.”

“Thank you again.”

Chapter 19

“That’s what this place is, the biggest funhouse in the universe.”

246 Walked up to the office manager. “Hi Erica, how are you today?”
She smiled. “Just fine, 246, what can I do you for?”

“I’m looking for the new manager for my section, I think he’s really new here and just came in a few days ago.”

“Oh yeah, Manager 12032, I’ll clue you in as best I can. I haven’t really gotten all of the details so I might be wrong on this, admin is running over a month behind on paperwork - that’s a standard month, not calendar - so what I have is over the phone from a very busy clerk down there. What I have, pending the actual information from Job Service, is that he used to be president of communications for a hotel chain. *Texas Pride and Joy Hotels* or something like that. He’s in room 2075-728, fourth down on the left.”

“Thanks.” He walks over to the office. He sees a man dressed in a short-sleeve shirt and a tie, with a coat hung on a rack in the corner next to a potted tree. The man is sitting behind a desk, reading a file. 246 knocks on the door.

“Hi, I’m looking for Manager 12032.”

“I guess that would be me. You would be the chief supervisor?”

“Well, Yes, I’m actually the lead male, Supervisor 246. How do you do?” They shook hands.

“I wanted to get to know a little about you and what you do, if I could. Perhaps you could tell me a little bit about yourself, whatever you think I should know about you that isn’t in your record here.”

“I think the record speaks for itself.”

“Well, I’ve read some of the other reports and it doesn’t seem to indicate what your assignment is, what you normally do.”

“Well, you could say I’m a floater. I substitute for other people in some things and occasionally I take on assignments as I see fit. I guess what you could say is that I do a little bit of everything around here. I like to call myself a jack-of-all-trades. I try to be available to do just about anything if it’s needed by someone around here.”

“So about how often would you say you do something here?”

“Well, I work very hard so I’d say I’m busy about 6 standard days a month.”

“That’s hard work?”

“Yeah. Most of the other supervisors have about 10 hours a month, one standard day of work to do. I guess you could say I’m a workaholic.”

“But I had the impression you’re in your office every day.”

“Yes.”

“Well, what do you do?”

“Have fun.”

“Did you want to run that by me again?”

“Mostly, I have fun here. That’s what this place is, the biggest funhouse in the universe. And I intend to keep it that way. In fact...” We never do get to hear what the fact is, because at that moment, all hell breaks loose as an alarm rings out and someone makes an announcement on the public address system.

“Your attention please. There has been a monitoring failure in Section 71. Measuring figures

for female response levels have been exceeded beyond all limit factors. Measuring system controls have overloaded. Congratulations are in order to..." The announcer doesn't get to finish as another alarm rings out. "A second overload has occurred, the monitoring system meter has exploded. Any Supervisor knowledgeable in metering service is requested to contact Supervisor 7090 immediately. Double Congratulations are in order this time, to Marie 760132. We also have, for the first time, an incoming to congratulate on this too, his name is Wilson 91043."

"Well, I am amazed at that. Sounds like I'm going to be doing some overtime hearing her report to see what happened. I'll have to contact John later and see if he can check the tapes and find out what she did. Anyway, do you want me to give you a little background on myself?"

"Sure, go ahead."

"Okay, I'm lead male Supervisor. I was elected lead male by a unanimous vote of all the other male Supervisors eight and a half standard years ago. Actually it was because the former lead male went back to earth and everyone else kept ducking the position until I was stupid enough to apply for the job because nobody else wanted all the extra responsibility. I took over and reorganized the place to make things easier and more fun for everyone and so here I am."

"What sort of things did you do?"

"Well, first thing I did was reorganize the sections according to sexual orientation, and have a person of that sexual orientation be Supervisor over all the persons who were of that type that they were compatible with. For example, all the people who work in my section are female. All heterosexual males work under a woman Supervisor who is heterosexual. Gays work under another gay male Supervisor, lesbians work for a Supervisor who is also a lesbian. Do you know why we do that?"

"No."

"If there is an issue between a Welcomer and an Incoming, let's say it's a man and one of my staff in my section, I can understand how a man thinks and thus I can possibly explain to the female Welcomer why there is a problem or how to solve it. I can also resolve issues if the woman decides she wants to make him have sex without getting his explicit permission first, such as if he's really scared, she can ask me to check, and I can see if maybe the guy does want it, but is too scared to ask her, that sort of thing."

"I see. That's quite amazing."

"I am curious about this incident we just heard about where the meter exploded, it sounds like that might be a whole lot of fun, especially if it can send a woman so far through the roof it goes beyond our ability to measure it. Might be interesting to know..."

Whether it was interesting or not is not discovered, because another announcement is made.

"Your attention please. Any supervisor or any technical person knowledgeable in metering service is requested to contact Supervisor 7090 immediately. If there is..." at this point a klaxon alarm rings out, "what the fuck? Hey, Al, hit the reset button on the panel, would you please, and turn that fucking noise off before I go deaf? Thanks. Can someone tell me what the hell is going on here, we've got a goddam alarm in Marie 760132's apartment, 1931-424, shit, I thought she just..." Someone else - probably 'Al' - interrupts him.

"John, John, you're still on the PA system."

"Oh, sorry. I'll get back to everyone later." The announcement ceases.

“Uh oh, looks like I’d better go take a look.”

“How about if I come along? I might want to learn something about what you do.”

“Oh, sure. It will probably be a mob scene down there so it’s probably pointless to try and teleport in so we’ll take ground transport.” They walk out of the office “Have you used the drop tubes yet?”

“No.”

“Oh this you are going to just love.” He stands in front of what appears to be an unprotected, naked opening of a shaft such as is used by an elevator with a sign that says “DROP TUBE (DOWN ONLY)”. He turns to a keypad on the right. “Let’s see, floor is 1931, number of passengers, two. Green light, okay, just jump.”

“But there’s nothing but an empty shaft there.”

“Yes, that’s what’s fun about it. I’ll go first, then.” He jumps into the shaft, and disappears down the hole. Manager 12032 is standing there, unbelieving. He leans over the edge and looks down. At this point, Supervisor 246 comes up from behind and says, “Hi.”

Manager 12032 jumps just a small amount in surprise. “Where did you come from?”

“Well, when you didn’t follow me I came back to see why. I figured maybe you didn’t trust the system. A lot of people don’t the first time, it’s too much like committing suicide by jumping into an empty elevator shaft. Okay, watch. Notice the light on the panel is red.” He walks up to the otherwise empty shaft and apparently can’t enter it. “The system will not allow you to enter the drop tube until you select a floor. Try it.” The manager carefully walks up to the shaft entrance, extends his hand and can’t push through what appears to be an invisible barrier. At this moment, someone is falling down the shaft in front of him, he steps back in shock. 246 says, “That’s why you can’t enter the tube without giving a floor number. It makes sure the tube is clear for you to use it before you can step in, and once it is clear you get a green light. Then you have ten seconds to enter or it closes again. If you’re still afraid, we’ll go use the elevator.”

“Okay, I’ll try it.”

“When the green light comes on, jump.” He punches in the number. Manager 12032 steps back, then jumps into the shaft. He starts falling and continues falling for several seconds when he feels himself landing on something very soft, like a trampoline, but there is nothing there. He then slows to a stop, and is tossed out of the shaft to land in front of it as if he had just taken a single step at the bottom of a staircase. He is amazed at what has just happened. He hears a series of beeps. Then an announcement from a speaker behind him. “Please step forward, someone wishes to exit at this floor. Please step forward, someone...” he does so, and the speaker says, “Thank you for your cooperation.” 246 then arrives.

He grins at the manager. “Wasn’t that fun?”

“I was utterly stunned.”

“Oh you’ll get over it after a few tries. Wait until you go back up using the bounce tube. We’ve sometimes had people spend two or three days playing with them, going up and down floors. But let’s go see what happened here.” They walk over to room 424 where, as he had predicted, there is a huge crowd of people. “If you get cut off, just tell them you’re with 246.” He walks on through the crowd, as people let him pass.

He sees a woman, lying on the bed naked, apparently in a stupor, while a young man, also naked, is sitting in a chair, clearly unsure of what is going on. Another man is in the room with the

same security guard who was there when Leroy was caught; the man is not quite sure what to make of the situation. Then he sees him. “246, I can’t tell you how glad I am to see you, I’m completely lost here.”

“John, I have no idea what to make of this either, but I suppose we have to start somewhere. Do we have any idea what happened?”

The security guard turns to 246. “246, this is incredible, if it’s what I think it is, it has to be some kind of record, we haven’t had a rape in at least a couple of years, and now two in one week. On the other hand, it might be something else but it still is strange indeed.”

“Hi, Bill, what are you doing here, aren’t you off duty right now?”

“Well, when I heard there was another alarm I wanted to see for myself. It isn’t often we get one of these, and now it looks like two of them in one week, I knew I had to get in on this, I wouldn’t want to miss it.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear that you’re having fun. John, go tend to the girl, see if she’s okay, or what exactly is wrong with her. Now let’s see if we can figure out what happened. Let me talk to the boy.” He turns to face him. “Young man, could I talk to you for a few minutes?”

“Oh, yeah, I guess.”

“I’d like to introduce myself, my name is Supervisor 246, but you can call me 246, almost everyone does. Could you tell me what happened?”

“Well, ah, I guess...”

“Son, we know what you were doing here, don’t worry about it. We just want to find out what exactly happened. Just tell me, we’re not looking to blame anyone or punish anyone right now, I just basically want to learn what happened.”

“Well, ah, we were having sex, and I was coming, and it was fantastic, unlike anything I’d ever experienced before, and I just kept coming, and coming, and apparently she was doing the same thing, and this went on for, oh, I don’t know how long, and I passed out. I came to and saw she was also passed out, I didn’t know what to do, and I saw this great big red button marked ‘PANIC’ that said, ‘In Emergency Press This Button.’ So I did and that’s when everyone showed up.”

“Young man, I think you did exactly the right thing. We’ll have to see...” At this point the girl on the bed kind of groaned a bit, and came to, or something to that effect.

“Wow! I want to do that again! Let’s see if we... Supervisor 7090, what are you doing here? 246! You’re here too? What happened?”

“That’s what we’re trying to find out.”

“I’ve had a lot of sex but I’ve never had anything like that before, it was unbelievably fantastic.”

“Are you alright?”

“Oh yeah, that was unbelievable.”

246 smiled. “So, I guess you want this young man to get back in bed with you so you can try again?”

“Oh yes! I can’t wait to try and do that again.”

“Young man, did you want to try and do whatever it was you were doing with her again?”

“Oh yeah, it was fantastic, I couldn’t believe it.”

“Okay then, we’ll probably want to investigate this later. Young lady, did you know you blew out one of the measurement meters for female orgasm?”

“Really?”

“Yep. You’re probably going to make top number for the month, it looks like.”

“Wow!”

Bill turned to 246. “You know, I was excited to be here, and at first I was a little disappointed, but now that I see it’s just, in effect, a false alarm, I am glad it’s not what I thought it was. Although it surprises me that I was disappointed. I wouldn’t want to be getting mean.”

“Let’s see, Bill, you’re kind of new here.”

“Yeah, I’ve only been on the job for about eight weeks.”

“You got excited over something that happened, because you like doing your job and you have fun at it. Once you get used to the idea that most of the incidents won’t be serious, you won’t be disappointed that it’s routine.”

“Yeah I know, I was just afraid I might be getting like I wanted people to be hurt and that’s why I was disappointed.”

“It’s okay, you’ll get used to being able to be more objective after you’ve done this for a while.

Well, I guess we can clear everyone out so you two can get back to having fun.” He turns around to face the crowd. “All right, everyone, let’s clear out of here so these two can go back to fucking each other’s brains out, okay?” He waves his hands at all the people watching from the doorway as if to shoo them away. “Go on, scoot, sex is not a spectator sport! Let’s break it up and move on to more important things. If you want to enjoy this, go find someone and do the same thing with them!” Everyone other than the two naked people leave, except for 246 and John. “Little lady?”

“Yes?”

“If you figure out what you did, let your supervisor know. I’m also very interested in this too, so I may want to talk to you myself later on. Okay?”

“Sure.”

“As soon as we leave, lock the door again and then you two can go back to whatever it was you were doing, okay?”

“Yeah!”

246 and John leave. He turns to him, “John, if she can tell you what she did I’d like to know. What you can probably do is, after you talk to her, review the tapes and see if it gives you more information if she isn’t sure. I’ll definitely be interested in this as it looks very exciting.”

“I agree. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like this in a long time.”

“Amazing. Well, anyway, I have to talk to my manager here, and he...” 246 looks around.

“Hmm, I guess he went back to his office. Well, I’ll talk to you later. Central Computer, telephone manager 12032.”

“Hello?”

“Hi, this is Supervisor 246.”

“I got the general impression that it was just two people who had gotten a bit noisy or something to that effect, and that it otherwise wasn’t really all that serious. Would that be correct?”

“That’s about right.”

“Given that to be the case, I figured that I might as well let you handle that, as I figured that you don’t need me looking over your shoulder, telling you how to do your job, when you’re probably able to do whatever needs to be handled, without me getting in the way, I figured you would call me back when you got finished.”

“Why thank you.”

“You’re welcome. It was my belief since I’m new here, that I don’t know enough to really offer much in the way of assistance, and you probably would do better at it than I could, at least until I understand more about what goes on. What I would like to discuss with you is your report, so I can understand what sort of things you do, if you could come back up to my office when you have the opportunity.”

“Sure, I’ll be up in a couple of minutes. Central Computer, close connection.” He headed for the bounce tube, which looks exactly like the drop tube except for a sign reading “BOUNCE TUBE (UP ONLY)”. He punches in 2075, the floor number, and a bull’s-eye type of target appeared, with the circles flashing in a pattern to appear as if it is moving inward, similar to a type of neon sign. He jumps onto the target, it propels him upward, to where he bounced out on the 2075th floor, as if he had merely taken a single step down, exactly the way the manager had bounced out of the drop tube.

Chapter 20

“...almost everything you know is *wrong*.”

246 is back in the office of Manager 12032, his boss, who is having a bit of trouble with what he's reading, especially since he's new on the job. “Supervisor 246, I'm looking at your report, and I want to ask you about one item.”

246 Looks at him. “I think I know which one.”

“First, what does the term ‘Incoming,’ as you used it in your report, mean?”

“Someone who just arrived here, someone freshly dead.”

“Thank you. Now let me get this straight, one of your women was raped by one of the Incomings.”

“Yes. I did the victim intervention myself along with Joan 20319.”

“And you filed *that* under ‘trivial incidents?’”

“Yeah. No biggie anyway in terms of what happened.”

“You seem to be treating this incident as less than a serious matter. A man was in a woman's apartment and raped her.”

“A *staff* woman's apartment. Not just an ordinary woman. A woman who took a staff assignment here as a Welcomer. Otherwise it would have been taken more seriously.”

Manager 12032 reads from the report. “Okay, a male Incoming was in a staff woman's apartment, pushed her down on the bed, she said to him, ‘Hold on a minute.’ He ripped off her panties, pulled his trousers down and jumped on her, saying ‘shut up bitch, you know you love it,’ then assaulted her for 45 minutes. Your report stated that she did not try to stop it because - and I'm quoting you here - ‘she was so amazed by what had happened she didn't think to react, and at the time she was having so much fun that she forgot to make him stop.’”

246 nodded. “That's correct.”

“This doesn't make any sense.”

“You haven't been here very long.”

“Supervisor 246, I can kind of understand that in this line of business there may be a tendency to have less respect for women, but I do not believe that the subject of sexual assault deserves the old macho stereotype of ‘If rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it.’ No woman should have to put up with that kind of attitude by a man, especially from a supervisor such as yourself. And why hasn't this man been turned over to the authorities since apparently this business is legitimate here?”ⁱⁱⁱ

“First we're not in a line of business, we give it away. Second, I got a contact from the cops when they found out about it. In fact it was the Police Watch Commander, my friend Joan, who worked with me on the intervention. Third, I made a deal to settle the matter privately. If they want him, I'll rent him out for a negotiated fee but I get him back.”

“You would *rent* him out? And you'd want him *back*?”

“Yeah. A lot of cops would love the opportunity to beat the shit out of this guy. Well, he doesn't have any in him to start with but that's beside the point. And I think he's going to be very valuable to me over the long term.”

“Okay, I'm kind of new here and this sort of vigilante justice is strange to me. But what about the poor victim?”

“Anita 71603? Fine, fine, not like they haven't tried this before. And probably will again. Just

never this fast.”

“You’re acting like this is not a serious matter.”

“Well, since Anita was willing to take him back and have sex with him again, only this time she let him come, I figured it wasn’t. In fact, they’re probably still having sex right now as we speak.”

“Now this is utterly ridiculous, what in hell is going on?”

246 decided that he had better figure out how much this guy knows about what is going on, he seems so clueless. “Sir, have you ever heard of a technological development called ‘Antirape?’”

“No.”

“Do you know what the term ‘Climax Privilege’ means?”

“No.”

“Have you ever heard of the term ‘Immunity from Assault?’”

“No.”

“Well, sir, if you had you would understand better what is going on. If you can trust me on this, once you know how these things work you would understand, okay?”

“I’ll take your word for it, for now.”

“Fair enough. Sir, may I ask how you got this position?”

“There was a notice requesting volunteers for a second level manager of a service facility. I was vice-president of operations and general manager of the *Pride of Texas* hotel chain. It said what this facility was but I figured it is a similar line of work, you have people using rooms and customers going in and out. I have no personal bias against this type of work even though I won’t use it myself, and apparently such operations are legal here. Second-level supervisors for this kind of operation are not exactly as common as file clerks so it’s not easy to find someone for this kind of position. So they said okay, I could have the job if I wanted it. I’ve only been here for two weeks so I’m simply reading the reports. I feel as a manager that it’s my job to solve conflicts which prevent us from continuing to run a smooth operation. Therefore since I don’t know enough about what is going on here, I read the reports in order to understand how things work before causing damage to a successful business through mismanagement.

“In fact, I’d like to take some time with you in the near future and discuss your typical work day and get an idea of what your job entails. I can’t manage an operation that I do not understand how it works and I do want to learn.”

(“Well, at least he’s smart enough to know that he doesn’t know enough and to leave what he doesn’t understand alone,”) 246 thinks. (“I can work with him. If I didn’t like my job so much I’d probably... Oh, wait a minute.”). “Sir, what is your rating, your classification level?” “I was told I was classified level three hundred fifty-six thousand. What is yours?”

(“Thank God, he doesn’t have high privileges yet, he can’t read my mind. Or any privileges for that matter. At least the clerks in admin are smart enough not to give someone a privilege if they don’t need it, or the person isn’t smart enough to know how to steal it and get away with it. Now do I tell him the truth? He won’t like it.”) “I have all the tools I need to perform my job properly, sir.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“All right, if you must know. 101.”

The Manager looked at him. “I believe that’s...

“...the highest possible ranking of a person who is not a member of the ruling council, the Board of Directors. And yes it includes the privilege to read minds as I am doing right now. The rules here are that you get privileges as you earn them, as you need them or as you can buy or steal them.”

““Steal them’?”

“Sir, did you have an orientation class when you arrived? Were you given a manager’s training package?”

“I died when I was 75; I’m proud to say I was so good at what I was doing the company granted me an exception to mandatory retirement. I’ve had over 30 years of management experience, I figured I know quite a bit about managing people and I could learn what ever else I needed to know while I was working, and that I could take that sort of thing once I’d settled in after a couple of months.”

(“Oh God, he doesn’t know how the system works. Does he even know what we’re doing here?”) “When you first came here, you were met by someone who showed you some information on video while you learned a few other things?”

“Oh, yes, I remember that. A nice young lady came to get me and sat through it.”

“What happened after the video and testing?”

“I left and went to the Main Entrance.”

“After the testing and before you left, what happened then? I know, so tell me. You don’t have to be embarrassed about it. I know a lot of people have hangups when they’re new here and can’t talk about it, but it happens here all the time. Literally.” (“I hope it’s not what I’m thinking, that maybe he has some weird interests like he’s a child molester or likes deviate practices involving pain, or that he’s not interested in sex at all.”)

“I didn’t want to get anyone in trouble so I didn’t say anything.”

(“Maybe he doesn’t want to admit he had sex with her. Oh Christ! Maybe I’m reading him backward and it *is* what I’m thinking!”) “What happened?”

“Well, the sweet lady was very friendly and probably just wanted to be nice but I had to let her know that I was not about to do that sort of thing to her, I respect women and I don’t use them or abuse them. If other people want to do that, that’s their decision but I will not do that to a woman. That is also why I felt your comments about rape were inappropriate.”

246's eyes rolled around in his head. (“He hasn’t been loved back into the world yet. We have *got* to make the initial transition download more comprehensive. And possibly orientation should be mandatory.”) “Sir, right now I’d say you do not know enough about what is going on to do the job you have, nor do you understand enough about this environment to even know why. Either that, or you didn’t think about it.”

“What do you mean?”

246 sighed as he thought to himself again, (“You’re supposed to get this at the orientation class dummy, that’s why they hold it! The lack of almost any mandates has probably saved this place from degenerating into a bad copy of earth but it also means people are clueless if they refuse to accept training because we won’t force it on them. Thank goodness the people in admin *do* know what they are doing. If they ever start to screw up and not vet people properly before giving them privileges, I’m taking the first birth back to Earth and get the hell out of here for one last chance to live before we end up destroying ourselves, which will probably start 15 minutes after it’s discovered that I’ve left. Then again Earth is pretty bad as it is. Looks like

I'll have to give him part of the course to even make him understand how uninformed he is.")

246 held his hands apart, looked up at the ceiling and around, then back at his boss, and said, "What is this place?"

"I guess, for lack of a better name, this is Heaven."

"I wonder about that. Belinda Carlisle once sang that 'Heaven Is a Place On Earth.' So, actually, we call it the Afterlife. How did you get here?"

"I had a heart attack at work and died. I went through a tunnel of light. I saw some people I used to know, then the vision passed and I ended up in a large room with a bunch of other people. Then a woman asked me to follow her, and I did."

"Okay, let me try this. What is this place made of? What is that desk?"

"Atoms. Molecules. Sub-atomic particles. Plastic made from petroleum, steel made from iron, maybe some wood."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, everyone knows that."

"Everyone knew that the world was flat, too."

"What are you getting at?"

"Sir, this is all covered in the orientation, that's why you're supposed to take it before you try to do any work. To put it bluntly, almost everything you know is *wrong*. You have to start over and unlearn all the things that are no longer applicable."

"Are you serious?"

"Very. Let me try and give you a little example, if I may."

"Okay."

"Did you change this office decor like the wallpaper or the paint or is it the way it was when your predecessor had it?"

"It's the same as my predecessor set it up, I put in a requisition for a decor change but I guess they haven't gotten around to approving it or don't have the funding."

246 thought to himself, ("Absolutely they don't have the funding, never have, never will. I'll bet if I asked a dozen people in the office how they funded things like office redecoration they'd look at me as if I was crazy.") "Okay, let's say you had unlimited funds to order your office any way you want it. What would you have?"

"Oh, I figured that out already. I have Post-It notes in this catalog from Office Depot that the mail room sent me, so they told me I could select exactly the items I'd like, and I requisitioned on the form they gave me, and kept this copy, just as they said."

("Man, the boys in the mail room must love this guy, I'll bet they laughed their ass off at him! I'll bet they pull this stunt on every clueless Incoming. It's got to be the only reason they even *have* a mail room, for the yukks they get for requests from people who think like they're still alive.") "May I see?"

"Sure. Here, here, and here."

"So you would like this set of blinds, this type of desk and chair, this color of carpeting and this shade of paint if you could get it?"

"Yeah."

"I can do it for you right away unless you would rather do it."

"You can?"

"Yes, I can do it, if you want."

“Sure, go ahead.”

“Now, I don’t have to do this by voice command but it might be less frightening that way.”

“What do you mean?”

Sitting back in his chair, 246 looked up at the ceiling, then at his boss. “Central Computer, this is Supervisor 246, please respond via audio to this room.”

A female voice sounded out, “Oh... Yes! Yes! Yes!”

Manager 12032 laughed. “That’s Meg Ryan doing the fake orgasm scene from *When Harry Met Sally*.”

“I thought it was a good fit considering what we’re doing here.”

“So you’re going to order the supplies directly from the computer? Why didn’t someone tell me I could?”

“Do you really want me to answer that?”

“Yes.”

“You’re supposed to learn that at the orientation.”

“I see.”

“Oh no, you don’t. You don’t even have a clue.”

“Excuse me, Supervisor 246, that was uncalled for.”

“You know what, I’ve had enough of this.” He stood up. “I suggest you stand up if you don’t want to fall on your ass.”

“Are you threatening me, Supervisor 246?”

“Central Computer, please clear this room of all furnishings and non-living objects.”

Everything in the room - except for the two people and the rubber-tree plant in the corner - vanishes, including the chair Manager 12032 is sitting in. He falls to the floor, which no longer has a carpet on it, either. Apparently unhurt, but surprised, he looks around at the now empty office.

246 points at the floor. “*This* is why you don’t have any privileges at all. You would not know what you are doing.”

The Manager is apparently at a loss for words.

“Central Computer, undo last request.”

Everything in the room is restored exactly as it was, including the Manager who is sitting back in his chair, only his jaw has dropped.

246 sits down in his chair. “Go ahead and try it.”

“What do I need to say?”

“Try repeating what I just said. But stand up first or it will happen again if the room is cleared.”

He stands, not realizing that 246 is still sitting. “Central Computer, please clear this room of all furnishings and non-living objects.”

Nothing happens.

“Maybe you need to identify yourself.”

“How?”

“I don’t want to say its name so it doesn’t respond to me, but say its name, then say your identification, then ask it to respond by audio here.”

“Central Computer, this is Manager 12032, please respond by audio to this room.”

Again, nothing happened.

“Maybe it didn’t hear you the first time, try again.”

“Central Computer, this is Manager 12032, please respond by audio to this room.”

A man’s voice sounded out. “I heard you the first fucking time, clueless Incoming asshole!”
Manager 12032 turned beet red. “I may be stupid but I wasn’t born yesterday. Obviously you did that.”

“How?”

“Probably some trick in which you got someone to switch it for you.”

“Nope, nobody else did it. So how did I do it, if I did?”

The manager thought for a moment, (“The only possible way I can figure he could do it is...”)

“Thought control.”

The same voice from the computer sounds out. “Give the man a cigar! No, wait a minute, I will!” A cigar appears in the manager’s breast pocket.

“You mean you can talk directly to the computer by thinking?”

The same voice repeats. “Give the man a cigar! No, wait a minute, I will!” A second cigar appears in the manager’s breast pocket.

He sits down in his chair and laughs. “Okay, I’m man enough to admit when I’m wrong. I apologize, Supervisor 246.” He stood up and held out his hand. ”By the way, before I died, my name was David Rollins.”

He stood up and shook his hand. “Supervisor 246. You can call me 246, practically everyone does.”

“Okay, you’re trying to tell me something. I’ll admit, I’m stupid. Please just tell me what it is, that I’m stupid about, real easy so I can understand.”

“You want to know my original name?”

“If it’s not a problem, I would.”

Chapter 21
“Greedy bastard.”

“How about I tell you that later, once you know me a little better.”

“Do you feel that my knowing who you were when you were alive will be that serious to being able to work with you?”

“Yes, sir, I do.”

“May I ask why?”

“I could be funny and say, ‘you may ask’ like William Shatner does in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, but I know what you mean. Right now, the fact that you’ve been dead for a very short period of time and have been working here even less means that you’re too new to understand if I tell you. After you’ve been here a while you’ll understand why.”

“Very well then.”

“May I ask why you didn’t simply take some time off when you arrived here, and see everything? Well, actually I doubt any one person could see everything, but you know what I mean. I’ve

known people who died who were so elated when they got here that they took years, even decades before they picked something to do. I mean, when you arrived here and were met by the nice lady, who propositioned you, I know of guys who spent weeks there. At least, I did.”

“Well, as I told you, I do not approve of using prostitutes, at least personally, that is. Run by pimps who steal most of what they make, most of them were abused, sometimes as children. Many of them are lesbians who hate men, and many do this because it’s the only work available to them to support the huge amounts of money needed to fund their drug addiction. Now, there are some women who work in very high end operations who do it for the money, they’re professionals who sell sex the way some women sell real estate. I’m no prude, I used to run a major hotel chain, I sometimes had to get important clients laid so I’ve dealt with them. It’s very similar to why I decided I could work here. But personally I think a woman should be treated with respect and I have tried as hard as I could to do so in my own involvements. With the possible exception of, say, a handicapped or disabled man who uses a prostitute because he feels a normal woman would not be able to understand how to work with him or would be unable to look past his disability, I think most men who use them do not respect women. I helped close down a major prostitution ring operating out of our Bangkok hotel because they were using child prostitutes, even though I knew it would cost the company money, because I felt it was wrong.”

“I see. You know, I’m glad to hear that. My personal detestation for pimps knows no boundaries. And pimping children is about as low as you can go short of molesting them.”

“This seems rather strange coming from you in view of your occupation.”

“As I said, sir, you don’t know enough about this place or how it works to understand what is happening. As a matter of fact, I’m doing a lecture on women’s sexuality for orientation in a few days. I could do it on tape but I like to hear the questions, it helps me learn how to make the speech better. Why don’t you attend and I think you will learn a whole lot more.”

“I’ll do that if you tell me when it is and how to get there.”

246 wrote some numbers on a piece of paper. “Here’s the date and time, be there about an hour early so you can get a good seat as they usually fill up fast. People hear about my so-called reputation as a Tom Cat who gets more women than anyone else so they’re interested. Go

down to one of the blue kiosks on the street, punch in this code sequence, and a transporter will take you to the hall.”

“Well, thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Anyway, I have to be going.”

“Thank you for coming to see me, I hope you’ll help me out while I’m learning. And I will arrange to take the courses as soon as the next ones start.”

“You’re quite welcome, sir. Actually I was thinking that I could work with you because you were smart enough to know that you didn’t know everything that was happening and not to change things you didn’t understand.”

“Well, thank you for being so candid. I hope you’ll help me out here so I can learn.”

“I’ll certainly try. Oh, that reminds me.” He opened the catalog that was sitting on the desk.

“Central Computer, programming mode.”

A voice bellows out. “By your command!”

246 Grins. “Cylon warrior from *Battlestar Galactica*. Central Computer, on alias table quote this room unquote. Central Computer, select this room. Central Computer, update furniture set Chair1 equal Office Depot 930-115-775, set desk equal Office Depot 930-334-749^{iv}. Central Computer, update carpet set color equal tan 25%. Central Computer, update windows set cover equal horizontal blinds 50 millimeter. Central Computer, update windows set color equal blue 40%. Central Computer, update carpet set color equal blue 50%. Central Computer, command save SQL.”

“By your command!”

246 turns to his boss. “Let’s step back.” They get up and walk over by the doorway. “Central Computer, command test stored program SQL.”

“Error report: Desk blocked by chair2.”

“The new desk is bigger than your current one.” He reaches out and moves the chair he was sitting in and the one next to it back about half a meter. “Central Computer, command test SQL.”

“Error report: No errors.”

“Central Computer, command execute stored program SQL.”

The room changes to fit the new furnishings, but the color is not quite right^v. He looks around. “Damn, I think it made a mistake, the carpet is supposed to be tan, the walls blue, not blue carpet and the walls remain green. Central Computer, command list stored program SQL”

The computer reads back what he had said. “Damn, I meant to say walls. Central Computer, command delete stored program SQL. Central Computer, enter silent programming mode. Central Computer, on alias table quote this room unquote. Central Computer, select this room. Central Computer, update carpet set color equal tan 25%. Central Computer, update walls set color equal blue 50%. Central Computer, update windows select color equal blue 30%. Central Computer, command save SQL.”

“By your command!”

“Central Computer, command execute SQL.”

The carpet changes color to a medium tan, the blinds become slightly lighter blue and the walls change from green to a shade of light blue somewhat darker than the blinds. “Hope you like the new decor.”

Manager 12032 is amazed. “This is great!”

"I'm glad all those years of programming I did on earth were worth something. Central Computer, command exit programming mode."

Meg Ryan's voice sounded out, "Oh... Yes! Yes! Yes!"

246 waved at his boss' chair. "Sit down, sit down, it's your office."

He did so as he shook his head. "Absolutely amazing."

246 sat down. "Might this be worth a few favors at some time in the future?"

"That depends on what you mean by a 'Favor'."

"Central Computer, list statutory definition of term 'favor'."

"Legal Code Section 100. Subsection (a). A 'favor' is defined as a promise of personal service not exceeding one hour. (b) A favor may only be required for the purpose of obtaining intellectual exercises and the implementation of same, attention or opinions or such activities as are necessary to provide same. (c) For the purposes of this section, 'intellectual exercises' includes the development of computer software or any similar construct."

"Oh, is that all? Yeah, sure. This is terrific."

"Say... five favors?"

"Okay."

246 thinks for a moment that actually he doesn't have a clue. "We won't make them fine quality favors or colored ones so let's call them gross, okay."

"Oh, yeah, sure."

246 wrote something down on a piece of paper. "I don't want to trigger anything so you say what's on line 1."

"Oh sure. Central Computer, this is Manager 12032, please respond by audio to this room."

"I heard you the first fucking time, clueless Incoming asshole!"

246 covered his face for a moment. "Sorry, I forgot to change it when I gave you voice access. Central Computer, set voice prompt for Manager 12032 to quote Yes Mr. Rollins unquote. Now let's pick a voice to use. Central Computer, set voice prompt personality for Manager 12032 equal 'Christiane Amanpour'. Try it now."

"Central Computer, this is Manager 12032, please respond by audio to this room."

The soft voice of CNN's Chief International Correspondent spoke. "Yes Mr. Rollins."

"I am still amazed."

246 grinned. "I've had a crush on her for a long time. If she's interested, I'm going to love her back into the world when she dies. Anyway, say line 2 on that paper."

"Central Computer, transfer five gross favors to Supervisor 246 and confirm."

"Transfer: Five gross favors from Manager 12032 to Supervisor 246. Completed."

246 smiled. "Anyway, I'll get going now." They both rose.

Manager 12032 held out his hand and they shook. "You know, I really have to say that I misjudged you. You're pretty nice..."

"If you say so, sir."

"...Even if you do have a strange sense of humor."

He grins. "I have my moments." He leaves.

A few minutes later a co-worker walks by and sees the office, and sticks her head in. "Hey, I see you figured out how to change the decor in your office."

"No, actually someone else came by and did it for me."

"Oh, they have pretty good taste. Who was it?"

“Supervisor 246.”

Her eyes opened. “Oh really! How much did he charge you?”

“Nothing.”

“Oh get out of here, I’ve never heard of 246 not charging, he didn’t ask you to give him a favor or two?”

“Oh yes, he did, he had me say that right there.” He pointed at the paper.

She looked at it, then screamed in laughter. “Holy shit!” She ran out of the office and came back with 3 co-workers. “Nice decor, isn’t it.”

A couple of them murmured. She showed the piece of paper. “Look what he had to do for it.” Laughter ensued. “Jesus, he really rooked you.” “Man he got you big time.” “Greedy bastard.” They all left laughing with the exception of the first co-worker, who shook her head. She set the paper back down on the desk and started to leave.

“Excuse me, miss?”

“Doreen. 25320 EA Doreen 930054 if you’re interested.” She smiled at him.

“Doreen, what exactly did I do?”

“A lot of people would probably have done this for free just to play at it. Maybe someone might have thought it was worth a favor, especially if you didn’t know how. But he had you give him *five gross* favors. Five times a *gross*, 144. Five times 4 is twenty... carry the two.. Seven hundred and twenty favors. Now, let’s say your time in hours on earth was worth, say, fifty-five Canadian^{vi} or... what country were you from when you died?”

“The United States. Dallas, Texas.”

“Okay, so your time, personally, is probably worth about U.S. 80 dollars an hour. Say a favor takes you an hour to do, that’s a good rule of thumb, he just put you on the hook for doing the equivalent of 720 hours of personal service, about *57 thousand dollars* of your time for a lousy office redecoration. I can’t wait to see what happens when he comes to collect! Wait till I tell some of the girls in the office pool!” She leaves, giggling.

Chapter 22

“Stick a fork in me, I’m done.”

“Hey, 246! I wanna talk to you!”

Never quite sure if it is someone happy or someone in the opposite state, and being fully prepared to run or dematerialize if needed, Supervisor 246 turned to see who it was. He stopped in the corridor watching people walk by when one of them walked up to him.

“Ahh, Mias 880. What can I do you for?”

“I want you to finish the job you started.”

“You asked me to write some programs to design a building for you, for 300 favors. I did. You saw how little time it took me so you wanted changes in the middle of the job, and thought they should have been included. I said you didn’t say you wanted those features when I priced the job, and it would cost more if you wanted to add them. You refused to pay. I refuse to do the extra work. You don’t like it, you can always get someone else to do it, but anyone else who would do it for less, will take a hell of a lot longer and won’t do a very good job, and I know you know it or you wouldn’t be demanding it of me. What you want will cost an additional 1,600 favors. No discount.”

“You want 1,600 hours of personal service from me to finish my building? You’re trying to tell me it will take that long to do? Or even anything *close* to that long?”

“No. I’m telling you that’s what it will cost *you* to get *me* to do it. I don’t want to do the job, so I’m pricing it high enough that you won’t pay it and I won’t have to. End of story. And technically I don’t *have* to do anything. Remember the saying, ‘The only things you *have* to do are pay taxes and die?’ Let’s see, well, I’m already dead, so that’s over. I don’t have any money, never had any all the time I’ve been here, so I don’t have any taxes to pay. Stick a fork in me, I’m done.” One of the people in the corridor watching the conversation applauded, then walked off. “But I’ve never refused to do something when I get paid enough for it to be worth the aggravation.”

“You don’t even need the favors.”

“When H. Ross Perot was on the Board of Directors of General Motors, after he sold his company to them, he was such a pest in asking them why they acted so stupidly, that the Chairman, Mr. Smith, offered Perot an additional 800 million dollars to quit and get lost. Mr. Perot had just sold his company to GM for something around 3 billion dollars and apparently was having a lot of fun looking at what was going on.”

“And that means?”

“Perot didn’t *need* the 800 million dollars. But he accepted it anyway. Probably meant to him about the same to me as another 1,600 favors: *Pocket Change!* Well, I can figure out another possible way to solve your problem that might be fun.”

Mias knew from what he’d heard, that 246’s idea of “fun” was the type of activity, that on earth, would be categorized as being worth about 3 to 5 in Baltimore’s *SuperMax* prison, he was wary.

“Go ahead.”

“You and I can go over and find a couple of nice ladies who are interested in us, and we go to town on them. First one to get his girl, as a result of vaginal intercourse - so neither of us can use a vibrator, we have to do it - no pun intended - through use of our penises - to come 1,000 times, wins. You win, I do the job for free; you get a refund. I win, you have to pay me

6,000 favors. If both girls climax 1,000 times and it turns out to be simultaneously, I do the job for the original 300 favors.”

“Are you kidding?”

“I’ll even make it fair, if they approve, you can either pick the two women and I get to pick which one I want, or I’ll pick the two ladies and you get to pick which one you want. I’ll even give you a 10 minute head start.”

“That’s ridiculous, that would probably take weeks to finish.”

246 smiled. “We’ve got all of eternity, you know of anything better to do? But let’s see, I should try to be fair. Let me use calendar time since you haven’t been here that long and probably can’t think in Afterlife Standard Time. Hmm, a woman takes about, oh, two minutes of foreplay to really be excited enough to begin intromission, then 15 seconds of coital stimulation to start of climax, then continued coition...”

“What the hell does all that mean?”

“Get her in bed, eat at the ‘Y’ for two to four minutes until she’s wet enough, then play ‘hide the salami’ until *you* lose. So anyway, it takes maybe 30 seconds to two minutes of reasonable intercourse for her to reach first orgasm, and as intercourse continues, maybe 3 climaxes a minute after that, no let’s say 2 orgasms, so that comes - no pun intended - to maybe 8 minutes of foreplay and 500 minutes of intercourse which totals 508 minutes for me to give a woman 1,000 orgasms.” He looked up at an analog clock. “60 times 10 is 600, times 8 is 480, so 490, 500, 508 plus 10 is 518, so I need 8 hours and 38 minutes, that’s less than I originally thought. Hey, I can actually give you a half-hour head start instead of 10 minutes. If you start at noon, I’ll start at 12:30, and by the time I’m finished I can actually be done in time to catch *Fox News at 10*. You probably wouldn’t be finished in time to watch *Good Morning America!*”

“Hey! I just thought of something. I might even make out - again no pun intended - on this deal even if I was to lose which I know I won’t. We find two girls who are willing to consent, and I am completely truthful, I explain to each of them that me and my business partner have a bet on which one of us will be the first to make one of them come 1,000 times by fucking her brains out and we’d like to try them, and I’ll make it up to them by offering both of them each a minimum three hours of gentle, passionate romance later on after my dick feels better.

“If they think it’s cute, and they just might, we’re *In Like Flint*. If they get insulted and walk off, we try two more. But the real benefit comes - again no pun intended - if one or both of them get mad. If any of them slaps me, I bust her for assaulting a Supervisor just like cops would bust hookers on earth. And if she hits me with her fist, I violate her for breaking Rule #1 and violating my civil rights and now I own her ass. Might be fun to try it just to see what happens.”

(“Make that five to *ten* years in *SuperMax*,”) Mias thought as he blew his stack. “You’re out of your mind! That’s nothing but... but... but legal... legalized entrapment! You are a fucking lunatic, you son of a bitch!”

One of the many people who had stopped to listen came over. “Excuse me, Supervisor, I don’t mean to interrupt, but I kind of agree with your associate. That sounds horribly like legalized entrapment.”

Supervisor 246 turned to the lady and shook his head. “No, ma’am. Let’s say that in this case of what I and Mias might decide to try to do is, we find two ladies who look like they are interested, I go over and introduce myself to them, and I say, ‘If I may be so bold as to say so,

the two of us find you two very attractive, and we would like very much to engage in sexual intercourse with you if you are willing to consent. Would you be willing to do so?' If one of them slaps me then, fine, I'll take it as no and it's within the anti-insult statute.

"But if they say yes, then they lose their right to be insulted at what I say. 'It is reasonable for someone to consider they have been insulted if someone solicits them for sex. However, when "a" has stated that they would want to have sex with "b", and "b" has agreed they would be willing to do so, it is unreasonable for "b", having agreed they want to engage in sex, to become outraged or upset at the other person talking "dirty" to them and then slapping "a" for that. To do otherwise would grant a license to commit assault all the way up to the start of sex and including during orgasm, if a man, for example, was to say something "dirty" to the woman at the moment of climax.' As quoted in the case of *In the matter of Laura 154731, Accused, 7104 Appellate 765*. One of my cases, upheld on appeal, I'm proud to say."

246 turns back to Mias. "Okay, I have another idea. You've paid me 300 favors to do the current portion of the job that is completed. I'll finish it according to the printed design specification for free, but my request from you as the content of the favors is, as my agent and civil rights violation victim assignor, i.e. as my employee, is to stand in the Picketing Zone for two hours a day for roughly five calendar months, during each day's Incoming rush and express an opinion on a printed sign that says, 'Faggots go back to earth, we don't need no queers' and you agree to repeat that opinion to anyone who questions you."

Someone standing on the other side of the corridor listening, snickered.

"Are you crazy? Do you know what will happen?"

"Of course. A number of human beings will get very upset. Some of them will take a swing at you. Some may even connect. The moment they do either, they get violated for breach of Rule #1. As your employer I have the right to demand retribution from those who would injure, or attempt to injure, my employee, the person to whom their civil rights were violated. I'll probably collect a hundred people for breaking Rule #1."

Another bystander yelled, "Way to go, Supervisor 246!"

246 turned and bowed, then turned back to Mias 880. "How does that sound? You not only get the work done for free, since I've used up all your favors that you owe me, you don't have to worry about me coming back to collect on them. Sort of like paying off a mortgage early. As for me, I get a bonus from all the perpetrators I pull off the street and all it costs me is the time it takes to finish your job. A win-win situation."

"Not that I'm going to do such a thing, but even if I would have, I'm supposed to stand there and take it?"

"I'll grant you the privilege of a complete Immunity from Assault while you're doing this. It doesn't matter whether they *could* hit you, all that matters is they had the *intent* of doing so, and *did*. Rule #1: 'No person shall initiate force upon another except to prevent or retaliate against the other's initiation of force.' When he takes a poke at you he violates your civil rights, and then I own him. Or her, if such a case happens."

"That's not going to happen, the police would arrest me in one day for incitement to riot."

246 shook his head. "Nope. Last week we caught a really vicious rapist. Cops want him for target practice, and they want him bad, I mean *bad*. I could conceivably loan him out to them in exchange for a favor from the Watch Commander that she fail to notice the existence of the sign you're carrying, and order her employees - the other police officers - to do the same.

Totally legal as they have discretion to do so. And there's nothing morally wrong, when the police give permission to be there holding a sign back on earth in the good old US of A on the public ways it was called a sign permit or a parade permit or something like that.

"Furthermore, I have the legal authority equivalent to a Federal Circuit Court judge, I can issue permission for you to display the sign myself. Then I don't even need to put you in the Picketing Zone, I can have you stand in front of the Main Entrance! Oh man!" He starts rubbing his hands together. "That might even be better, I might just have to put up a taxi meter to count the number of people I violate for breaking Rule #1! As far as the law is concerned, you're just standing there, minding your own lawful business when people start hitting you, or trying to, anyway.

"But I won't have to; the law on the Picketing Zone is clear: 'Anyone may silently express any writing or image or combination of both, in person or by agent, no matter what its content, provided one stands inside the box and do not offer audible comments except to those who address the person. The police have no power to prevent them, and in fact, are required by law to protect them from those who would attempt to prevent them from silently expressing such opinion.' I know the law is clear: I wrote it myself."

"Why on earth would you want to do such a thing, anyway?"

"We're not on earth, Mias."

"You know what I mean."

"You really want to know? It's a hackneyed phrase to say, 'This place is really Heaven' but it's true. The few rules and laws we have all make sense and are apparently designed with one thing in mind: to encourage the orderly operation of a free society and to prevent injury to others. If you don't like someone's opinion you should express your own or ignore his. I think the saying was, 'The answer to free speech we disagree with is not violence, but more speech.' Disagreement with someone else's opinion does not give someone the right to injure them. People who would do that have no place in a civilized society, and the sooner we pull them out, the less likely they are to do something really bad to someone. Perhaps we can even teach them a lesson that they have to respect other people's rights if we are to respect theirs. Maybe make them better members of society, and possibly less intolerant of other people's differences. If I pull some intolerant little snot off the street and make him learn, he's one less irritant to the people he might someday come in contact with and have a disagreement that hurts someone."

"Aren't *you* being hypocritical?"

"In what way?"

"Having such a homophobic opinion yourself."

"Who said it was *my* opinion? I just wanted to have *you* express it. Besides that, Mias, I'm not homophobic at all. Any time you want to come visit, I'll be happy to take you over the desk in my office and shag you a couple of times if you want. I'll even be sure to go slow and use lots of lube, or you can blow me if you like, as long as you don't bite. I don't do bottom, however."

Someone nearby listening laughed at that. Mias turned around in disgust and left, however, fuming.

Chapter 23

“I felt that we needed a place for unlimited free speech.”

As 246 was about to continue down the corridor, a lady walked up and asked, “Excuse me, Supervisor 246, could I ask you a question?”

“Yes. You look familiar. Aren’t you Arlene from the 6 o’clock Channel 63,045 news?”

“As a matter of fact, I am. I was just wondering if you normally hold those types of conversations in the middle of a public corridor.”

“Why not, I’ve got nothing to hide. Besides, I never raised my voice and if someone wanted to overhear they’d have to stop to listen.”

“I was listening to you talk about a couple of ridiculous stunts.”

“I didn’t think they were ridiculous.”

“You didn’t think putting up a sign that used epithets against gays wasn’t a ridiculous thing to do?”

“No. They’re just words. There’s an old saying, opinions are like... oops, ma’am, would you be upset if I said some things that might be insulting? I wouldn’t want you to get mad at me because I forgot and gave a crude example of something.”

“No, I wouldn’t.”

“Okay, whatever is written on a sign is just an opinion, a bunch of words. There’s an old saying, opinions are like assholes: everyone has them, everyone thinks everyone else’s stinks.”

“And you think it’s acceptable to express such opinions like those you mentioned in public?”

“Well, when I designed the Picketing Zone...”

“You designed it?”

“Yeah. I felt that we needed a place for unlimited free speech. Where people could have signs saying anything at all, and be within their rights to do so.”

“And it’s okay to say things like what you said?”

“You mean, ‘Faggots go back to earth, we don’t need no queers?’”

“Yes, like that.”

“There is a sign outside the entrance to the Zone that says, ‘By entering this facility you consent to being exposed to the ideas here. If you do not wish to see ideas you may find offensive or hostile to your beliefs, do not enter this place.’ The Picketing Zone is not the only path. You do not have to go through it to get anywhere, there are other ways to get to every place you can get to through the Zone.”

“But it’s the direct route to Central Square for most Incomings from earth! You have to know to go out of the building instead of the Main Entrance, around the corner and back in the other entrance. It’s very inconvenient to have to go around it.”

264 smiled. “Yes, isn’t it. That was the whole point.”

“It’s the whole point of it being inconvenient? I don’t get you.”

“It was once said that ‘freedom of the press belongs to those who own one.’ Meaning that most people don’t have the opportunity to be able to let lots of people see their opinions. By making it so that a lot of people can see those opinions you have the opportunity to let them be known. I think it’s a great idea to make this available. It allows people to be exposed to ideas and opinions they might not have seen otherwise. By making it slightly inconvenient to ignore them we encourage people to go there specifically to get their opinions seen by others.”

“Anyone can go there and take a square. They can even move around or wave their signs as long as they don’t cross into the path or someone else’s square. As long as they remain quiet the police cannot remove them. Not only that, not only can’t the police remove them, the police have to protect them and by law are required - no discretion permitted, the police must violate, arrest and remove - anyone who tries to stop them from displaying their message. And if someone asks them, they are allowed to respond to questions so long as they restrict themselves to a normal speaking voice.” He smiled. “In fact, some of them have gotten around the silence requirements and make speeches by having one of their friends stand outside their square, and ask them to tell them about their opinion.

“What it also means is the minority opinions, the crackpots, the crazies have their place to put their opinions before the public. This gets rid of a lot of festering resentment from people with an unpopular viewpoint, who would otherwise feel that they can’t have a place to make their case in the public square for whatever idea they believe in, whether you and I think it’s reasonable or nonsense.”

“You still haven’t answered my question.”

“The only reason I picked that particular opinion is that Mias himself is gay. I thought it would be quite ironic for someone who was, to hold up a sign like that. I might have asked him to hold up one insulting blacks, or Chicanos, or Muslims, or whites, or whatever minority group he was from if he was one. I only did it to bait him to see how he would react. And it got rid of him, which was the whole idea since I really didn’t want to do the job he wanted. And it was fun, which was most important of all.”

“Were you really serious about doing him in your office?”

“Why not? The door locks and it’s private. Why should it matter whether one uses a vagina or an anus to stimulate one’s penis? Pleasure is pleasure as long as the other person consents, and I doubt anyone has found a difference between a male or female mouth when it comes - no pun intended - to fellatio, it’s all in the skill of the person who performs it as to whether it’s any good.”

“You mentioned an anti-insult statute.”

“Yes.”

“What is that?”

“It’s a provision of the law that says that it is a defense to an accusation of assault where the assault consists of a single slap on the face of the victim to the crime, where the Accused used their open hand, immediately after any obscene gesture or offensive, insulting or otherwise degrading terms used by the victim to the Accused where the Accused has not indicated they would be willing to be exposed to such. The courts - and I am proud to say it was one of my decisions the appeals court upheld - have ruled that it is reasonable to include asking someone for sex as ‘insulting’.”

“I see. Well thank you for your time, sir.”

“No problem, ma’am.”

Chapter 24

“Call it *Future Shock* on an exponential scale.”

“Excuse me, Supervisor 246, may I have a word with you?”^{vii}

“Yes?”

“My Name is Artie 11. On rare and special occasions I’ve had the pleasure of watching you do some computer work for someone. I want to learn a bit more about programming and I figure if I look at how people who are very good at it work it might let me learn more. Now, am I correct that you have privileges that allow you to issue computer commands by thinking?”

“Yes sir, I do.”

“Well, that makes me wonder, why do you tend to use voice commands so much?”

“That’s a very good question, young man. You see, when one is doing specifications, they have to be exact or whatever you’re doing doesn’t work right. Or it may be completely wrong. If I instantiate a building, for example, and I make a mistake and fail to insert a structural point, what can happen is that the building might only have three sides, so as a result, it falls over and creates a pile of rubble. That then has to be cleared up and the structure started all over again. That’s a big waste of time.

“When you act at the speed of thought it is much faster than at the speed of voice. It’s the difference between working with a Briggs and Stratton gas powered chain saw, and a Black and Decker cordless hedge trimmer. The first one will do a whole lot more work, much faster, but it’s very easy to cause a lot of damage. The second one is not as powerful but it’s not as easy to make a huge mistake really fast.”

“Also, by talking something out you force your thought patterns to slow down. Panic is usually the result of someone taking in too many thoughts at once and overreacting to them. If you do something in a panic - or you panic because you think you did something wrong - you can often make a bad situation even worse.

“If I either am doing something quick or I don’t want someone around me to know what I’m doing I’ll think it in my head, but then I have to either be doing something trivial or I have to do it very carefully to make sure I don’t make a mistake.

“Another reason is that if you issue commands orally in programming code, or in SQL, you can ask the computer to read back what you have done. You can’t do that with thought-based commands.

“It’s part of the same reason most technology you see around here mirrors that of earth. We have something in the neighborhood of 8-10,000 people arriving here 7 days of each standard week after they die, usually 36 days in any one standard month. By arranging this world to be similar to earth with only slightly more advanced technology, they can be comfortable with the way things are. If they got hit by hugely wild advances such as the stuff we run out at Afterlife Amusement Park like flying cars, and monorails running through the sky, and about a thousand other things that they’ve invented in Science Fiction, it might confuse so many people so much that a lot of Incomings might be so disoriented that they decide it isn’t worth coming here, turn around and recycle themselves. Call it *Future Shock* on an exponential scale.”

“I see. And just 10,000 people? I thought the numbers were higher. I mean, Blue Oyster Cult sings a song called *Don’t Fear the Reaper*, which says that 40,000 people die every day.”

“That’s probably worldwide numbers. This particular town only handles Incoming people who think in English. And we only handle adults; babies and children are generally Recycled automatically. This gives those who didn’t make it to adulthood a chance to actually have the opportunity to be able to grow up. There are reception areas beyond the Frontier that handle other languages. It makes it easier to manage since otherwise we would have to have every possible language everywhere, or people could not understand what was around them, they could not communicate, they could not operate in a technologically advanced society which is dependent on computer support. You wouldn’t want someone to go to the recycling center when they intended to go to the Main Entrance, now, would you?” He smiled.

“Ah, no. I see. Can I ask you another question?”

“Certainly.”

“How come we don’t have any personal computers?”

“Well, it’s kind of complicated to explain, but, did you ever see the movie *The Matrix*?”

“As a matter of fact, I did. That was a terrific movie.”

“Well, what we are in right now would be very close to what that movie described...”

“You mean we’re inside of a computer program?”

“That’s about right. Take someone’s ‘soul’ if you were, capture it out of their brain, and put a piece of electronic circuitry in place of the organic compounds that make up your brain, and if the match is close enough, you’d never know the difference. Network the circuits together so they can exchange signals with one another as if they were sensory input and you have what we have here. Didn’t you go to orientation?”

“Yeah, but they didn’t make it that clear. Now I’m kind of frightened.”

“Why? You’re dead; live with it. What exactly is so different to have your existence operating on electronic hardware as opposed to it operating on the proteins and fats in the brain of an organic life form? If nobody told you, you’d never know the difference.”

“Gee, I never thought of that. I’m just hoping it doesn’t use Windows or we’re really in trouble.”

“No, actually they use Open Source software specifically because of safety issues. And if you decide to go under the knife, they put you minus your memories back into someone as a baby to start over. And while most people don’t bother, you can go back and review the memories you had from previous lifetimes. So you never really lose anything.”

“Gee, that’s really something.”

“Now to answer your question, about the only time someone uses a terminal on a regular basis is if they are doing audio or video editing. Especially video; since that uses a lot of computer power it’s expensive in favors to obtain and to keep, you either have to be a large-scale enterprise or have serious need to do video editing. The public library has video editing terminals for the use of the general public when they need it. And the Amusement Park has them for people that want video of their time there, the park can make copies of the system master tapes when needed.

“For just about everything else, we already have computer connections effectively tied into our heads, it makes very little sense to just create less capable smaller ones. Actually, you could set up a terminal but since most people can talk faster than they can type, for the few things people need to do they usually read them in.

“One thing you can do is use what we call ‘electronic paper’ by creating a pad that allows you to view stored information and such. It’s very similar to, say, a web browser on earth. Most people prefer ordinary paper that doesn’t change but you could use an electronic pad if you wanted to.

“Now, about the only time someone will use a terminal is when they have to be even more careful than when slowing down to the speed of voice, where they need to slow down to the speed of typing. If someone was to change something in the world, like maybe change the way the phone system works for everyone, there you would want to be extremely cautious and careful as a mistake there would be even more serious. But for most work, speaking out what one needs to do is sufficient.

“And if you have the privileges to do so you can create a video screen on the wall using what is called streaming video and run a video game on that, for example, and you could either use your hands to move or give commands to the game. So that means you don’t have to have the space that a computer terminal is using cluttering up an area. So what we have seems to work quite well, in fact, I’d say that the computer technology and scaling capacity we have here are about 100 years ahead of the state of the art on earth. But one thing we’ve always done in developing major pieces of software, is to consider stability and safety over any other concern. This means that it takes a lot longer for things to come out, but they tend to be much more reliable and less likely to fail when put into service. Since there isn’t a real ‘profit motive’ to develop programs there’s really no rush to get them out on the market. Further, since we learn everything they do there, as well as learn what mistakes they made so we can avoid them, we will probably always be many years, if not decades, ahead of them.”

“Gee, I’d never thought of that. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” 246 continued back to his office.

Chapter 25

“By the time you hear this message, I will be alive...”

Manager 12032 was extremely unhappy as he picked up the telephone and dialed a number. “Supervisor 246, come up to my office right now.”

In approximately two seconds, a sound similar to the *Star Trek* transporter occurred and 246 materialized in the office. “I’m sorry it took so long, David, I had to hang up the phone.” He sat down.

“Not funny. I just got off the phone with the new Deputy Administrator, or rather Administrator *Pro Tem*...”

“You mean ‘Putty Tat Marilyn’?”

“So you’ve heard of her. But ‘Putty Tat’?”

“Yeah. She used to be Secretary to the Chairman. One time she came into the office wearing a half black, half white dress. The Chairman looked at her and said she looked like Sylvester from the Tweety cartoons. So she ended up getting the nickname ‘Putty Tat.’ You know, ‘I tawt I taw a Putty Tat. I did, I did taw a putty tat’ Well, she was the Chairman’s secretary until Cynthia, the former Deputy Administrator, decided to go off to the Frontier, and I guess get raped for a while, so the Putty Tat applied for her job. You said Administrator *Pro Tem*. That means that Tom is officially out of the office so she’s APT in his absence. So it was her that called you, not the Administrator?”

“That’s correct.”

“Come to think of it I haven’t seen my friend Tom for a couple of days, maybe a little longer. I know he was with Joan - the Police Watch Commander - just a little while ago. Do you know what happened to the Administrator?”

“No. I don’t know.”

“Central Computer, check any new messages from Welcoming Department Administrator.”

“1 new message on voicemail.”

“Central Computer, play message.”

A man’s voice comes out, partially breaking up, as if he’s either crying or trying to hold back tears, and not succeeding. “246, this is... Tom. I’m afraid I’m going to have to break the combat date for our golf game next week. I’ve been sitting at home for a while thinking. I’ve been feeling, oh I dunno, maybe that I’ve been wanting to do something better with myself. I wasn’t sure so I didn’t say anything because if I changed my mind I could always erase this voice mail. I wasn’t sure if I should say it, here, or let you learn it later, 246 my friend. I remember you once spoke about that line from *Star Trek II*, ‘I am now, and always shall be, your friend.’ And you always have been.

“Sooo, I guess I can tell you a few things I kept away from you. Did you know I found out what your real name was? It took quite a bit of work but I found it. Why didn’t you ever tell me? I would have understood. Do you think I would have thought it was strange that it was me in that previous life that knew you and now I’m here? I think someone said once that eventually we will meet people we have known in previous lives, and sometimes we even do so on earth.

“I even listened to the tape when you were first Welcomed here, so many years ago. And I know you remember the pet name that... uh, that ‘she’ gave to you. Indeed, she really played

you, didn't she?

"Do you remember what happened at the 1,000,000 climax contest? We were planning to get you to come by and participate at the party for weeks, we had half your section in on it so we could arrange to surprise you. Then it was my idea to bring in that dead porno star. Just wanted you to know.

"Okay, you'll probably know it before too long so I'll say it now. I set this message up to delay delivery until it would be after the time it happened. I've scheduled my operation for around 8:30 Eastern so that's when I go 'under the knife' as the saying goes, for a Real Sex Change. Yep. You got it. By the time you hear this message, I will be alive..."

246 gasped. The audio continues. "I'm sorry if you feel bad that I didn't let you know or have the chance to say goodbye, but, somehow I just felt it would be better if you remembered me as I was, not now, and know me - literally and biblically - as I will be when I'm back. I had some of my staff over to see me before I left. A couple of them I told privately and they said they knew I was feeling bad but didn't know it was this bad."

"And now I can tell you something I couldn't admit to myself until now and it's the final thing. I love you, 246. And I wanted to return that love, again, but I could not because I realized once, in something you said, that the greatest gift you can give anyone is the gift of love. That or a nice big orgasm, which is part of physical love. And I realized that I couldn't do that; even if I got a sex change I'd be lousy in bed and I didn't want to have to try to learn how; maybe I'm just too tired or bored or something. But I thought, I could do something else; something I'd tried before. Get a Real Sex Change. Then when I had learned how to use it I'd be okay. So I'll learn how, and I'll be back.

"It's redundant to ask you to do the following 246, as - as you put it - it's sweepstakes odds that you would anyway. If you didn't think of it, credit me with 100,000 favors because you *really* screwed the pooch this time. Actually it's a good thing we have most animals Recycled automatically anyway, Supervisor 246, as I might not trust you if there was a lamb, a steer or a sheep anywhere nearby. Of course, by the time you got finished short-arming them, they'd never want to go back to their own species again!" He actually laughs for a moment.

"Here's something to think about if you ever consider going under the knife but not as a human: UCLA did some studies that say that a male rat can fuck continuously. Then again, with you, you horny bastard, they'd probably be envious.

"Some people used to talk about black guys and their dicks and supposedly how they were a terror to women. If I was to tell people on earth that the most terrifying sexual force for women was 6 foot 2 and white and had a 3 digit number for a name, they'd ask if it was 666, never dreaming it was 246. Oh, sorry, not 6 foot 2, just presume it to be whatever it is in metric.

"That reminds me, I still say that English terms like 'a miss is good as a mile' have more flavor than anything in Metric. Sure, it's easier to use, that's the whole point, but it was boring. I never could get myself to think in Metric, I still thought of 98.6 degrees as body temperature, not 37. The numbers just seem too low.

"Presumably you'd charge me for doing it as I've heard you'll never do favors for free, so if you owe me any favors, 246, and I don't remember if you do, or give them to me on credit if I have to buy them, here are the two things. First, Flag me." His voice breaks up for a moment, then he resumes. "Second, I want you to return a favor which we now both know I did for you many years and lifetimes ago. So what I want from you is, as you call it, to allow me to pay you the

highest compliment one human being can offer another. I want you to be the one who loves me back into the world. I want it to be your face I see when the first female climax hits me in vaginal intercourse.

“I used some favors to make sure the full announcement of my sex change would show up on the news so you can do a search and find it.

“And now, in parting I shall say something to you in answer to something you said to me. Goodbye, my friend, and remember this thought, and if you agree with me that it is better than yours, echo it back. I think I found an even stronger term for friendship than yours, 246, and I’ll say it to you now: Supervisor 246, I was, am, and always will be, *primus inter pares*, your friend, Tom.”

Chapter 26

“... *primus inter pares* ...”

After a pause indicating the message was over, 246 said, *sotto voce*, “He was right, it was stronger. And I’ll agree with you: Tom, I was, am, and always will be, *primus inter pares*, your friend, 246. I love you too, Tom, and I will miss you very much until I see you again.” Manager 12032 spoke. “Well, I guess I can understand that having a sex change could be such a big thing. What does that phrase mean?”

“It’s Latin. ‘First among equals.’ Central Computer, transfer 1000 Favors to Welcoming Department Administrator attribute Eternal and confirm.”

“Transfer Eternal: 1000 favors from Supervisor 246 to Welcoming Department Administrator. Caution: these favors will never expire, even if the person goes under the knife. Confirm if you want eternal attribute attached or cancel.”

“Central Computer, confirm.”

“Transfer Eternal: 1000 favors from Supervisor 246 to Welcoming Department Administrator Completed”

“Central Computer, audio search, news, ‘Welcoming Department Administrator’, ‘Administrator 113214’ or ‘Administrator Johnson’ and list.”

“No News.”

“Central Computer, display ID Administrator 113214”

“29231 GA Tom 844323.”

“Central Computer, audio search, news, ‘29231 GA Tom 844323’ and list.”

“In other news, 29231 GA Tom 844323, who worked at the Welcoming Department, and was Incoming as Tom Johnson, went under the knife today for a Real Sex Change and was born as his choice, a female, at 6:45 am Central Standard Time in a shack at the Mexico City garbage dump. Police Watch Commander Joan 20319 reported that Tom 844323 had left behind a note saying ‘I am tired of a Lotus Eating existence and want some meaning in my life.’ Her new parents, Rosa and Mañuel Lopez, have named their 2.5 kilogram baby Maria Consuela Lopez. He was deceased by his friend, the infamous Supervisor 246. Persons wishing to flag her when she returns are requested to contact the Recycling Department, or do it themselves if they have sufficient privilege. In a note supplied to this announcer by the now undead, it was stated ‘That means you, 246.’

“In other news, now here’s something *really* depressing...”

“Central Computer, stop audio. Well at least they got my number right. I see that he didn’t have them mention he was Administrator, I guess he wanted it low key until after it happened. Should I have... no, I’m not going to ask the Recycling Department for anything, not after the last incident, I’ll do it myself. Central Computer, flag, cancel. Aw shit, I haven’t done a flag myself in I don’t know how long. Central Computer, help command ‘flag’”

“Say ‘flag’, then give the full name, GMT and place of birth. If information is insufficient for locate, more will be requested. Flagging requires authorization. Please be advised flagging causes logout.”

“Central Computer, show time zone for Mexico city, DF, Mexico.”

“Central Time, GMT -06:00.”

“Central Computer, flag Maria Consuela Lopez, time 00:45 today, place Mexico City, DF

Mexico “

”Be advised flagging causes lockout. One entry found. Confirm ID is 29231 GA Tom 844323 and provide any options to change, or cancel to abort.”

“Central Computer, confirm, option change first name on ID from ‘Tom’ to ‘Maria,’ option declare inactive.”

“Notice. ID change or inactivity marker is usually done routinely by the Recycling Department during monthly batch updates, or else automatically at death. Confirm if you wish to change it now.”

“Central Computer, confirm.”

Two loud buzzer sounds occur. A polite woman’s soft voice speaks: “Warning. You are about to perform a reorg. All of your computer functions will be locked out while this is taking place. This is not a trivial operation; it cannot be stopped once begun, continues until finished and will take a considerable amount of time.” The voice changes to that of the man who said “give the man a cigar” to David earlier: “And when I say considerable buster, you could be sitting on your ass with everything dead - including being unable to use the telephone - for two hours or more; be very careful when doing this.” The voice changes back to the previous lady, “Provide authorization for privileged function or cancel to abort.”

“Central Computer, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”

“You will be advised when lockout has ceased. You will receive no other messages before then except warnings and no commands from you will be responded to; use someone else as proxy if you need to or in the event of emergency. Give final confirmation if you are sure you want to do this or cancel to abort.”

“Central Computer, confirm.”

“Request acknowledged, please wait as lockout is now in effect.”

“It will be some time for it to reorganize the database for 18 billion people, the 2 here and the 6 on earth, plus possibly another 10 billion in the Frontier and the other areas where they don’t think in English. So we’ll wait.”

“That ID you mentioned is too obvious to be randomly generated. You had your ID changed in some special way?”

He nodded. “Not only that, nobody else has a code starting with all zeroes, or has spaces in it for the check code, or ending in 000246. And nobody else will ever be issued a code that ends in 000246. That cost me a lot of favors. But it was worth it.” He smiled. “I’m the only 246 in the *whole* world. World’s most exclusive vanity license plate. And probably most expensive.”

“You say it’s expensive. If it’s all right to ask, how much would you say it cost you?”

“Based on the number of favors I had to trade, most being from other people to me and some of my own, hmm, maybe 300,000 and basing it out at maybe an average of 20 dollars an hour, I’d say it cost me the equivalent of about six million dollars. That’s about right. Today my favors are much more valuable, it would probably be worth about ten times that much.”

“Wow. May I ask how many you have?”

“Haven’t checked in a long time. Central Computer, count all favors due me.”

Nothing happens.

“Aw, shit, I forgot I’m locked out.” He opened his wallet, and looked at a card. “David, I’m going to give you privileges to pretend you’re me. Promise me you’ll release them when I ask

you to, okay?"

"Sure."

"Say this, 'Central Computer, grant me proxy for user 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.'"

"Central Computer, grant me proxy for user 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246."

"This requires their permission or authorization code. Race Free Zulu Delta."

He looks at the card. "Say 'Central Computer, authorization Mildew, Spice, Frost, Grape'"

"Central Computer, authorization Mildew, Spice, Frost, Grape."

"Authorized, you may proceed."

The voice changes to a new one. "Priority Message to Supervisor 246: Someone is acting as you through proxy."

"David, say, 'Central Computer, list all occupants of room by ID.'"

"Central Computer, list all occupants of room by ID."

"00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 246, currently locked out. 11062 WN David 030216 acting as 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 246."

"David, Say this 'Central Computer, count all favors owed me.'"

"Central Computer, count all favors owed me."

"756,231,488."

"Now say, 'Central Computer, count all favors I owe.'"

"Central Computer, count all favors I owe."

"118,146."

"How does that compare to most other people?"

"Say 'Central Computer, list statistical average favors due.'"

"Central Computer, list statistical average favors due."

"120."

"Okay, now you try it. First, go back to being yourself. Say 'Central Computer, revoke proxy and confirm'"

"Central Computer, revoke proxy and confirm."

"11062 WN David 030216 is no longer proxy to anyone."

"Now ask Central Computer, how many favors are due you, then ask how many you owe."

"Central Computer, count all favors due me."

"Zero"

"Central Computer, count all favors I owe."

"720."

"Those are the ones I tricked you into saying '5 gross'. Since you're new here and you're a fairly nice boss I'm willing to let you take them back, all but the 5 you thought I was charging you."

At this point, David would make a response to 246's words, then ask a question, out of ignorance. This particular choice of words he used in the question, showed his ignorance. 246 is not a violent man; that is probably the only thing that saved David from getting the crap beat out of him. Here is what David said:

"246, I'm from Texas, I can accept a good beating in a poker game any day, even if it is from someone who's a professional at it. I shouldn't have gotten in the game if I didn't know how to play; that's how you lose your shirt. I'll learn. So how long will your friend be gone getting his

sex change done?”

This was David’s big mistake.

Chapter 27
“I have an Armada Signal.”

246 looked at him, and shook his head. “David, dear boy, please get to...” and at this point he screamed, “A GODDAMN MOTHERFUCKING ORIENTATION CLASS, BEFORE I HAVE TO VIOLATE MYSELF FOR POPPING YOU ONE, YOU CLUELESS INCOMING ASSHOLE! ARRGH!” David almost fell out of his chair in shock; he could not believe 246 would get so upset.

246 calmed down a bit. “Central Computer, call Board of... aw shitfuck I keep forgetting that I can’t use it while a reorg is in progress.” His voice became rather tinny as if he was trying to keep from crying. “David, I’m sorry I yelled at you, I am extremely upset. Would you please use the speakerphone, call the Office of the Board - it’s on the Rolodex there - and tell them your alias and that you have to report - and be very careful to say this exactly - an Armada Signal.” David dialed a number. “Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“This is Manager 12032. I have to report an Armada Signal.”

“Repeat, please.”

“This is Manager 12032, I have to report an Armada Signal.”

“This is very important. Are you *absolutely* certain?”

David looked over. 246 Nodded. “She can’t hear me, just say yes.”

“Yes.”

“Please hold.”

“Executive Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this had better be goddam important or we will violate you big time.” The man speaking has the same voice as the one who originally said, “give the man a cigar,” among other things.

“This is Manager 12032, I have to report an Armada Signal.”

“Listen carefully buster, this is *the Board*. We’re six steps senior to God. I’ll let you get away with that this time because you might be too stupid to know what you are doing. If you’re *absolutely certain*, say that again. If not, hang up and don’t ever call us again with this. I’m not kidding that if you’re not right we will violate you, not just six-ways-to-Sunday, but in ways you can’t possibly imagine.”

David again looked at 246. He nodded. “Say it again, David, just say that you have an Armada Signal.”

“I have an Armada Signal.”

“Accepted. I hope to Christ you’re not kidding because if you are you’re in real trouble. You can hang up now.”

As soon as the man said “Accepted,” 246 got up, closed the blinds and locked the electronic lock on the door. He then sat back down.

David Hung up. “What on earth did I just do? The funny thing is the exact same term was used to indicate World War III and the end of the world in the book *Down to a Sunless Sea*.”^{viii}

“That’s exactly where it came from, it...” He didn’t get to finish as a man teleported in.

“246, nice to see you. How come you didn’t call me directly?”

He gave a sardonic grin “George, you get a Hugo ten spot.”

“Really?”

“As they said in *Shrek*, ‘really, really.’ You’re not going to believe it.”

“I know the old game, I’m supposed to say I will and you tell me then I say I don’t. So what did I win?”

“I just screamed at my boss, David here.”

The man - George - looked at David. “Holy shit. What happened?”

“Tom went under the knife. He decided to get a Real Sex Change and come back. I get a delayed voice mail message from him telling me to flag him and...” His voice starts to break up and become tinny at this point, “... love him back into... I mean, love *her* back into the world. David is so clueless he just asked me how long Tom is going to be gone getting his sex change. *That’s* when I screamed at him.” 246 was almost in tears.

“So right as we speak you’re flagging Tom?”

“Yes.”

“So you’re doing a reorg and locked out which is why you can’t call.”

“Yes.”

“So how much was the bet for?”

“5,000.”

“You know, I’m really surprised. I never expected to actually win the bet from you. I figured I’d be paying you as I expected I’d be the one who lost his temper first.” George turned.

“David, what’s your ID code?”

“11062 WN David 030216”

George spoke to 246. “I guess I can understand why you blew your stack. Central Computer, grant over transfer favor privilege to 11062 WN David 030216”

246 said, “David, say ‘Central Computer, transfer 5,000 favors from Supervisor 246 to Chairman and Confirm.’”

David’s eyes bugged out when he heard 246 identify George. “Central Computer, transfer 5,000 favors from Supervisor 246 to Chairman and Confirm.”

“Transfer: Five thousand favors from Supervisor 246 to Chairman. Completed.”

The Chairman spoke. “Central Computer, revoke transfer favor privilege from 11062 WN David 030216. What’s her name?”

“Her name is Maria Consuela Lopez. She’s in one of the hovels in the Mexico City Dump. 6:45 this morning.”

“We’ll see to it the family ends up in the U.S. and the girl grows up healthy. I’ll bet you’re going to really enjoy watching her grow up. You might even extra virgin, if she’s Catholic and dies too soon or becomes a nun, wouldn’t that be something? Give her a great big climax for all of us at the instant you pop her cherry when you love her back into the world.”

“I intend to. Big time. She’s going to see fireworks like never before. This is the first time in a long time I’ve been really excited about a woman.”

The Chairman laughed. “246, how many women are on your to-fuck list? Must be thousands. Let’s see,” he starts counting them off on his fingers, “Lauren Hutton, Christiane Amanpour, Brenda Vaccaro, Mother Theresa, Linda Ellerbee...”

David turned to look at 246, and said, “Mother Theresa?”

246 grinned. “Can’t fault me for trying. Besides, she did devote her life to serving God.”

The Chairman laughed. “That’s ‘serving’ God, not necessarily ‘servicing’ Him.”

Besides, *I'm* God, not you. Not yet, anyway, I mean, I offered you the opportunity and you turned it down. At best, you're what your Welcomer originally called you, years and years ago. You are one sick fuck, 246. I've seen busy warehouses that have smaller client lists."

David turned to 246. "Wait a minute, isn't she dead already?"

"Yes, but I understand she turned down the offer to be loved back into the world and I wouldn't have gotten her anyway, her native language wasn't English. I think she doesn't believe she's really dead yet, she thinks this is Purgatory and was sent here to continue her mission, so she went out to the Frontier to try to preach to the lost souls out there. I am amazed, she's the only woman who would be brave enough to go out alone to a place like that. And it shows something about her personality and her reputation, she's the only woman - and probably the only virgin - who's been out to the Frontier without armed escort who *hasn't* been raped. "Even the Muslims and the Jews who are out in the Frontier stop their weekly wars whenever she happens to visit the areas they are fighting over. The only other thing that gets *that* to stop are the *World Cup* Soccer Finals, so that shows you how respected she is.

"What I meant was that I wasn't sure which I was going to enjoy more, watching Maria's expression when she feels me come inside her the first time, or coming inside her. And which way she's going to choose when she takes me."

"Let me know when you find out, oh, probably in about 80 standard years. Anything else?"

"Tom thought of a really strong expression for a close friendship. I liked the one from *Star Trek II*, 'I have been, and always shall be, your friend,' but he thought of an even better one. He said, 'I was, am, and always will be, *primus inter pares*, your friend.' And I have echoed it back."

"Hmm. I think I get it. It's Latin, and it translates into 'first among equals'. I once used the phrase to refer to my position as head of the *Zombies*, but I'd never thought of using it that way to refer to friendship. How would you qualify it's meaning in this context?"

"Well, you could take it as best of all friends, which might be a stronger statement than best friend, or perhaps, what was that line from that song, 'You mean the world to me, you are my everything, I swear the only thing that matters, matters to me,' which may be what Tom meant. In my case, for the last line, I would have used what I originally thought the lyrics were, 'I say the only thing that matters, after me.' I guess it has the advantage that you can have it mean whatever you want, it is a strong statement of close friendship, and yet it can mean so much more. I'm going to be thinking about it for a long time."

"I'll have to think about it, too. Interesting way of saying that. Anything else?"

"Right now, I think that's about it. There's something else which I can't quite remember now, I'm still a little upset about Tom recycling himself and not telling me."

"Are you still mad at David.?"

"No, I think it helped to yell at him."

"Nevertheless I'll give you a freebie on him. Central Computer, Telephone Watch Commander."

"Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line."

"Knit 2 Pearl 4"

"One moment please."

"This is Joan 20319."

"Hi Joan, this is the Chairman."

“Mike, how are you doing?”

“Authenticated. Get real broad, my name is George.”

“So what can I do you for, Dr. Green?”

“You’re not gonna believe this.”

“I’ll believe anything.”

“246 blew his stack today.”

“I don’t believe it.”

“Have you heard about Tom?”

“Yeah, he left a note before he went under the knife.”

“246’s boss heard that he went to get a Real Sex Change and come back, then asked how long he’d be gone, and 246 hit the ceiling.”

“Well, that’s amazing. I knew Tom, he was great in bed, such a fun guy to be with too. 246 is usually very calm, unless... Oh. George, let me guess. I was there when Tom left his voice mail message to 246, but I promised Tom I wouldn’t tell him ahead of time. It’s because he heard Tom say that when she comes back she wants 246 to love her back into the world, that’s it, isn’t it?”

“Now you see why.”

“246 does have a lot of control. I might have had to violate myself if it had been me because the Clueless ignorant fool would probably be hurting big time. On the other hand I might just have apologized, and if the guy was willing to forgive me, I might use my police power to decide not to prosecute. On something like that I’m willing to accept that I’m human and make mistakes. But I just hope I never get tempted to do it in other circumstances, I might decide I’d have to quit. No, George, my friend, if it came down to it, if I got tempted to beat prisoners or people we’ve just violated I would quit. Can’t be a police officer if you’re going to take the law into your own hands.”

“Glad to hear it Joan, my friend. I’d always thought 246 made the right decision when he asked me to offer you the job. Anyway, His boss’ ID is... David, what’s your number?”

“11062 WN David 030216.”

“Okay, I have his number.”

“246 has permission to break Rule #1 on him from now on. Also, 246 is going to give him a direct order from me; 246’ll fill you in on the details when he’s available. Actually, I can tell you, he’s going to Board Certify him but I need to explain it to him.”

“Yes, sir. Logged for both items. Order Numbers 7104-16632 and 33. Is he there?”

“Yes ma’am. He can hear you but he’s locked out flagging his friend so he can’t answer you.”

She yelled out, “Hey 246, that’s great! Unlimited beating rights! Wish they’d give that to me sometimes, because I won’t do anything to someone unless it’s legal. Have fun. Oh, sorry about your friend. I liked him too, a lot. Love her back into the world big time for all of us, fella.”

“Tell Joan what I said.”

“246 wanted you to know that he intends to make her see fireworks big time.”

“Just like he does to me?”

“Tell her ‘even better’.”

“‘Even better,’ he says.”

“Good for you, 246! Good luck with whomever Tom is when she shows up. See you

tonight.”

The Chairman spoke. “Bye. Central Computer, Close Connection. David?”

“Yes?”

“You’ve probably guessed that I’m the Chairman of the Board, Dr. George Green. How do you do?”

“Well, it’s nice to meet you, sir, I never expected to meet anyone that important this soon, if at all.”

“Since you’re working with 246, you probably would have, sooner or later. Anyway, obviously I can give you orders, right?”

“Yes sir.”

“Would you like to know about something fun?”

“Sure.”

“If you get a direct order from me or the Board to do something, you get to do anything at all to get it done, you get away with it.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, let’s say you’re given a direct order by me to go somewhere. So you walk over there. That’s okay. Or, let’s say you see a transit bus, you could get on, toss the driver off, step on the gas and go as fast as possible, run over any pedestrians in the way, and crash through the plate glass window of the building you were going to. And you know what punishment you would get?”

“I think I understand. Nothing.”

“Absolutely. Not only that, it doesn’t even matter if it was unnecessary to do it that way. It’s your discretion on what to do to comply with the order. So, in a moment, 246 is going to be in a unique position to give you an order instead. And I’m granting you a direct order to follow whatever he tells you. Got me?”

“He’s going to tell me to do something and I’m to do anything at all to make sure it’s done and no matter what I do to comply I can’t be punished for it.”

“That’s correct. As long as it’s related to complying with the order, and ‘related’ is generally taken with extremely wide latitude. Have fun.”

“Excuse me, sir?”

“Yes?”

“Instead of calling it a ‘direct order’ which people might not understand, why don’t you use the term from earth, ‘Diplomatic Immunity?’”

The Chairman looked at him. “David, what’s your ID code again?”

“110621 WN David 30216.”

“Central Computer, transfer 20 favors to 110621 WN David 30216. You know, young man, I wish I’d thought of that. 246, why didn’t you think of that?”

“Did anyone offer me any favors to do so?”

The Chairman smiled. “Greedy bastard.”

246 smiled too. “Sir, under the law I can take that as an insult and legally slap you. Or I could if you were here, that is. Actually I thought of it several years ago.”

He laughed. “I’m glad to see you’re feeling better. 246, instruct him about our names, Board Certify him. Now, this is a separate matter. David, I just gave 246 permission legally to do anything he pleases to you forever. Not only that, it’s one sided. He can beat the shit

out of you, toss you off the roof of the building to see which parked car you land on, or fuck you in the ass until you're screaming in agony, and he can do this as often as he likes, but if you try to stop him, or hit him, you get violated for breaking Rule #1 and you go to jail! So don't get him mad again because he might pop you one. He can't ever be violated for anything he does to you. I suggest you go to orientation before you do anger him again. Do you understand?"

"Uh, yes, sir. May I ask you a couple of questions?"

"Certainly."

"About how old are you?"

"Well, that's sort of a hard question to answer, why did you want to know?"

"Would it be fair to say that you're under 75 years old?"

"Oh yes."

"Well, you referred to me as 'young man'. I was 75 when I died."

"Oh. It's hard to tell. In case you hadn't noticed, most everyone there looks under 25."

"Yes, I know. It's hard to tell how old anyone was."

"Well, all right then, old man, I'll remember that. What was your second question?"

"Do you have limits on what you're allowed to do here?"

"No, not really, did you think I did?"

"Well, you gave me the ability to transfer favors from 246 to you but just now you gave me some favors, so I thought it must be you're not allowed to do so yourself, and that seemed strange."

"Well, actually, it's just common courtesy. You ran a hotel chain if bio I have on you is correct, if a cashier was to buy something in one of your gift shops, she can't ring up her own sale, can she?"

"No, it's a check against someone being dishonest."

"Well, the same applies here. If I am transferring favors for my own account, I could do it myself but because, as a matter of custom in society we want to show people we respect them, whenever we might have someone give us favors, either they give them themselves - so they can't claim they were cheated - or we get someone else to do it for us. Now I could do it directly, but I choose not to, just to be polite, no other reason. 246 has the authority to do that too, but he would do it the same way for the same reason."

"Oh, I never thought of that. Thank you."

"You're welcome. 246, Anything else?"

"Now I remember. David, repeat what you said to me when I asked you to use the phrase 'Armada Signal' to page George."

"I think I asked you what that was about because the exact same term was used to indicate World War III and the end of the world in the book *Down to a Sunless Sea*."

"That is exactly what it is for. That was a great book. Your boss is pretty sharp."

"I thought it was good but I felt the idea for the plot was a bit thin, that Great Britain would hold onto its oil, while the U.S. ran out of all of its and as a result the country collapsed. It showed how the U.S. would look as society disintegrated into the equivalent of a bankrupt third-world country. A well-written book and an excellent plot device, but probably unlikely."

"I thought it was a very plausible scenario, 246, why do you think it was unlikely?"

"The U.S. was, when I died, importing more than half its oil anyway. And Japan imports 90% of its oil; neither country has problems buying it. It's something like what Robert Heinlein said once, if the price of hamburger goes from \$1.50 a pound to \$5.00 a pound

overnight, it's an inconvenience. If you can't get hamburger at all, *then* it's a disaster. If the price of oil goes up, it drives out those who can't afford it and the supply equalizes."

"But what if you had a major dry up in supply, as the story said?"

"Estimates are that Saudi Arabia alone has over 100 years of supply. And we keep finding new ways to get oil out of wells that are marginal. As the supply started to run low - and remember, the system that is used to ship oil has a six-week backlog, it takes six weeks from the time any oil supply is reduced (or increased) before it shows up - there's time to raise prices and drive out marginal customers who can't afford it. That then encourages opening of wells too expensive to operate at the previous low price. That's why when OPEC severely raised oil prices it eventually caused a glut on the market because it encouraged exploration now that oil was more valuable, it encouraged more oil drilling and uncapping of wells that were more expensive to operate, but were now affordable at the higher price for crude.

"We had gas lines because of government distribution mandates and price controls. When both conditions ceased, even extreme fluctuations in price did not cause shortages because refiners were free to raise (or lower) prices to match competitors and to make money, plus they could distribute fuel where it was needed most, not where government orders said it had to go or what price they could charge.

"If you have a free market in energy, supplies will meet demand. Even the book mentioned attempts to use coal as a substitute although the effort was going to take a long time. It's only when someone tries to put their thumb on the scale and artificially change things that you have a problem, either because someone tries to corner the market - which almost never works - or because the government steps in and either nationalizes the system, which eliminates competitive forces because it becomes politically unacceptable for a government agency to allow prices to rise (or it encourages corruption by allowing the government ministers who operate it to use a lucrative system to line their own pockets which means prices won't fall, either), or the government imposes price controls on private companies, which does the same thing, cuts off supply.

"If the price of something goes up radically, it's usually temporary until the market corrects the problem, if it is possible by new suppliers stepping in, then the price usually comes down and stabilizes. There are almost always other choices. Maybe they'll develop an alcohol type fuel from crops, and something to inexpensively convert gasoline engines to use it. A high price is only an inconvenience, it may mean some people have to do without something else or use less in the interim. It's only if you can't buy oil at all (or the market isn't allowed to correct itself) that it's a real problem. And Desert Storm showed what the U.S. could do to any country that might threaten world oil supplies. Of course, the author couldn't know that at the time, even I didn't expect the world's military to cooperate so much or do that well, and he had to have the U.S. collapse in order to make the story work. That's why I said, it was an excellent plot device and a well-written book but as it was I saw the scenario unlikely."

"Jesus, 246, you amaze me sometimes. How long were you in the energy business?"

"I've never been in the energy business, I just simply understand how markets work. I could have expressed the same issue in my original line of work, computers, when there was a tremendous shortage of memory chips and the price went up. The reason was because American producers were getting killed by cheap memory from Japan, so the various American manufacturers of memory - actually, it was one in particular, Micron Technology of Idaho - got

the threat of a government-imposed embargo on DRAM to force Japanese makers to cut shipments. But the U.S. producers couldn't meet demand so prices skyrocketed. Someone put their thumb on the scale and dislocated the market. Same thing."

"Like I said, you amaze me sometimes."

"Anyway, about the reason for your pager code, George, you want me to tell him or do you?"

"You're so good, 246, you do it. Anything else?"

"Not that I can think of."

"Okay then." The Chairman dematerialized.

"David, what would be the most dangerous thing to have here? Of all the things around, what do you think? Really, take a moment."

"I don't really know enough about this area to be able to say."

"Okay, then, have you ever watched cartoons when you were younger, or with your kids, if you had any?"

"Yes, lots of them. I even watched some when I was an adult, too. Sometimes I had to keep up to date on the latest fads and things kids and teenagers were interested in, in case our hotel chain was doing merchandise tie ins for family marketing, I had to know what was acceptable in ads or what would be done by a particular cartoon's characters. For example, if our restaurants were doing a tie-in with *The Tick*, we'd want to use something that was blue, or related to a spoon, that word being his trademark. Doing something in red or in white, unless it was related to his sidekick, or involving a knife or a fork wouldn't be appropriate."

"Good, I see you do understand. For our world, and I have a standing offer of 10 favors for anyone who can guess, who is the most evil cartoon character ever created? It was before 2000, a long time before. An extra 100 if you know why, and if you get the first you can probably guess the second. But you have to promise not to tell anyone else if I have to tell you or you figure it out so it doesn't spoil the game. Now, before you answer, consider that I'm thinking backward, or upside down, that it would be completely the opposite of what you would expect in an evil character. And, just for fun, while you're thinking about it, tell me what your reasoning is. It's fun to listen to some of the answers. And it relates to what you just asked me about why I asked you to give an Armada Signal."

"Well, I'm guessing it would have to be someone who is doing or did something really bad."

"Yes."

"One of those people who destroyed the earth? Or tried to, like Marvin the Martian."

"We're not on earth, so that wouldn't affect us."

"Someone who destroyed, or would have destroyed something."

"You're getting warmer."

"Everything. Someone who destroyed, or could have destroyed the universe."

"Uh huh, and who might that be?"

"Damn, this seems so familiar. Oh shit. It just hit me. I wouldn't have thought of it otherwise. You think backward, as you say, so it wouldn't be someone really vicious, it would be someone cute. And I can only think of one character that fits those qualifications."

"And whom do you get?"

"The Great Gazoo from *The Flintstones*."

"Why?"

"He got sent to earth as punishment for creating a machine that could annihilate the entire

universe.”

“You got it. Once I’m unlocked I’ll give you the favors. Now, don’t tell anyone because I like to try this on other people, okay?”

“Sure. But I don’t understand why you consider him the most evil cartoon character.”

“You pointed it out exactly. *Because* the character of The Great Gazoo is cute. He looks harmless. Hidden evil is much worse and more dangerous than obvious evil. Now, I might have given him a pass on being ‘evil’ except that he knew what his device would do and he knew what the consequences of his actions were.

“Now, remember you mentioned how the Armada Signal indicated the end of the world, that’s exactly right. If someone discovered something that could conceivably destroy this world, or us, then that is a reason for that person to page the Chairman that they’ve discovered it. And they had damn well better be right. Because if you use his pager code for any other reason - unless they know him personally or otherwise have a reason to call - they are in trouble.

“Since the Chairman is essentially God, they’ll make an appropriate example of someone calling without a legitimate reason. They’ll crucify him, nail him to a cross at the Main Entrance with a sign reading, ‘This person used the Chairman’s pager code without a legitimate reason.’ And maybe after 30 days of agonizing torture, they might let him down, but when they do, it will be at the recycling center, and toss his ass back into the world. That’s why they warn people not to play games with his pager code. Which is how the order he wants me to give you relates to the above.

“Well, anyway, here is the direct order the Chairman wants. You are not to mention to anyone anything about the names or descriptions of him or anyone on the Board unless you know the person you are telling already knows it or it is absolutely necessary for them to know in order to perform a specific function. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“He’s asked me to Board Certify you. I am therefore required to ask that you make this a solemn promise to me and to him not to release this information except in the manner I have stated, under penalty of being tortured for 30 days and involuntarily recycled. If you understand me, simply say that you solemnly promise to do as I have asked.”

“I solemnly promise to do as you have asked.”

“Thank you. It’s mostly for privacy reasons. For example, did you know that man?”

“No.”

“See, he - and every other member of the board - can walk around in public and nobody knows anything about him. The most powerful man in this world, who can do anything he wants to anyone, and not only can’t he be violated, the police couldn’t even try, and in fact, he can give the police orders, as he just did when he told the Watch Commander to let me do anything to you. And nobody would be asking him for any special privileges because they wouldn’t even know he has any. So you see why: the board wants to stay private as much as possible.”

“Oh, okay. I was afraid I was going to have to do something very bad.”

“He just basically wanted you to know that if he gives you an order, you just go ahead and do it, no matter what the consequences. It eliminates excuses for doing something, where someone thinks they shouldn’t do something to comply. Let me give you an example. You’re subpoenaed to testify, you’re sworn, and you’re asked if you know any of the names of the members of the Board, what do you say?”

“I say, ‘no’ because I cannot be charged with perjury. I believe if someone showed me his picture and asked me if I recognized him it would also be correct to say ‘no’”
“Very good.”

Chapter 28

“...the highest possible compliment one human being can offer another...”

A few minutes later, a voice spoke. “Previous command was successful, you are now unlocked.”

“Central Computer, transfer 110 favors to David 30216 and confirm.”

“Transfer: One hundred ten favors from Supervisor 246 to David 30216. Completed.”

“Now lets see if it worked. Central Computer, display ID Administrator 113204.”

“Notice. The ID this alias is attached to has changed to inactive. The ID previously was 29231 GA Tom 844323. The ID has been changed to 29231 GA Maria 844323 and is Flagged. When ID is reactivated, notification will be sent to party or parties who flagged them.”

246 said, “I didn’t even know he was depressed. Damn shame, he was a nice guy. And he was right, I did love him. Both times. We’ll have to hold a memorial service and a sleep.”

“I think I’ve been blown away by what just happened. Will I understand much of what just happened from Orientation?”

“Yeah, but I’ll give you some quick pointers. Since we can’t ever get sick or injured, there are no medical doctors other than psychiatric and certainly no surgeons here. So when someone says they ‘go under the knife’ it means they get cut loose from society, they go back to earth and are born back into a baby’s skull. Sometimes called getting Recycled. It’s the earth equivalent of dying, or more like committing suicide since people choose to go. Actually, if someone breaks Rule #1 here bad enough, and we think they can’t be made to behave in a civilized society, and we either can’t send them to the Frontier or they might leave and come back if we did, they would be put under the knife without their consent, meaning they would have been sentenced to be Involuntarily Recycled. That would be the earth equivalent of having the death penalty imposed upon them.

“Also, since here you can change your sex from male to female - or the other way around - fairly easy, if someone decides to change to the other sex as part of being reborn, guess what they get?”

“A ‘Real’ sex change?”

“Yes.”

“So that voice mail we just heard was the equivalent of a suicide note?”

“Yeah. That’s why he said ‘By the time you hear this message, I will be alive.’ Just like on earth, someone would say, ‘By the time you hear this message, I will be dead.’”

“I’m really sorry about your friend. I guess he was really close to you.”

“Yes, he was. I will tell you another code phrase to show you just how much. He paid to me the highest possible compliment one human being can offer another by offering me the greatest possible gift one human being can offer another.”

“What did he say?”

“He said he wants me to be the one who loves him back into this world. Meaning that when he comes back - which will be as a woman - he wants me to be her *Welcomer*, the one who meets her and is the one who pops her cherry by giving her the first orgasm she has here, and gets to be the first man who comes inside of her. Do you remember the nice lady who propositioned you?”

“Yes.”

“She was your *Welcomer*, the one who met you. She *chose* to meet you when you came

back. She picked you; you were not assigned to her nor was she expected or required to have sex with you. Actually that's not true, we expect them to have sex with the other person but not in the sense that most people mean. It's not like we expect it as in we presume it is supposed to happen, it's more like, two people meet and get really excited about each other and really, really turned on and go home together and take off their clothes and jump into the sack and get really hot and bothered with some really wild foreplay, then the guy gets on top of her, positions himself, aims for her opening, then, at this point, would you *expect* him to start fucking her or would you *expect* him to turn on *David Letterman*?" He smiled.

"I mean, a Welcomer could just meet someone, take them back to their room, show them the video, answer questions, then decide to play tiddly winks or do a thousand things except fucking. Or making love, then fucking if you prefer; I mean it in the sense of whatever you like when you and someone you find interesting are in bed. If it's two lesbians it might mean eating each other or fisting or one using a strap-on upon the other. Or two guys might have one do bottom and the other shag him, or 66 (I don't know if there's a term for 69 when it's two guys). But it would be really stupid and I'd try very hard to keep someone who did not want to have sex with the person they were Welcomer for out of my section. *Real Hard.*

"The fun part of the thing is that you pick someone because they look really hot or you like them and because you want to fuck their brains out and be their first time. So basically you decide who you want, mark them so someone else can't, go get them, make them think you're attractive, bring them back to your apartment, show them the video, then you use whatever method you think is best to ask them if they want to have sex with you that they are likely to respond positively. We give them a mind reading privilege so they can read the other person's thoughts and overcome their objections and fears. We give them local instantiation privilege so that if the person wants anything at all, they can materialize it then and there for them. The whole point is that you've decided you want to have fun with this person and you want them to have fun with you. And I'll do everything in my power to make sure my staff and Incomings they Welcome can have as much fun as they want.

"The person you're bringing in is new, almost certainly confused, and scared, maybe terrified. You're trying to calm them down and show them care, and concern, and perhaps even love. And since this is their first time in the Afterlife, they are a 'virgin' even if, on earth, they had sex with more people more often than I have. I mean that, seriously. Wilt Chamberlain will be a virgin when he gets here. Despite the fact he's had over 30,000 women on earth. I suspect he's going to be very envious of me!

"And I do mean it is their first time. While almost everyone who is here has been here before, some were in other areas, the ones out beyond the Frontier, before, because in that lifetime they never thought in English so they weren't instantiated here, they went there instead. Since almost no one remembers their existence here when they were on earth, this is all new to them, so every time they arrive it is their first time here, and they are a virgin in this world. Same as, if they go under the knife they will be a virgin on earth no matter how much sex they had in their former life or while they were here.

"Because we don't have the limitations of the physical world here, certain things are radically different. One of which is that because sex here is literally mind to mind rather than mind to sex organ to sex organ to mind, the pleasure you get from sex is much much stronger than anything they can do on earth. Since you don't have a physical body that needs time to recover,

there is no reason for one to need stop time between orgasms. So a man can continue to have sex after he comes and he does not get soft. In essence men have the same orgasmic response capacity here that women did on earth.

“But here, women have much more. Since the vagina doesn’t have to support delivery of children, it doesn’t have to have huge stretch power. So, as a result, we don’t have to line just the first eight centimeters with sexual response tissue, we can line the *whole vaginal surface* with it. The entire vaginal vault is a whole lot of Graftenberg spots. We originally tried duplicating the clitoris along the entire system but it didn’t work right, I think it was so sensitive it was too much. But in any case, it’s a factor of at least 10 more sensation for a woman here than on earth. There, only about 30% of women can experience orgasm by vaginal intercourse using just a penis. Here, it’s 100%. Also, because the communications channels here are simulated using digital signaling rather than actual nerves, a woman can be ready for intercourse much sooner and respond to pleasure much faster than one on earth.

“For example, I can get a woman ready for sex in about 2 minutes of foreplay. On earth, it would take anywhere from 10 minutes to half an hour or longer. And first orgasm on a woman on earth as a result of vaginal intercourse, even if that alone would trigger it, would take much longer; that’s one of the reasons earth women often have a hard time getting pleasure from sex. A man doesn’t always want to take the time to do her right during foreplay, is often much too fast for her as far as wanting to begin vaginal intercourse, often won’t give her enough time to respond properly before he sticks it in, moves inside of her so fast that she can’t keep up with him, and he climaxes and ‘pours the pork’ into her before she’s half-way done. And then - presuming she trusts him enough to let him eat her, that’s a very personal thing and many women won’t let a particular guy do that even if she will let him have sex with her - he probably doesn’t like eating a woman he’s just come inside of so if he’ll even finish her at all, at best maybe he’ll finger her. If he hasn’t already gotten up to take a shower or rolled over and gone to sleep.

“Since we have no bacteria here and we don’t get sleepy unless we want to, a man doesn’t have to do either so he can stick around and hold her after sex. Actually since he doesn’t get soft after orgasm he’ll usually just keep on moving in and out of her, which means she continues to have orgasms even after she’s let him have one, so then she’ll usually give him another shortly thereafter, and on, and on, as he keeps giving them to her, she’ll keep giving them to him. Lots of orgasms for everyone, nobody has to feel deprived or cheated.

“So anyway here we can’t get pregnant. There are no diseases here. There’s no life beyond this to punish you for sleeping with someone you’re not supposed to. Sex is a hell of a lot better here than it is on earth. So there’s no reason not to have it any time you want it. And lots of it, too.

“So anyway, your Welcomer picked you. She wanted you. She wanted to ‘love you back into the world’, which is the highest possible compliment one person can offer another, and what she wanted from you was the greatest possible gift one person can offer another. She wanted to be the first person in this world you had sex with. She wanted to be the one who pops your cherry in our world, by letting you have sex with her until you came inside her, because she wanted you to come inside her, and to have you come inside of her just about any way you wanted, and do it again and again. She wanted to do this, because while you would be coming over and over again because of what she was doing to you, she would be doing the exact

same thing, coming over and over again because of what you were doing to her. An even, fair exchange. To let you fuck her brains out, while she fucked your brains out. Fucking like rabbits, as the saying goes. Or like minks, as they said in *Basic Instinct*. David, do you really want to be a member of our society, of this country, this world?"

"Yes."

"Go find her. That woman that first met you when you came back. As soon as you can do so. Go see her. Tell her that you thought what was going on was some form of prostitution and did not know that it is normal, and that if she will, you want her to 'love you back into the world.' If she doesn't want to, and I'll bet it's sweepstakes odds that she does, go back out to the Reception Area and try again."

"I had no idea. I will do that. Thank you."

"The computer will know who it was. Do you want me to tell you how to ask it for you?"

"Yes."

He wrote down a phrase. "Say this."

"Central Computer, who loved me back into the world?"

"19936 LA Priscilla 030332"

246 said, "Central Computer, find Priscilla 30332 , show status"

"1035th Floor, room 102. Is occupied by one person."

"She's alone. Call her. Say the computer's name, then say telephone, and her ID"

"Central Computer, telephone 19936 LA Priscilla 030332."

An excited woman's voice answered, "David, hi! How are you doing?"

"Okay I guess."

"Well, it's nice to hear from you again."

246 spoke up, cheering him on. "Come on, David, tell her!"

"Who's that?"

"This is Supervisor 246. I'm trying to get David to talk to you. David, just ask her if you can come over and let her love you back into the world."

David spoke. "Priscilla, can I come over and let you love me back into the world?"

She sounded excited. "Why sure, come on over!"

"David, what's your ID?"

"110621 WN David 30216"

"Central Computer, transport David 30216 to current telephone connection and close." David dematerialized. 246 did the same and went back to his office.

Chapter 29

“I wasn’t on the 6-o’clock news.”

Hours later, 246 materializes in David’s office, with a big grin on his face. “So what, David, sorry you didn’t do this sooner?”

David looked at him. “That was utterly fantastic! I’ve never felt anything like that before! I could never have even imagined what it was like to come and come and come over and over again. And it was so much stronger orgasmically than anything I ever felt as a man on earth. Thank you for talking me into it.”

“You’re welcome. So, anyway, David, you called me in about something before we were so rudely interrupted? Which reminds me, I’ll need to set up a memorial service and a sleep. I like to be reverse, so a wake after a funeral on earth would be a sleep here.”

“Wow, that was quite an experience. What a wonderful woman she was, I’ll have to see her again sometime, she invited me back anytime I want. Anyway, the Administrator Pro Tem is livid about your remarks on the 6-o’clock news.”

“I wasn’t on the 6-o’clock news.”

“She says you were interviewed there.”

“I was having a conversation in the hall with Mias 880 when a reporter asked me some questions. I was not interviewed.”

“Well, the APT says... Oh here she is.”

She walked in. “Good day, gentlemen, I have a tape from last night’s 6-o’clock news that I’d like you to watch.” She started to put a tape in the VCR.

246 asks, “Marilyn, why don’t you just use Streaming Video?”

“What’s that?”

“Watch. What channel was it from?”

“63,045.”

“Central Computer, television replay, location north wall, date yesterday, time 5:98, channel 63,045.”

A TV picture appeared on the wall as an audio fragment from a prior commercial plays: “...and because it’s there.”

“Always like to catch the commercial before the news, it’s the most popular time slot and costs a lot of favors to get. Usually it’s very interesting.”

The TV continues. It shows a man hitting another over the head with a baseball bat. Another hoses someone with a fully-automatic machine gun. Another, clearly disgusted, punches someone in the nose. A bunch of guys are fighting with each other. Some woman slaps a guy five times. Then some uniformed police come, violate and arrest everyone and take them away. An announcer comes on voice over. “Have you, or someone you know been recently violated? Broken Rule #1? Arrested for assault?” We now see these people standing inside of a jail cell, holding onto the bars, looking unhappy. “Know your rights under the law. Contact the law firm of Main, Main, Main and Main. It costs no favor for your first consultation. You have rights under the law and you should take advantage of them. Not knowing your rights could mean the difference between this...” It shows video of people milling around a square and going in and out of a building with a sign that reads MAIN ENTRANCE, “... and this...” video shows people going in and out of a building and milling around a heavily fenced back yard

of that building where we can now see has a sign in front of it that reads MAIN JAIL FACILITY. "Main, Main, Main and Main. Call anytime."

Picture goes dark for a moment. Next it shows a typical station ID card showing the typical full Terra picture far below and the words "Channel 63,045" as the first announcer speaks again: "This is Channel 63,045. Located at 63045 North 63045 Street in the English Language Afterlife."

Picture changes to the inside of the typical news studio where a couple of anchors sit at a desk. Announcer comes back on voice over. "With the number one newscast in the Afterlife, this is Channel 63,045 Eyewitness News, at 6! In Stereo!"

The video opens with a scene of police cars with emergency lights flashing, police buses being loaded with men and women, and a number of old men in beards and wearing skullcaps, being escorted onto police intake vans and shown in the yard behind the Main Jail Facility, as a voice over announces, "Full-scale riot breaks out at the Zone!"

Video of people holding signs in a foreign language, others sitting in a circle chanting, when some other uniformed police start beating the picketers and protesters with sticks and clubs, accompanied by attack dogs, as they chase them into cattle trucks (open trucks with lattice sides) and use cattle prods (electric shock wands) on them. The video goes on until another police officer smashes the camera with a billy club. Another video shows a cameraman being severely beaten by police until that camera operator too, is also clubbed. "In the Spanish Section: Mexican Federales shut down protests and picketing over police corruption and misconduct, over 35,000 arrested!"

Pictures of empty offices, shots down corridors with nobody in them, and a camera team focusing on a house with the door closed and the blinds shut. "Is there a shakeup in the works at the Welcoming Department? The Administrator and several members of his staff have disappeared!"

246 sardonically grinned. "Well, we know the answer to that story, don't we?"

The TV continues: "The Big Debate: Is there such a thing as too much free speech?"

"Tonight's Editorial: Do we really need public displays of insensitivity, hatred and bias?"

A male announcer says, "I'm Marion 22106," A female announcer, next to him, says,

"I'm Laura 1503. Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Our top story tonight: Riot breaks out in the Picketing Zone. We caution you that the text and pictures may be upsetting to some of our viewers. 332 Orthodox and Hasidic Jews were violated this afternoon for breaking Rule #1 when they assaulted a man in the Zone, holding a sign which had an antisemitic text."

The video focuses in on a young bald male wearing a typical Hitler Youth costume: tan shirt, tan pants, red armband with white circle and black swastika. He is standing in a square holding up a large hand-drawn sign, reading: THE NAZIS DIDN'T MAKE ENOUGH OF YOU KIKES INTO SOAP AND LAMPSHADES.

The audio continues: "The men had apparently just died, after coming off of a plane crash of a reunion of Holocaust survivors, had declined Welcoming, apparently also did not even see the Welcomer's video, refused Orientation, and were looking for a synagogue at which to pray, when they saw the man. Some of them were so upset they started punching and kicking him, at which point it apparently broke out into a full-scale riot as others joined in, and some others attempted to stop them from assaulting the man. Police came in and broke up the riot, violating the men and carting them off to the Main Jail Facility."

The TV shows Joan in her uniform in her office, and a logo below it reads: Police Watch Commander Joan 203 19. “I’m sorry to say I don’t like this one bit. Not one bit at all, in fact I think it is probably one of the most sickening things I have seen in decades. But I have to uphold the law as written even though I do not like it, and am deeply sorry for those who were violated, most of whom were apparently under the impression that they were still alive. Under the Picketing Zone Law the man has the right to express his opinion and I am powerless to stop him.

“Personally, I wish I could. I think it is a horribly cruel thing to show in public, especially in view of what happened to those poor men. Professionally I cannot do anything to stop him, and if anyone stops him or tries to stop him from continuing to express his opinion, my officers will violate and arrest them as well, that’s the law. I intend to follow the exact letter of the law even though I do not want to and I am disgusted at the results. Freedom of speech applies to everyone’s opinion, including those we vehemently disagree with, and it’s my job to protect everyone’s rights, even if I personally think the person is a psychotic nut case that deserves to be recycled. Professionally I have to protect his rights under the law same as those of people whose opinions I agree with. He has chosen to express an opinion, his right to do so will be protected against anyone who tries to use force to stop him from doing so. That’s my responsibility under the law as Watch Commander and I will comply with it.”

The video returns to the anchor at the studio. “Bystanders who saw the incident, amazingly enough, were horrified as police violated and arrested some of the men who simply tried to cover up the man’s sign and made no effort to stop the man from continuing to hold up the sign and show it to passers by. Approximately 150 additional people, trying to stop the police from arresting some of the men, were also violated.

“The law’s proponent, well known Supervisor 246, was spotted by our camera crew on the 2075th floor of the Administration building as we were covering arraignment of some of the men. In a separate question on an unrelated matter, he spoke about the Picketing Zone to our reporter, Arlene 1144:

A camera was showing him, probably from a telephoto lens, as he had been talking to the reporter earlier: “I think it’s a great idea to make this available. It allows people to be exposed to ideas and opinions they might not have seen otherwise.”

246 screamed out an enormous burst, not of anger, but of laughter. He held onto his stomach as he guffawed and pointed at the display, then slapped his knee. Then he applauded as he continued to laugh.

The video continues but nobody notices. The Administrator Pro Tem and David looked at him like they thought he was insane. After he calmed down, the APT looked at him, “And you think this is funny?”

“I think it is probably the funniest thing I’ve seen in days. I need to save that tape. I can imagine what my office will look like when friends of mine see it, they’ll probably leave me cases of soap and lampshades.” He broke out into hysterical laughter again.

“This is a very serious matter and you are treating it like it is some kind of joke.”

“It is a joke, ma’am. The joke’s on me, it seems.”

“Do you mind explaining yourself and how you can have such an attitude?”

“I was talking to her on a completely unrelated matter; I did not even know they had a camera around. I had no idea that this thing had happened and she essentially quoted me out of context.

I think I need to tell Joan how I admired the professionalism of her officers, I think I'm going to loan her our rapist free for a couple hours of police asskicking if he'll agree, those cops deserve a reward after doing such a fine job."

"You think that what happened was 'a fine job'?"

"Ma'am, it's one thing to do your job when you like it, or when it's nice, or when it's pleasant. It's a whole lot harder to do it when you find you disagree with what you are supposed to do. And it is very hard - damned hard indeed - when it is something you not only disagree with, but do not want to do, and do not like, but you do it anyway because it is what you are supposed to do and because it is the right thing to do. And that looks like exactly what happened. The police went in, stopped the riot, violated and arrested those who broke the law, and left the law abiding alone and free to continue their lawful business. If the report on that program," he pointed at the video "is correct, then that's exactly what happened. The police acted in a highly professional manner, a way we unfortunately seldom see. An outstanding job."

"And you think this was 'the right thing to do'?"

"As a matter of fact, ma'am, yes I do. About the only thing I regret about this is that I didn't think of it first and hire someone to do it. If I ever find out who did, and especially if I find out he knew that plane crash occurred and got that guy out there, I'm probably going to want to shake his hand and thank him. If he knew, it was perfect; if he didn't know, it was probably a real lucky coincidence."

"I find your take on this incident completely strange, Supervisor 246."

"Would you like me to explain myself, ma'am?"

"Yes, I would."

"I'll give you the short version. He wrote something stupid, a bunch of words that say something we don't agree with. It's only words and ideas, it's not like he beat someone up, he's not committing violence or hurting people, he's simply saying something offensive that we do not want to hear because we don't like it. If we suppress ideas we don't like, the proponents of those ideas will probably fester in secret societies and explode in double-plus ungood ways and we will like those results even less. If we allow people to see their ideas, and we ignore them, they've had their chance and they don't have to feel cheated about not getting exposure. Or if we really don't like their ideas and really need to keep them from convincing other people to believe in them, the answer is to tell people why and they'll learn.

"But you can't just beat people up because you dislike their stupid opinion. If we go that route, then anyone who is willing to use force can suppress any opinion they don't like, and maybe support opinions we don't like. Then what you get is a society of brutality where it isn't the best ideas that are seen by others, it's only the ideas that have the most vicious thugs to back them up. And it becomes very hard for people to be willing to express any opinion if someone can just pop them one because they say something someone else doesn't like.

"In any event, ma'am, I have a sleep to set up, I need to call that TV station, and I think I need to find out about that poster, if you will excuse me." He dematerialized.

Chapter 30

"I disagree with this opinion, but I respect your right to publicly display it."

246 materialized in front of the Picketing Zone. There was a large crowd outside where police were keeping the main path open to allow people to go through the facility. At about the 3rd square was the man with the sign. A number of people were standing nearby, while police stood near the man as he held up his sign. 246 Walked up to him. "Good afternoon, young man."

"Why, good afternoon Supervisor."

"What's your name, son?"

"Michael 3441."

"Michael, would you be willing to make me a trade?"

"What kind of trade?"

"If I get you a brand new, printed sign in nice big letters just like you're holding, would you be willing to give me yours and sign it?"

"Do you like my sign?"

"Yes, son, as a matter of fact I love your sign."

"Wow, that's great. So you think they should do something about them Kikes?"

"Since most of them went to jail, I'd say they did. But I want you to sign the sign at the bottom there."

"Yeah, sure, here."

"Thank you. Okay, here, let's see, the new sign says 'The Nazis didn't make enough of you Kikes into soap and lampshades,' just like your old one, is that correct?"

"Yeah, it does."

"Here you go."

"Thank you!"

"My pleasure. Now would you be so kind as to tell me, was this your idea or did someone have you do it? Because if it was someone else, I wanted to say hello and thank them."

"Oh, yeah. I owed a guy named Steve 77032 some favors so he asked me to come down here and hold up that sign. And what amazed me was he was right when he said not only wouldn't they stop me, the police would even arrest people who tried to stop *me*. I'm really amazed. I saw how they even had a quote from you on the TV last night, I thought it was great that you approved."

"Son, just for your own information I don't approve. I disagree with this opinion, but I respect your right to publicly display it. Do you know Steve's entire ID code or where I can find him?"

"Yeah, here it is, I have it written down."

"Thank you." 246 walked away.

Chapter 31

“...triggering a full-scale riot is a damn good first effort...”

246 rang the doorbell of Steve 77032's apartment. “Wow! 246! I'm surprised to see you, you're a real important man!”

“If you say so. Wanted to ask you a question, if I may.”

“What's that?”

“When you did this sign, did you know about the plane crash of Holocaust survivors?”

“Well, if I say I did, are you going to be mad about it?”

“Absolutely not. Even if I disagree with this opinion I can respect your right to display it in the public square.”

“Okay, then, yeah, I did know about it. When I heard, I wanted to put something out there that would really piss off a lot of people just to see what sort of reaction I could get. I could only find one guy willing to hold up a sign like that, the others figured they were going to get arrested. It's hard to get people to believe that not only won't they, but the police will arrest those who try to stop you from doing so.”

“Is this your opinion?”

“No, I'm not some stupid skinhead like the guy who owed me those favors, it was just the quickest thing I could think of that would bait people. I figured a lot of people would get mad and yell at him and maybe anywhere from a couple to a half-dozen or so would pop the guy one, I never expected it to blow up so big. I got to watch when everyone blew up and started fighting until the cops showed up and violated everyone, leaving the guy I got to hold up the sign behind to continue to show it. That was hilarious.”

“I thought it was too. I wanted to shake your hand, young man, and if you would, I'd like you to autograph your sign, too. That was one of the best practical jokes I have seen in a long time. It was very funny. Do you know the police violated over 500 people as a result? I think that's a terrific score. Now, can I presume you had the young man assign his civil rights violations to you?”

“Yeah, he did. I figured I'd get some of the people for a reading program our church is trying to set up.”

“Well, young man, if I can get you, say, 1000 people to spend 10 hours doing that, would that be worth assigning those violations to me?”

“Wow! Yeah, sure. But I want something else.”

“One moment. Central Computer, remind me to assign 1000 people for 10 hours of favors for a reading program for Steve 77032 and confirm.”

The computer said “Reminder,” it then played back 246's voice, “remind me to assign 1000 people for 10 hours of favors for a reading program for Steve 77032.”

“Okay, Go ahead.”

“There's a friend of mine at our church, his name is Akers, he's got some complicated questions about religion that I can't answer. I've been trying to find someone who can answer them. You're such an important man that maybe you can find someone real bright who can.”

“Young man, I'll be happy to do it myself. Have Akers call my office and they'll set up an appointment for him. What's your ID code?”

“11305 NF Steve 077032”

“Central Computer, transfer 10 favors to 11305 NF Steve 077032 and confirm.”

“Transfer: 10 favors from Supervisor 246 to 11305 NF Steve 077032. Completed.”

“Young man, I just gave you 10 hours of my time if you ever need some computer programs designed. And I’ll get you the information on the people who’ll help you out with your reading program, okay?”

“Okay. Gee, that’s very nice of you.”

“You’re welcome. What I think I’ll do is this, I’ll find 100 people to give you ten hours. When you’ve gotten those people to do some work, call my office and I’ll find another 100 people or maybe some of the same ones, and so on until we’ve done this ten times. That way you won’t be overloaded with too many people all at once and you can use them as you need them, and if you feel you can use more than 100 people at once, I’ll give you as many as you think you can handle up to 10,000 hours of time. How does all that sound?”

“That’s terrific, thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Here’s the code I need you to read.”

“Central Computer, assign all civil rights violations dated yesterday and today to Supervisor 246 and confirm.”

“Assignment: 2,741 informations, 592 grand jury indictments and 65 pending grand jury indictments from Steve 77032 to Supervisor 246. Completed.”

“Thank you, young man, if you ever get an idea like this again, please feel free to call me. I said the only thing about this incident that I regretted was that I didn’t think of it first and hire someone else to do it for me. I might have liked to get even nastier signs out there and maybe violated more people. But triggering a full-scale riot is a damn good first effort for a practical joke. You have my admiration, young man.”

“Gee, I’m surprised. You know, when I saw you, I thought you were going to be mad.”

“No sir. You probably have the same idea I have. I think you figured out something about intolerance. If we bait people who are intolerant into expressing it in ways that cause them to overreact, we can catch them and maybe stop them before they get worse. If we catch intolerant people we can maybe make them learn something about how it does not help them to be that way, and even use their intolerance to our advantage by putting them to work doing something useful for us.”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

“Besides that, son, I have a terrific sense of humor. Anything that is strange and unusual, and especially if it bothers lots of people, is something I can find funny.”

Chapter 32

“Ma’am, you still haven’t answered my question.”

246 materialized in front of channel 63,045. He walked in the door where a receptionist is answering the phone. “Good Evening, Channel 63,045, Please Hold. How may I...” she looks up, “Oh, Supervisor 246!”
“Hi, I’d like to see Arlene 1144.”

“Uh, okay, one moment. Arlene? I think I have some bad news for you, honey. Supervisor 246 is standing out in the lobby and he wants to see you. Okay. Go down the hall that way, 4th door on the left.”

“Thank you.” He walks into the office. “Good Afternoon, Ma’am.”
“Good afternoon 246, what can I do you for?”

“I’d like a copy of the tape from last night, and a copy of the transcript of the show, and I’d like you to autograph both of them. I thought you did an outstanding job. But I’ll say one thing, dear, you don’t have to do ambush interviews. If you want to ask me something, come right up with a camera crew there. I’ll say the same thing with them there as I would in any public forum if they were not there. In fact, I would have been happy to repeat the conversation with you with them filming it. In fact, if you get an appointment I’ll even see you - and even a camera crew with you if you want - in my office if you want to ask me about anything. Okay?”
“Okay.”

“Also, if you’re going to do a debate or a panel discussion about the riot at the Zone I would love to be one of those participating.”

“Why gee, that’s terrific! We were going to do one, and I did not expect to be able to get you to appear on the show. Knowing how you stand on freedom of speech I know it will make for a lively program. That’s going to really boost our ratings. In fact, I think I have an idea of the other people to invite.”

“In fact, I’ll say it explicitly that you have my permission to advertise that I would be on the show. Just give me the time and I’ll be there.”

“Gee, thanks.”

“May I close the door for a moment?”

“Sure.”

He does. “May I say something to you which you may find offensive?”

Somewhat warily, she said, “Oh. Okay, sure.”

Supervisor 246 looked her in the eye. “Ma’am, I find you quite intelligent and an extremely interesting person to whom I would like to get to know better. In every way. Would you be interested in making love and having sex with me sometime?”

She looked surprised for a moment. “Oh, I thought you were going to say something else, that you were going to complain about something.”

“I’d only complain if I was misquoted or quoted out of context. Your video clearly identified it was a related comment about the Picketing Zone in some other question. It was a perfectly legitimate use of a comment I made. Since I made the comment in a public corridor where news filming is permitted I have no right to complain that I was filmed. And I recognized you as a reporter; presumably anything someone says to a reporter is fair game to be used publicly if it is not being considered off the record. Other than doing it as an ambush interview you didn’t

do anything wrong. The only reason I'm saying it this way is that I don't want you to think I am unwilling to make my opinions public record."

"Oh. I see."

246 Smiled. "I will now repeat back something you said to me the other day: Ma'am you still haven't answered my question."

"Oh, yeah, sure. I've heard you're notorious in bed."

"So I'm told."

"But why did you ask me if I thought I might find that offensive?"

"Remember what I told you, legally it's permissible to consider someone asking for sex to be legitimate grounds for them to slap you unless they were warned you might insult them. I'm the one who made the rule, too. I wanted to make sure a woman could get away with slapping a man if he was fresh to her. But not if he warned her he was about to. This way you couldn't slap me."

"And I had this impression you were this sort of man who had low opinions of women."

"I think it's because I have this reputation as a notorious Tom Cat. Or 'A Tigger, who likes to bounce around with women a lot.' And if you want to hear the uncensored version, it's 'A Tigger who likes to bounce around with lots of women a lot and fuck every one of their brains out.' It's the uncensored version that got me the notorious reputation. And it's true, of course."

Chapter 33

“...30 seconds to convince me why I shouldn’t have you nailed to a cross...”

“Well, you’ve proved you’re right. So it isn’t foolproof after all. It was fun, maybe it’s supposed to work that way for that reason.”

“I don’t think so. I think that if they wanted it to be that way they could simply allow it to be disabled. And I think it is possible for you to turn it off if you don’t want to use it, I think someone said that once.”

“Oh yeah, that’s right, I remember, they did. I don’t normally because I like knowing exactly when things happen. And I don’t want to forget and leave it off and defeat the whole purpose. There are a number of guys I see that I wouldn’t trust them at all with me if they could do what you did with that thing of yours. You I can trust, but I can’t think of too many other guys I would trust to behave if they knew how to do that either.”

“I’ve been thinking I need to tell someone about this because if I’m right there are a whole lot of bad things someone could do. You can probably think of the biggest one.”

“Oh yeah. Almost happened to me on earth a couple of times, if I hadn’t had Mace with me it would have.”

“I don’t know how important this is. Terry, I’m wondering if I should say something. Maybe someone noticed this before and I’m mistaken. Or it’s supposed to work that way and nobody said anything about it. But I’m afraid if I’m wrong on who I should report this to I’ll get in trouble. Or if it is as bad as I think it is and people who might misuse this find out about it.”

“I have an idea.”

“Okay.”

“Call the Board of Directors and tell them you found out something, and ask who you need to talk to about it, then when you get someone, just tell them in general terms what it is, then only give the details out to someone really important. If it isn’t important to them, they’ll probably tell you whom to talk to. If they tell you no or blow you off, then you can say, hey, I at least said so and you can tell people and let them know about the problem.”

“Okay, and thanks a lot, both for helping me find this out and for giving me an idea on what to do about it.”

“Any time. I wouldn’t have done it for anyone else. You’re my favorite boyfriend. I like you a lot. I’m not sure if I love you but I do like you more than anyone else.”

“And I like you too, Terry. Probably the same.”

“Thanks, sweetie.”

“Bye. Central Computer, hang up phone. Central Computer, call Board of Directors.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“My name is Wilfred 14532. I’m not sure whom to call about this because I’ve discovered something that I’m not sure if anyone knows about it, I didn’t want to give anyone ideas if they hadn’t because it might be really bad if they figure out what I did, and I wasn’t sure if I should call about it because maybe it’s already known and I might be bothering someone unnecessarily if they do know about it.”

“Please hold a moment.”

“Board of Directors Office of Security, this is a recorded line.”

“I’m not sure who to talk to about this, but I’ve discovered something that I’m afraid to say

much about it because I don't want to give anyone ideas about it."

"Well, tell me, in general, what it is that you've discovered?"

"I found a way to get around climax privilege and come inside a woman even if she doesn't want me to."

"Hold on a second, let me check and see who I ask about that. And it's.. Holy shit! You hit the jackpot! Are you serious?"

"Yes."

"Can you prove it?"

"Yes."

"Are you willing to risk being tortured for 30 days if you can't prove that you can do what you just said?"

"I don't know. Well, I'm not sure if I want to go through that just to prove what I said. I mean, I can do what I said but I don't think it's worth being tortured over."

"If you can prove it you don't have to worry about that. All I'm saying is, are you willing to accept getting serious pain if you're lying?"

"Oh yes, because I'm not lying, I can prove it."

"Excellent. What's your name?"

"Wilfred 14532."

"Okay, Wilfred, I'll transfer you back to the main desk. Don't tell anyone anything about this; like you said, we don't want to give anyone ideas if you're telling the truth. You tell the clerk - and anyone who asks - that you have an Armada Signal. Remember those words: Armada Signal. You'll be asked to repeat it; do so when asked. That will get the Chairman of the Board to come see you. Then you can tell him when he asks you. How does that sound?"

"Wow, that would be great!"

"Okay, think about what you're going to say. He'll give you 30 seconds. If you can prove it, that is something he definitely would want to know about. But if you can't prove it, or you're kidding, they will really do some serious hurting to you. Do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"But don't give that code out to anyone because if someone uses it without a good reason, and they find out the person did it by mistake because you told them about it, they won't punish the person who did it by mistake, they'll come after you for telling someone without letting them know the consequences. Got me?"

"Yeah, that makes sense."

"Now what was the code I told you, so I make sure you tell them correctly?"

"Armada Signal."

"That's right. Hold on a moment."

"Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace."

"Armada Signal."

"Repeat, please."

"Armada Signal."

"Listen carefully, are you *absolutely* certain?"

"Yes, I am."

"Please hold."

"Executive Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this had better be goddam important

or we will violate you big time.”

“Armada Signal.”

“Listen carefully buster, this is *the Board*. We’re six steps senior to God. I’ll let you get away with that this time because you might be too stupid to know what you are doing. If you’re *absolutely certain*, say that again. If not, hang up and don’t ever call us again with this. I’m not kidding that if you’re not right we will violate you, not just six-ways-to-Sunday, but in ways you can’t possibly imagine.”

“Your security office told me I’m supposed to say Armada Signal.”

“What’s your Name?”

“Wilfred 14532.”

“Accepted. I hope to Christ you’re right because if you’re not, you are in very serious trouble. You can hang up now.”

He does. George teleports into the man’s apartment. “Are you Wilfred 14532?”

“Yes.”

“And you called the Executive Office of the Board to give an Armada Signal?”

“Yes.”

“Now, I want you to understand something young man. I’m the Chairman of the Board. I’m..”

“Excuse me.”

“Yes?”

“You really are the Chairman?”

“Yes.”

“Is there like several people allowed to call themselves that or is there just one?”

“It’s just me.”

“Wow. I’m really kind of surprised.”

“In what way?”

“I kind of had this suspicion that the whole idea about there being a Chairman were just another form of belief in God and that they might actually have been making it up. I guess I’m a little surprised that there really is someone, a single person actually running this place.”

George laughs. “Running this place? Are you kidding? Do you think I want to spend my time running other people’s deaths? I have lots more important and fun things to do. I figure I want to stay out of the way unless something goes wrong or there’s something serious that needs fixing.”

“Yeah, I guess that makes sense.”

“Good. Well, anyway, to continue, I’m God. If you convince me, to my satisfaction, that you had a legitimate reason for calling me, you’re not going to be in trouble and you don’t have to worry about anything. I want to make that very clear to you, and I want you to answer yes or no if you understand me when I say that you have nothing to fear from me if you had a legitimate reason to call me. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I do.”

“I just want you to understand the other side of the story. I’m God. I can do anything I want to you and you can’t lay a finger on me. I own this world and I can do anything I damn well please. I can destroy you right now if I wanted to. If you’ve called me here on a fools errand you are going to be hurting very badly for the next month. Now, I might just let you off with a

warning if I think you didn't understand what you're doing if you convince me you're sorry and made a mistake. If you haven't made a mistake I want you to tell me why you called me. Now you've got 30 seconds to convince me why I shouldn't have you nailed to a cross and hung up at the main entrance for the next 30 days. Go."

"I've discovered a way to defeat climax privilege and come inside a woman even if she doesn't want me to."

George looked at him, taken aback. "Young man, that buys you a reprieve. If you can prove it I'm going to be very grateful. And you can imagine that will mean I'm going to owe you some favors. And it doesn't get much better than that. But let me tell you something, a lot of people have tried and failed. We consider it foolproof. Now you're going to have to prove us wrong or you're going to be feeling something unpleasant very soon. Central Computer, get me 246 with priority."

"All right buddy, nice try. Making me think you're the Chairman just to get me to answer the phone."

"246, come see me now, please."

Supervisor 246 teleports in. "Oh it really is you. Hi Mike."

"246, this man's name is Wilfred 14532, let's get him Board Certified first."

"Wilfred, do you know who I am?"

"Yeah, you're Supervisor 246. Everybody knows you."

"The Chairman over there wants to be able to talk to you but he has to make sure you don't say anything to anyone about what he looks like or what his name is. Do you know what a solemn promise is?"

"Yeah. It's the kind of thing they toss you back on earth for breaking."

"Good, then you do understand. But, now, if you have a question about this or you don't understand, ask. Now, we're going to trust you, but if you break this promise you will be in serious trouble. The Chairman likes his privacy and doesn't want people to know who he is or what he looks like unless they have to know. So what we want from you is your solemn promise not to tell anyone what he or any member of the Board looks like or any of their names unless you absolutely know the person already knows, such as me. We'll set it up with the police so that if you were ever sworn and asked in court if you know who the Chairman is you can say no and you won't ever be prosecuted for perjury. Now, will you make your most solemn promise to me and the Chairman that if you break this promise you will be tortured for 30 days and Involuntarily Recycled, that you will not tell anyone except those you absolutely know are already aware, the names or descriptions of him or any member of the Board?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Uh, no, you have to specifically make it a solemn promise."

"Okay, then, yes, I solemnly promise."

"Well, George, I guess we can tell him, then."

"Uh huh. Okay, Wilfred, you're going to be part of a very privileged group who knows who I am. My name is Dr. George Green. How do you do?"

"Pretty good, I guess."

"Well, anyway, let's get this formalized. Young man, what's your full ID?"

"07705 QZ Wilfred 014532."

"Central Computer, Telephone Watch Commander."

“Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line.”

“Knit 2 Pearl 4”

“One moment please.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Hi Joan, this is the Chairman.”

“Hold on a second, my office is not secure. There. Hi Mike, how are you doing?”

“Authenticated. Get real broad, my name is George.”

“So what can I do you for, Dr. Green?”

“I’m granting Diplomatic Immunity regarding knowledge of the names and descriptions of the members of the board to 07705 QZ Wilfred 014532.”

“Got it. Logged. Order Number 7104-16638. So as of now he’s Board Certified and never knew you.”

“Correct.”

“Okay.”

“Central Computer, Close Connection. 246, he says he can defeat climax privilege.”

“You’re kidding! Young man, can you explain it to me or do you need to demonstrate it?”

“Oh it’s real simple to do. Well, you know how it doesn’t matter whether you or her, or both, have clothes on or not, if you’re touching a woman, even with clothes in between, you can’t come?”

“Yeah, that was one of the first things that was considered, that someone might try wearing clothes, so the system ignores them.”

“Okay, and even if you use a condom it still doesn’t matter because the rest of you touches her or her clothes and it still counts.”

“Right.”

“Well, I got thinking. What if you didn’t touch any part of her at all, had no contact whatsoever, would it still protect against it? So I conducted an experiment with my girlfriend to see if we could make it happen. And I did.”

“So how did you do it?”

“Well, what I did was, I constructed a covering of plastic, very soft but about as thick as denim, and covered her entire body below the neck so I didn’t touch any part of her. Then I cut a hole in it big enough to let my penis through into her pussy. Then I had the computer make a condom out of synthetic rubber that has no pores in it. And covered the area around the opening to her crotch with the same material. So I fingered her through the plastic until she was wet enough to get inside, then I put the condom on, told her to be sure not to let me come, then I started having sex with her. After a few minutes I felt myself about to come and then I did. She didn’t believe I had so I made a new condom, this one with a hole in the end far enough that I wasn’t exposed. I did her for a few more minutes, I came, sprayed her and she was shocked that I could. We then did it a few times and she enjoyed the difference of not having to let me come. But I came all the time and she never once let me. If I wasn’t worried about someone using this to commit rape I might never have said anything, we both found it was a lot of fun this way.”

246 looked at him. “Young man, are you willing to try this with another woman?”

“Oh sure.”

“With us watching? We want to see if you really can do this.”

“Yeah, I would.”

“Now, we’re going to let the woman we try this on think it’s a special device rather than actually you, so don’t say anything, okay?”

“Uh huh.”

“And make sure the covering is opaque so she can’t see what you’re up to. We want her to be completely unaware of what’s going on.”

“Yeah, right, that makes sense.”

George looked at him. “246, whom do you think we should use for this?”

“If he’s right, I’d want it low key, someone who won’t be scared. Joan might be interested, or Geannie, Erica, Nancy, or Penelope.”

“Young man, what we’re going to have you do is try this. We’ll probably want you to do this on more than one woman or possibly have specialized attempts done. I can trust my secretary but I think Joan may be more interested. Central Computer, Telephone Watch Commander.”

“Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line.”

“Knit 2 Pearl 4”

“One moment please.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Joan dear, this young man has a new sexual gadget he wants to try out on a woman and we wondered if you would be interested in letting us see how it works, if you don’t mind me and 246 watching.”

“Oh yeah, I would be interested. Central Computer, transport me to the other side of this phone call.”

She materializes. “Is this the guy you just Board Certified?”

George replied, “Yeah.”

“Okay, then. Hi George, 246.”

246 says, “Hi.”

“Hi, Joan. Okay, young man, see if you can get your device to feel close to real including the spray effect into her. Joan, to make sure this is not the usual method, be sure you don’t ever release climax privilege to him, okay?”

“Right.”

Wilfred looked at Joan. “If you’d lie down on the floor I’ll try and set this up. I need you to take your pants off and anything underneath, please.” She takes all her clothes off and lays down. “Central Computer, instantiate synthetic rubber, no pores, opaque, thickness 4 mil, size 2 meters square.”

A square piece of rubber appears. He lays it over her, then uses a magic marker to indicate where her vaginal opening is. He pulls it off and uses a scissors to cut a hole in the rubber at the marked point then puts it back on her. “Central Computer, instantiate box one dozen rolled condoms, synthetic rubber, no pores, reservoir tip, end missing.” They show up. He rolls one onto his penis, climbs on top of the rubber sheet, uses his finger to stimulate her for a minute or so.

“Okay, I’m wet, go ahead.” He inserts his covered penis into the hole, slides into Joan and starts moving in and out of her. After about 3 or 4 seconds or so, she starts moving too, what is sometimes referred to as “thumping,” in which she is matching his movements in sync, moving toward him as he moves toward her, moving back as he moves away. The two of them look

like they are both having a pretty good time doing this together.

He does this for about four minutes, then says, "Here it comes!"

Joan looks over. "Hey, 246, this actually feels like the real thing. If I didn't know better I'd swear he had his actual penis inside a condom with a hole in it. I actually felt something that was just like spray. Since I didn't let him come I know it wasn't him. It was fun and might not be too bad if I want to sneak a quickie without having to go get a man. I'll bet there are some lesbians who might want to try his improved strap on or whatever it is. It's really pretty good for a fake, in fact it's damned good, it felt so real."

"Now one more. Central Computer, instantiate box one dozen rolled condoms made of rubber with no pores, reservoir tip." These also show up. He shows the one he has, rolls it on, then goes back to Joan and tries again, pounding on her for about six minutes, while her actions and some of the noises she makes show that the fun isn't all one sided. He gets off of her, pulls the condom off and extends it to 246. "One soiled condom."

246 looks at the condom he's holding, which has spray in the tip. "Joan, you didn't grant climax privilege to him did you?"

"No."

"Was it any good?"

"Oh yeah, I came about 3 or 4 times, just like the first time he used it on me. It's really very good."

George speaks again. "Let's try one more. Young man, use one of the open ones, and warn us just before it is going to release the spray into her. Joan, when he does that, touch him on his skin. Then, young man, you let me know whether it caused your device to stop, okay?"

"Sure." He gets on top of her and starts moving, then after about four minutes, he says "Ready." She reached up and touched his forehead. "Yep, it stopped dead. Man that was the strangest thing."

"Joan, move your hand away from him and let him try once more." She does, he continues moving, then he says "Ready, "

She says, "Oooh." She looks over at 246. "I will be damned if that doesn't feel like the real thing. He's really got something there. I mean, if I didn't have climax privilege turned off I'd swear it was real. And I really enjoyed what it did to me. Let me know when those are available, I might just be interested in using one. I thought I'd never find a substitute that was as good as a man. I was wrong."

"George, we've got a problem. Jesus H. Christ, how long have guys been trying to defeat this? I'd say what, about a hundred and thirty calendar years? And all it took was a rubber sheet and a condom? I think either I'm amazed at his ingenuity or taken aback by how lucky we are men want bare sex so badly they're willing to behave to get it. Or that because sex is so good and they can get it almost any time that they've never had to try to figure a way to get it that way."

"I think we've just been lucky. A man who commits rape probably either does it spur of the moment or is just concerned with power and might not even care if he comes."

"The only sort of guy who would think of this is someone who is bright enough to look at cracks in the system, or wanted real badly to commit rape and climax too. But since chances are, you can find some woman who will try slightly rough sex you don't have to commit rape to find her. Guess what, Joan."

"What?"

“He wasn’t using a device, we wanted you to think he was. This young man figured a way to have sex with a woman that defeats the climax privilege.”

“You mean that wasn’t a strap on, that really was him coming inside me?”

“Yep.”

“Oh Christ, if someone else figures this out, can you imagine what it will do as far as rapes?

Well, at least I was right, they still ain’t built a substitute as good as a real man.”

Wilfred looks at 246. “I think I know how to fix the problem.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Instead of having climax privilege being dependent upon the person having contact with a woman, have it be proximity. If a man is within, say a meter of a woman, he can’t get any kind of sexual pleasure at all, he can’t even jerk off unless she grants it to him. I figure that will cover any man no matter what size his penis is.”

“Hmm. Meter might be too much, a guy could be against a wall trying to jerk off and a woman be on the other side in a different apartment, it would shut him down. 50 centimeters is probably more than enough. We’ll have to revise the code for this and it will take about two weeks I think. Once the change is made we’ll have a press conference. Young man, you’re going to become very famous. What you’re going to do is tell people you contacted me, not the Chairman, is that clear?”

“Oh yeah, sure, I remember the promise I made.”

“I don’t know if you heard me, but guys have been trying to figure out how to defeat climax privilege for one hundred thirty calendar years, and nobody had until you came along. I want to say thank you, young man, and shake your hand, both for finding it, and for letting us know about it when you did. And even more than that, you’ve come up with a quite elegant solution to how to fix the problem too. That really takes some brainpower.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Now, if there is some special privilege or favor you want, let me know. Otherwise, if you think of something within reason you want later on, call me and I’ll arrange to get you almost anything you want, or if I can’t do it, George will.”

“Okay, gee, thanks! I just thought of this and didn’t want to see women being exploited.”

“Young man, you will probably never know how many women you saved from exactly that happening. It was probably only a matter of time until someone else thought this up. I’ll tell you something, do you know why the Chairman himself came to see you?”

“He’s the one that invented Climax Privilege?”

George speaks to him. “Young man, you are very bright. That’s right. I wanted to see if there was a way to prevent women from being exploited by men like they are on earth. Wilfred, I’d also like to say thank you, as well. I’m really glad you came forward and let me know about it. Anything we can do to make men treat women with respect and not abuse them is something I think is well worth having around. That is one of the reasons I’ve made it possible for just about anyone to contact me about anything important, so that if they find something really bad like this we can try to find some way to fix it.”

Supervisor 246 asked Wilfred, “Would you be interested in working on some special projects like this for me, some time? I’ve got something I want to try and I can use someone who’s bright enough to think of ideas like this.”

“Why sure!”

George says, "Joan, you can put your clothes on now."

She does. "I agree with 246 here. Thank you, young man, I could imagine having a lot of women needing rape counseling if this became known before it could be fixed."

"You're welcome, ma'am. Oh, and if I didn't say so, and it's kind of funny, but thanks for letting me have sex with you."

"You're not bad, actually, if you'd like to do it for real the old fashioned way, come see me if you're interested."

"I think I might just do that. Thank you. But how do I find you?"

"I'm Watch Commander Joan 20319."

"You're head of the Police Department?"

"Yes I am. 246 knows me, I like trying things. We have a standing bet on that they'll never find a device that's as much fun as a man so I'm offering to try something if he thinks he can."

"I figured you were just a secretary or something, I didn't expect the actual head of the Police Department to come out here to try this." Wilfred starts laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"I guess it brings new meaning to the term 'getting screwed over by the cops.'"

She laughed. "I guess it does, after all. In any case, thank you for discovering this before someone nasty did. Actually you weren't too bad, considering it was inside a condom."

"I had another idea when I was thinking about this, because my girlfriend Terry was saying that it was nice for a change that she didn't have to keep granting me climax privilege when I did this, I could just come every few minutes as I was banging her. And I thought, maybe it would be possible for a woman to set up her climax release so that if she was with a guy she trusted it would automatically give him a climax every few minutes, or, a randomizing feature so that it would allow him to come anywhere from two to ten minutes between climaxes, so that she could, for example, pick a range of 3 to 6 minutes, and then maybe at 4 minutes, then 3 1/2, then 3, then 5, so that they would both be guessing when his next climax would occur, and she wouldn't have to do anything except either be moving on top of him and enjoying what she's getting out of him, or lay back and enjoy the ride, coming over and over herself and then feeling him come automatically. And if he stopped doing her right, she can stop giving him automatic climaxes."

246 looked at the man. "Jesus, how come - no pun intended - I didn't think of that?"

"Or even the possibility of allowing a woman to choose a particular man if she really trusts him, and allow him to come any time without having to get her to enable it. Some people like to play seduction or rape games where they really trust the other person. They might want to pretend she's being forced or do some things where the guy might not let her know he's going to do her, and he sticks it in when she isn't ready, because she wants it a little rough. That sort of thing. Although I don't know if you think that's a good idea."

George looks at him. "Wilfred, when I said that I didn't want a woman abused, what I meant by that is to be treated badly without her consent. If a woman wants to play seduction games, or she likes rough sex and wants to do that, as long as she's not being forced to do that I have no problem. I don't even care if a guy sticks it in her without asking her as long as she's told him he can do that. If she's the type that likes pain, for whatever reason, that's her right and as long as nobody forces her to do that, I have no problem. So if a woman likes it a little on the racy side, or if she likes being bound up and forced to submit, I don't care. As long as it's what she wants to do she can do anything she can get a guy to do to her or let a guy do things where she

hasn't been forced. My whole purpose was to prevent it from being done to her without her consent."

"That just gave me an idea about something. A woman has to be able to talk to the computer to release climax privilege, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, we could tie this in so that if a woman is being raped, she can trigger an automatic teleport of herself and the rapist to the police department."

"Hey, that's a great idea. I wish I'd thought of it."

"246, I agree. Let's implement that as soon as possible and announce it."

"George, we definitely need to get this guy into the research department."

"I agree, I think he's got a hell of a future with us if he's interested."

Joan looked over at him. "246, I like the idea that kid suggested. With someone like you, or Tom, when he was here, or some of my closest lovers, I could use something like automatic climax release, because I know you do me right, or some of the others do. Then, as this young man says, I wouldn't have to think about anything except enjoying the whole experience."

"Excuse me, just from doing this, I got another idea."

246 looked at him. "What's that?"

"Another possibility, if there's a way to tie into the number of orgasms a woman has, she could even fix it so that, say, after every 5 or 10 or 20 orgasms or some number, it automatically releases climax too. So she doesn't even have to time him, she can let the guy she's with earn them on the basis of how good he is, the more he gives her, the more he gets; in fact the faster he can give them to her, the faster he gets to come. That might also be a nice feature."

"Damn you're good. Where have you been over the past few years?"

"I just thought of another one."

"What's that?"

"Once you fix this, a woman still has control over when and how often a man comes. Well, maybe he wants it more often than she's giving it to him, or maybe she's giving it to him more often than he wants it. Have an option that she can allow him, for that particular time he's with her, to do his own climax release, and let himself come whenever he wants to. She can still cut him off if he isn't doing her right. I remember on Terry's deathday this year, I wanted to do something special, so I said that since we'd been seeing each other for 12 years, I wanted to screw her continuously for 12 minutes before I came so she could really enjoy it. And she did, she really liked the thought so much she gave me a double climax; I thought that was nice of her. Had something like that been available I wouldn't have had to tell her I wanted to take 12 minutes, I could have just done it as a surprise. I don't know if she's exaggerating or just trying to stroke my ego, but she says of her 129 boyfriends she thinks I'm the best one."

"Of which do you think she's exaggerating?"

"I'm not sure if she is just telling me I'm her best, but I know she sees me more than anyone else. At least twice a year, on her deathday and on her birthday, she invites all 129 to come to the party and she has all of us that show up screw her to see who can do the best job at it. I think she's telling the truth because I've won first prize the last 4 years.

"I don't know why that thought popped into my head, but on earth in hospitals, for patients with severe pain, they have a machine that dispenses medication to them when the patient wants it. They've found that the patients are much happier, since they decide how much medication they

want, and how often. They don't have to wait hours to get a shot, they get instant relief when it really hurts, and they don't get shots when they're not in pain and don't need them so there's less chance of overdose. Except for a tiny number who go right to the limit the machine will allow because of addiction problems, most people end up taking less pain medication than the nurse would normally give them and yet they suffer less. But I'm not sure if that's a good example. "Or fast food places, a lot of them would let people serve themselves sodas so nobody complains that they were cheated or that they were given so much it spilled over. I've heard the reason they do this is that customers tend to give themselves less soda than the employees do. It's both a labor saving device and such a great way to reduce the amount of product you give the customers that the places that charge for refills say it saves them money even counting the number that sneak extra refills.

"So I got thinking, give the woman this sort of an option and she still has final say because she can cut him off, but now her boyfriend doesn't have to ask her every time he wants another climax, or worse, tell her that she's giving it to him too often. I know sometimes I wanted to enjoy pounding on Terry more before she gave me the next orgasm but I wouldn't dare tell her to give them to me less often, she might not give them to me often enough and then I'd have to be asking her for more, which would be ridiculous!

"Don't get me wrong, I like the idea that a woman has say so over when the guy comes. When I was on earth, I probably would have sworn on a stack of Bibles that I would be outraged if someone asked me if I thought it was a good idea if the woman I was having sex with got to decide when or how often I got to come. But I've been thinking about it. I don't ever have to ask Terry if she came; she wouldn't let me come if she didn't, (or if she just wants to be pounded on and doesn't come for whatever reason and wanted it that way, she doesn't have to lie to me and say she did); I don't have to worry that I came too fast for her; I don't have to ask her if I'm doing her right because if I'm not she won't let me come (but I do ask her anyway, she likes it); I can do her any way I want and she comes all the time and then makes me come; and I don't have to worry about not being able to enjoy it because I never have premature ejaculation and never have an inability to have an orgasm, it works every time. And that's not even counting the fact I can come more than once while having sex."

246 looks at him. "That's what really makes this feature so terrific. But in the interim, until we can find a way to fix it I think you'd better not tell anyone else about it. And you'd better ask your girlfriend not to tell anyone else about it either."

"I don't think I have to worry about her. She said that she can trust me being able to do this, she knows I'd never do anything to her without her permission. She said that there are a few of her boyfriends she likes to do things with because sometimes she does like it rough, that she wouldn't let them within 100 meters of her if she didn't have the ability to keep them from coming unless they did things exactly the way she wanted them. I'm also pleased that she told me, if they ever fix it so that she can let me decide when and how often I want to come, I'm one of only two of all of her boyfriends that she'd trust with that. Because me and him are the only ones she can trust to always make sure she's really nice and wet before we get inside, she never has to ask us to slow down or speed up because we always ask her if she likes what we're doing. And I'm the only one she says that I can do anything I want to her and she'll let me come anyway, she trusts me enough that I'd never do anything that hurts her or be rough on her in ways she doesn't like."

“Sounds like she really cares a lot about you.”

“Oh yeah. She reminds me of how men are back on earth when it comes to saying ‘I love you.’ She doesn’t want to admit it but she’s clearly in love with me. I love her too, but I’m playing along with her not wanting to say it. Basically I think she’s afraid if she says she loves me she’s going to have to commit to me alone or something like that because she thinks it would hurt my feelings if she didn’t. I think that’s the last thing I’d want to happen so I won’t tell her I love her unless she says so first.”

246 looked at him. “You wouldn’t want her all to yourself?”

“Hell no! All Terry wants to do is fuck almost all of the time! She’s discovered just how much fun sex is so she’s having lots to make up for all she didn’t get when she was on earth. She’s great in bed, but I think she’d wear me out in a week! Or I wonder if I could even last that long. She doesn’t have 129 boyfriends because she likes to play some of us off against each other, she has that many because it takes that many to be able to handle her and satisfy her! Some of them only see her every couple of weeks, some every week, it depends on what she likes to do and how often they want to do it with her.”

“How often do you see her?”

“Three or four times a day. Usually I see her for half an hour or an hour at a time, she likes it that way, she can squeeze me in between other guys she’s seeing, I’m like her pet vibrator, I always do her the way she likes it, I never complain that she wants it too much, or that all she’s interested in is straight sex, I almost always ask her if I’m doing her right even though I don’t have to, and sometimes I’ll do something a little bit different just to surprise her, I always kiss her a lot when we’re having sex, and I’m nice about it. I never talk dirty to her unless she asks me to.

“When we’re not in bed, I never criticize her personally even if I disagree with her on something, which happens on occasion. If she thinks something that’s ridiculous or crazy, I just tell her I don’t agree with her but she can believe anything she wants to. And she’s fairly smart, she’s the one that thought of calling the Board and asking you guys who to tell about this.

“But she’s so good in bed that I dropped almost all of my other girlfriends simply because I can get almost everything I want from her. I have one I see maybe twice a week because she lets me do her all three ways. Terry doesn’t like taking it up the ass, so I see another girl who does, we do it very carefully so it doesn’t hurt, and I make sure she gets a lot of really nice orgasms when we have regular sex, and while Terry will blow guys, I know she doesn’t like doing it so I stopped asking her. There’s one other girl I see because she likes to pretend she’s being raped, I sneak into her apartment, grab her and if she can overpower me, she gets to do me however she wants, otherwise I can stick it in her as soon as I can get her tied up enough that she can’t get away, and we have a great time.

“I remember one time I tied her up, then said that I’d be real nice with her, and have sex with her gently if she let me come when I asked her. So I did, and we did, then I came two or three times and got off her, pretended like I was going to untie her, stopped, and said, ‘I changed my mind, I think I’m going to rape you anyway’, got back on top of her, slammed myself inside her, because she was well lubricated she enjoyed it, then I pounded her as hard as I could for five minutes, until she came ten times and she really gave me a good orgasm after that. We have fun in ways I’d never have dreamed of trying on earth because I’d probably hurt a woman for real if I did them there.

“One time she tried bending over backwards to see if it could be done, we could do it but it was weird and we didn’t do it again, but we could never have done it on earth because it would have broken her spine and probably cracked a couple of ribs.

“But I like just regular sex with Terry so I keep my wild games with the other girls. And when I told Terry about it she damn near raped me in thanks for going to other girls to get the things I want from them that she doesn’t like having to do. That’s what I think made her fall in love with me, that I only want from her what she wants to give me, and I get the stuff she doesn’t want to have to do from someone else so we can both be happy.”

George smiled and looked over at 246. “Hmm, now who does she remind me of? Someone I think I know.”

“Oh please, I’m not that insatiable.”

The Chairman grinned. “As this young man says, if you think something ridiculous or crazy, I can disagree with you even though you can believe anything you want to. Or as you say it, ‘That’s your opinion and you’re entitled to it even if I don’t agree with you.’”

Chapter 34

"I'm adamant on this and I'm not going to change my mind..."

"Let's winnow out some of the chaff so we have fewer cases to deal with. Okay, here's the situation. First, APT Putty Tat is so annoying to defense counsels that they are overloading the Department's courts due to her rather unyielding view of the law that we need to get rid of as many as we can that really don't require processing in the first place. I'm looking over the reports here, these people here didn't hit anyone, the cops just grabbed them for interfering, and these six people here hit some of the others to make them stop fighting. Okay, we'll start with the first group. Bring them in, one at a time."

"Hello. What's your name, ma'am?"

"Sally 730126."

"Okay, Sally, what I'm going to do is offer you a plea bargain. This is going to be the best deal you're going to get, from this point on anything else will be more expensive to you. So I want you to listen to the offer first before you decide, okay."

"Okay."

"You plead guilty to obstructing a police officer. You're going to grant me 1000 favors of my choosing so that I can assign you to 1000 hours of mandatory labor at my discretion. You agree to stay out of trouble for three years, attend orientation classes if you haven't already, and if I can arrange them, you also attend anger management classes. And you accept the amount of time you've spent in jail as time served."

"How long do I have to stay in jail?"

"If you agree to this, you're out right now."

"Oh. Okay."

"Sign this and go see the clerk to be sworn." She leaves.

"Hello. What's your name, sir?"

"Eddie 37."

"Okay, Eddie, what I'm going to do is offer you a plea bargain. This is going to be the best deal you're going to get, from this point on anything else will be more expensive to you. So I want you to listen to the offer first before you decide, okay."

"I'm listening."

"You plead guilty to obstructing a police officer. You're going to grant me 1000 favors of my choosing so that I can assign you to 1000 hours of mandatory labor at my discretion. You agree to stay out of trouble for three years, attend orientation classes if you haven't already, and if I can arrange them, you also attend anger management classes. And you accept the amount of time you've spent in jail as time served."

"Four hundred."

"980."

"Four hundred and one."

"Let's not spend all day dickering, what's your top limit?"

"I'm willing to accept 500 if I have to."

"Five hundred it is, but you take four years of probation and if you get another conviction for serious misconduct during that four years you owe me another 1000 favors on top of any other punishment. And you agree not to recycle yourself until all favors you owe me are paid."

“If it’s five hundred then I want two years rather than four.”

“Three.”

“If it’s three years probation then I want 425 instead of 500.”

“Three years and 450.”

“Deal.”

“Sign this and see the clerk to be sworn.” He leaves, and the next person enters.

“Hello. What’s your name, ma’am?”

“Andrea 528.”

“Okay, Andrea, what I’m going to do is offer you a plea bargain. This is going to be the best deal you’re going to get, from this point on anything else will be more expensive to you. So I want you to listen to the offer first before you decide, okay.”

“Uh no, I’m not interested in pleading. I’ll take my chances at trial.”

“That is your right but I suspect you’re going to find if you’re convicted it’s going to be a lot more serious and the penalty very stiff.”

“Supervisor 246, sir, I don’t expect to be convicted. I’m adamant on this and I’m not going to change my mind and plead guilty.”

“Well, it’s your choice, ma’am. And you don’t have to call me sir, almost everyone calls me 246.”

“I’d like to ask you a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“I like to keep my options open, so what sort of thing would you be interested in that might get you to say, drop the charges?”

“Well, if you can prove that I’ve made a serious mistake, I’d definitely be interested.”

“A mistake on this issue or on something else you’ve done?”

“Anything I’ve publicly done or privately done that becomes known, if I’ve messed up on something or made a mistake, I do want to know about it. I can’t correct my errors if I’m not willing to discover them. And if it is serious, I’m willing to pay a reward for it. Since this is what you’re asking for I’d be willing to give that if you found one I made. But if you don’t expect to be convicted, why would you want a way for me to drop the charges?”

“I just want to win, I’m not trying to make a point. I figure that it will take the better part of several weeks to try the case if I do everything. But if I can find some way to end it early I’d take that choice. If I thought I had done something wrong I’d be interested in pleading out. But I’m not going to plead guilty because I do not believe I am guilty, I believe I can either raise necessity or reasonable doubt.”

“Good luck to you, then. Anyway, go see the clerk for a hearing date.” She leaves.

After several more people are questioned and plead, his assistant says, “Okay, these are the people who were hitting some of the others to make them stop.”

“Send all of them in.”

“Except for this gentleman, I have decided that the rest of you can go, we discovered that you grabbed someone in order to stop them from fighting, the police officer didn’t realize this and violated and arrested you by mistake, so rather than wait until arraignment, we’re letting you go early.”

“Why gee, thank you!”

“You’re welcome, ma’am.” They leave.

“What’s your name, sir?”

“Ivan 9.”

“Now according to this, you grabbed 5 people, flung them against the wall and told them to stay there, and with a sixth man who kept trying to run, you punched him out, knocked him to the floor and stood on him, telling him to stay down.”

“Yeah. I wouldn’t have been so rough except they were beating the shit out of that guy. I mean, I wanted to knock his ass out too, but just because I don’t like what he has to say I don’t go around beating up someone. And they shouldn’t either. And if I have to go to jail because of that I’m not going to say I’m sorry, I would have done it again. Maybe I was a little rough on them but if they’re beating someone up for no good reason I’m not going to be nice about it, I’m going to make them stop first.”

“Well, what I was going to tell you was that in view of what you did we were going to let you go but in view of what you just said I’ve changed my mind.”

“Well, I still think it was the right thing to do and I suspect if I get before a jury they’re going to agree.”

“Oh, no, you misunderstand me.”

“Huh?”

“It’s hard to find people who understand how to properly use force when needed and not end up with people who get brutal and act excessively. And those are the ones we don’t want around. We think you did okay and we are letting you go. It was something else we wanted to mention.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. The Watch Commander saw the tape and how you acted, and she said that if you decided you wanted to be a police officer she would be delighted to have you on the force. I just wanted to let you know that. We try really hard to screen out people who are cruel or brutal and it looks like you might just be the type of person we’d want to have.”

He laughed. “That’s really funny. But I doubt they’d want me around, and I probably wouldn’t qualify.”

“What do you mean?”

“I had a police record when I was on earth, and had several felony convictions.”

“It doesn’t matter, your conduct on earth has no bearing on your existence here.”

“Well, it’s kind of funny, because I learned that if you have to use violence on people you only use what you need to, otherwise it’s not effective. That’s why I just knocked them against the wall, I figured if I pulled them off the guy it would be enough, and it was. But you think I could really be a police officer?”

“Yeah. You didn’t think so?”

“Well, in view of what I did on earth and my record I never even thought about it.”

“What did you do on earth?”

“I beat people up to collect the money they owed. I was a loan shark and I also did my own collections. You don’t really think I can be a cop, do you?”

“If you can use restraint properly like you did today, I think you might really be pretty good at it.”

Chapter 35

“Welcome to the Frontier. Enter at your own risk. You might not get back.”

“This is Afterlife All News Radio 2700, the most popular radio station anywhere in the Afterlife. Afterlife All News Radio 2700 standard time is 4:75. And now it’s time for our most popular show, William 330126 with *News and Commentary on the News*.

“Thanks, Al. Well, this is a new one for those of you who are interested in asking someone to go to bed with you, which is probably almost the entire listening audience. The Court of Appeals has issued a ruling that, of all things, says that it’s acceptable to slap someone if they ask you if you want to have sex with them. According to the ruling, sex is so touchy that it bothers people, so it’s reasonable if someone asks you for sex, no matter how nice, that you can be insulted and slap them one and get away with it as far as the law is concerned. But if they tell you they’re going to ask you and ask if it’s okay to ask you, and you say it’s okay to ask you, then they ask you, then they can’t slap you. I mean you can’t slap them, even I’m lost. Now if you can figure that out, you’re a better lawyer than I am. I just hope my girlfriends never hear about this gem.

“But here’s one you’re probably not going to believe. Whom do you think thought up that rule? Some broad who doesn’t like men and wishes they’d stop coming on to her? Someone who hates sex and wants to see it outlawed? Nope, you will never believe it. Just as they say there is a certain sex act that everyone knows by a two digit number, let’s just say it’s a certain individual known everywhere by his three-digit-number. Yeah, can you believe that! Supervisor 246 wrote a court opinion, upheld by the Court of Appeals, that says it’s okay to slap someone if they ask you if you want to get laid! And not only that, in the decision, he ordered some girl to *get* laid! If you don’t believe me, go look it up. *In the matter of Laura 154731, Accused, 7104 Appellate 765.*

“I could make some comments about our friend with the three-digit number again, starting with how, if you saw the news about the riot, he was on TV, saying how much he liked the sign that Nazi Skinhead was holding when he got the - well, I can’t use that word on the radio, but you know what it is - kicked out of him. Some people have no sense of responsibility, and someone as important as he is should know better than to encourage such things.

“Now let me tell you something, Watch Commander Joan had the right idea when she said that little punk deserved to have his ass thrown back into the world. Personally I think it might be better to let him face whatever God he believes in, if any. Maybe they can think of a way to send people like that to the next place they’d go if this place wasn’t here. If they can’t, how about funding a research project, and start with him as the test case? If he ends up vanishing into non existence, well, that’s just too bad, I’m sure we’ll all miss him terribly, yeah, right, but you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs, I say.

“I have to tell you, the Chairman made an excellent choice when he appointed Joan in place of the previous Watch Commander, who never met a Road Molester he didn’t like, especially after he was properly bribed. Though I wish she wasn’t so ‘by the book,’ maybe we need a little less law and more order sometimes. Like upholding the Free Speech law even when it allows the spreading of that kind of garbage. We don’t need that sort of stuff in a free society. We’d all be a whole lot better off if we didn’t have to be exposed to that sort of trash.

“In fact, I’m going to be on a panel show with my good friend Lou 5, and a special guest

that they haven't told us whom it is yet, but since we both have said we oppose such things I figure they'll find someone soft in the head to support it. My guess is the person who they'll argue in favor of this is probably some right-wing punk who thinks the Holocaust never happened, or thinks it was a good idea. Be sure to tune in, and get all your friends to watch *Your Point of View*, Channel 63,045 next Earthday at 7. I'll do my best to tear this guy apart, whoever he is. I'll even give him extra time to argue his point. Oh excuse me, I'm sorry. His or Her point, it conceivably could be a woman arguing for the other side.

"But what gets me is, as my spies tell me, is how our three digit friend again, went down to the Picketing Zone, and actually gave the little Brown Shirt a brand new printed sign containing exactly the same words of hatred and bias; such cruel and vicious slander to a race of people that have been suffering untold agonies for thousands of years. So now, our local member of the *Nazi Party of the Afterlife* doesn't have a crude hand-printed sign, he has a nice, professional looking printed sign. Maybe our three-digit friend is some sort of secret member of the local Brown Shirt movement, I don't know. If he's not somehow connected, then I don't understand how he can, in all seriousness, do such a thing. Now people will believe that punk holding up the sign represents some serious group instead of being just another fractured saucepan, e.g. a cracked pot.

"But let's not dwell on unpleasant things. I've got something here a lot of you thought was quite funny. Especially since most of you are smart enough not to go within 10 kilometers of the entrance to the Frontier, and have never seen *The Sign*.

"Now, so many of you listeners liked my story about *The Sign* at *The Right of The Road* so much and asked me to, that I decided to repeat it; some of you said you didn't get to hear all of it. As I promised yesterday I'll read it again for those of you who didn't hear it on last week's show and you can tape it if you wish, also because someone suggested a new ending which I'm going to use. Okay, here goes.

"At the edge of this city, the border of the English Language Section, there is a place. It's where the world ends, as people say. It's the area between this city, where people think in English, and the places where people think in other languages. That place in between is called the Frontier. Some people say it ought to be called the *Twilight Zone*. Some people call it names that are so bad I can't repeat them on the air.

"In order to get from one language area to another there is a street running out of this city and on past the horizon. It is an important street. It is the only highway going that way. Since there is only one road out there until you go at least 200 kilometers, it didn't really have a name until people started to give it one. Its name is, if you can believe this, is "The." That's right, "The." It's expressway quality; two lanes in each direction with a shoulder on each side separated by a median, similar to the QEW, or any typical Interstate highway in the country South of the Border to the civilized one I was from. It was decided to not call "The" a street, or a highway, or a lane, but simply, to call it a *road*. So its name is "The" Road. It's one of the few times the word "the" is capitalized in the middle of a sentence.

"Actually, I've heard people who've been there say they shouldn't have called it "The" Road, they should have called it "The" Highway to Hell. Or "The" Highway Through Hell, take your pick.

"Next to *The Road*, is a sign. It is so well respected that no one has ever bothered with it for years. That sign even says what will happen to them if they do. Because this highway is

named *The Road*, people refer to that sign as, you guessed it, "*The Sign*". Five others are next to *The Sign* saying *The Same Thing* in *The* other languages.

"So, for your enjoyment, ladies and germs, here is what *The Sign*, posted to *The Right* side of, *The Road*, at *The Entrance*, to *The Frontier*, says, in *The Queen's English*. Well, *The Chairman's English*, anyway, that is:

WARNING TO ALL TRAVELERS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AFTERLIFE:
PLEASE READ THIS OR YOU WILL BE VERY SORRY AND YOU WILL REGRET
IT. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.

REMOVING OR DEFACING THIS SIGN WILL GET YOU INVOLUNTARILY
RECYCLED, NO EXCEPTIONS, NO SECOND CHANCES, NO KIDDING. YOU
CAN GET A COPY OF THIS SIGN FROM THE AUTHORITIES - FREE AND WITH
NO QUESTIONS ASKED - IF YOU WANT ONE.

IF YOU DO ANYTHING TO HURT THIS SIGN YOU WILL BE A HURTING
NEWBORN ON EARTH IN LESS THAN HALF AN HOUR, IF YOU ARE EVEN
ALLOWED TO LIVE.

DON'T EVEN GIVE THIS SIGN DIRTY LOOKS, IT MIGHT TAKE OFFENSE.
THEN THE AUTHORITIES WILL TAKE OFFENSE. AT YOU. SOON AFTER
THAT, YOUR NEW MAMMA WILL BE BREAST FEEDING YOU AND
CHANGING YOUR DIAPERS.

The Following line shall indicate - in that language - the primary language of the area this
sign is posted within:

You are leaving the jurisdiction of the **English** Language Section of the Afterlife.

The area you are about to enter is called *The Frontier*. This area extends at least 1500
kilometers in any direction until you reach the border of some other area where people
think in a different language than the one for this area.

Please be aware of the following:

1. The highway you are about to embark upon is named "The." It is called "The Road". The additional highways that cross it or run parallel are called "The Cross Road," "The Not Really Cross Road," "The Double Cross Road," "The Right Cross Road," "The Back Road," "The Right Way," "The Wrong Way," and "The Other Road." In the future, any additional added roads which are named with "The" and ending with "Road" or "Way" will be included in this list on a temporary basis without being listed here until this sign can be reissued with the new roads added to this list. Where this sign says "The Road" I mean all of these and the following applies equally to all of them.

2. When I use the word “Them” or “They” with a capital T, it means the Authorities of the various Language Sections.
3. You may use The Road to get to any other language area. The signs on The Road will direct you which way to go. Do not trust any sign which is not on The Road or the shoulder. Do not trust any sign that does not look official or tells you to go off The Road.
4. There is no speed limit, you may go as fast as you wish, but if you hit someone hard enough to be knocked off of, or do anything that causes them to become off of, The Road, if it is your fault, you will be severely punished and possibly Recycled unless you bring them back to The Road before someone does something to them.
5. Where this sign talks about “The Road” it includes the shoulders, the median strip, any turnabout in the median, that portion of any other highway that crosses The Road at grade, the exits, the on- and off-ramps, any overpass above The Road or underpass below The Road as well as the connecting highway between the two sides of the roadway and for a distance of 20 meters. Where there is an exit, an underpass or overpass, “The Road” includes the opposing highway for 20 meters in each direction away from The Road if the opposing highway is not otherwise part of The Road as specified in Paragraph 1 of this sign.
6. There is only one Rule of The Road. To residents of the Frontier, be advised that *The Rule of The Road* is: **Thou shalt do nothing to hurt The Road or the shoulders, and leaveth alone the touristes upon it.** Those traveling on The Road or on the shoulders are inviolate, you shall not rob, molest, hurt, or plunder them. You shall not damage or break The Road, stop traffic or cause people to leave it.
7. This requirement to leave travelers on The Road alone does not apply if you see someone doing any of the above to others on The Road. If you do, you may capture for disposal to The Authorities those who do that, whom They call *Road Molesters*: anyone who you see robbing or plundering people (or all the other things I told you not to do to them while) on The Road, stopping traffic, causing people to leave The Road (without immediately returning them and before someone does something to them), or damaging The Road.
8. If you are a Road Molester, the Language Sections will send The Authorities or their Authorized Agents, Deputies, or, if necessary, Wizards to cross into the Frontier, find you, attack you viciously, and bring you back to be Involuntarily Recycled when They catch you. And They *will* catch you, because Everyone in the Frontier knows that the cops give extra leeway (“increased Karma”) to those

who turn in Road Molesters.

9. If you see that The Road has become damaged you are permitted to make quick repairs as long as it does not stop traffic or cause people to go off The Road, unless the damage to The Road is so severe that it has already stopped traffic. Those who improve the road with repairs increase their Karma with The Authorities, as it saves Them from having to do so.
10. In the case of occasional Road Molesters, those who do so will be Involuntarily Recycled. If Everyone out here watches for them and turns them in, it will increase Karma and The Authorities will leave you guys alone. If Road Molesters start appearing on a regular basis, and They are having trouble finding or stopping them, or you guys start to hide them, it will decrease Karma and I won't like it. If you guys run out of Karma, then fun and games are over and I will start shutting you down. So if you know of Road Molesters, you are encouraged to capture them and turn them in to The Authorities, it will increase your Karma and make Them more likely to leave you alone to continue to have fun off The Road in whatever sadistic ways you want.
11. Just because The Road is supposed to be inviolate does not mean it always will be; the only way anyone will know if a Road Molester broke The Rule of The Road is if you capture them and turn them in to The Authorities, escape, or someone else comes back to tell Them. For that reason, it is recommended that you don't travel on The Road alone, make sure you have a way for someone to rescue you or to come back and tell Them in case a Road Molester breaks The Rule of The Road.
12. The reason people come out to the Frontier is that they reject My civilization and do not want to live under its rules. So if you go into the Frontier, you lose the benefits of the civilization of a high-technology virtual world and you go back to the rules required in the real world on Terra. Computer services are not available and 'magic' doesn't work here. Everything has to be done on the same rules as if you were on earth, e.g. phones and electric lights have to have wires and switches to connect them, cell phones have to have towers, you can't teleport to get places, you have to travel by walking, ordinary land equipment or such aircraft as would have operated there and under the same rules and restrictions on operations, etc., except that you don't have to refuel equipment and some weapons may have unlimited ammo.
13. From time to time someone may have My Authority to be here. I refer to them as a Wizard, because they *will* have computer support and may use magic. Wizards will wear clear and obvious indications of same under the provisions for Lawful Combatants in the *Third Geneva Convention*: Article 4.A(2) of the *Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War* of Terra

Calendar Date 12 August 1949. Wizards will not be inviolate and you can do anything to them that you think you can get away with, but remember, they have the Authority of God to do anything in response, including ways to which you can't respond. And anyone is permitted to come to their aid, including someone else who has authority to use magic. Unless they are looking for you, you have their solemn promise they will not do anything to you unless you do or try to do something to them first. Leave them alone and if they are not looking for you they will do the same.

14. Firing ordnance at or across The Road, even if it only goes through the air and nobody is there, or shooting into the Frontier from The Road, is considered the same as damaging The Road, and brands you a Road Molester. You shall not use artillery or any weapons in directions pointing toward or upon the road. Stepping onto the shoulders of the road or crossing it to the other side, in order to take time out from any war or fighting is permitted. The only time you may use ordnance on the road is if someone else uses or attempts to use it on you or someone else first, and only against them in order to subdue them to return them to The Authorities as a Road Molester.
15. Do not leave The Road or the shoulders of the road under any circumstances unless you intend to enter the Frontier. The Authorities will not help you and nobody will come to get you back unless your friends do so. There is no law except the Law of the Jungle in the Frontier, anyone may do anything to anyone out there. Rule #1 doesn't apply there, there are no rules. Well, there is one rule. *The Rule of Promise.*
16. The Rule of Promise is: **If anyone inside the Frontier makes a Solemn Promise, given freely without coercion, and you can prove they broke it, they will be Recycled.** No kidding. Breaking your solemn promise then drops your karma to less than zero which means you are in serious trouble. If you make a solemn promise out here you had better keep it because you won't be around for long if you don't.
17. So basically if you're out here, you only have to remember two rules: Leave The Road and those using it alone, and keep your solemn promises. Do those two things and The Authorities will leave you alone to go about your unlawful business.
18. Turn in Road Molesters to The Authorities, as well as those who wilfully break their Solemn Promises, and you increase your Karma as well as that of the Frontier. You don't have to, but consider this: If you screw up somehow and your Karma is increased enough, The Authorities will be considerably more tolerant of you and They might just let you come back out here rather than violating you six-ways-to-Sunday, or worse.

19. Be a Road Molester, or get caught wilfully breaking your Solemn Promise, and the authorities will screw you up considerably before they let you go, at the Recycling Center, as they force you under the knife and throw your ass back into the world.

Welcome to the Frontier. Enter at your own risk. You might not get back. Have fun.

This sign shall be posted at the edge of the Frontier to the right of the entrance to The Road. The English text shall be the definitive version. Each Language Section shall also post this sign in English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish, any additional languages they feel are appropriate, as well as their own language if it is not one of these.

BY DIRECT ORDER OF THE CHAIRMAN, ISSUED IN THE NAME OF GOD.

We The Authorities, solemnly promise, freely given without coercion, as if We were inside of the Frontier, to abide by the above, and to hold our officers to do the same:

Joan 20319, Police Watch Commander, English Section
Francois 95, Superintendent of the Gendarmes, French Section
Maximilian 9189, Commandant of the State Police, German Section
Benito 2230, Chief of the Carboneri, Italian Section
Carlos 7312, General of the Federales, Mexican Section
Peter 3, Chief of Police, Russian Section

“The list continues for another 100 or so names, one for each language’s Chief of Police. Well, you get the general idea. Sort of gives you that warm feeling all over, doesn’t it, about the way the Frontier might just be the perfect place to spend a few years to go to find peace, quiet, tranquility and respect from other people. NOT.

“A listener suggested I add something to that report, so I’ll do that. If this was a music station, I know what song I’d play. So I’ll play you a clip.” A song by Ace of Base blares out:

I saw the sign
And it opened up my eyes, I saw the sign
Life is demanding without understanding
I saw the sign
And it opened up my eyes, I saw the sign
No one's gonna drag you up
To get into the light where you belong
But where do you belong?

“Now let’s go on to our next item. Did you ever notice some of the really stupid opinions people post in the Picketing Zone? I’d like to tell you about a few. We could start

with the one which, as I mentioned in my lead story, is so beloved by our lovable friend who might just be one of those Brown Shirt types, Supervisor 246, on the subject of antisemitism. How anyone can support such crap is absolutely beyond me.

“But here are a few more items which I thought were hilarious, and I decided I’d let you hear some of them. First was the guy who said to Ask about the Real Heaven. Hell, if this place were like what some of those religious wackos say the Bible says it’s supposed to be, I’d have done a u-turn and gone under the knife the minute I got here.

“Let me tell you, I think the Afterlife is terrific, it’s a great place to die, or to be dead in. Just like Canada was a great place to live in until I fell out the window of the revolving restaurant at the top of the Skylon Tower in Niagara Falls, Ontario a few years ago, when some wacked out tourist decided to bash out one of the windows in order to parachute out, he broke the glass but in the process, so many people panicked and ran that I got knocked over by the crowd and fell 300 feet.

“All the man had to do was open the chain that said ‘Emergency use only’ walk down 10 steps, and open the emergency door. The alarm would have gone off so he would have gotten noticed, and I’m sure the stairs were steel frame and open to the air, he could have jumped from there and been able to give interviews about his wacked out opinion after maybe a small fine or a few days in jail, instead of getting 20 years for involuntary manslaughter when I died. And I wouldn’t be here now. And speaking of wacked out people, here’s another one of those wacked out ideas direct from the Zone ...”

Chapter 36

“Request permission to ‘up Chuck’ sir.”

The *(Third) Geneva Convention*, Article 4.A(2), defines a Lawful Combatant as “(a) that of being commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates; (b) that of having fixed distinctive insignia recognizable at a distance; (c) that of carrying arms openly; and (d) that of conducting their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.”

246 popped into David’s office. “Hi. I’m going to be doing a job out in the Frontier, would you like to come with me?”

“Are you serious? I’ve heard that place is positively horrible.”

“Well, it is but only if you’re a civilian. As it turns out, if you have military status you generally have it fairly safe. Not completely but most of them will leave you alone.”

“Really?”

“Really, really. I think most people should see the place at least once, if for no other reason than to let them know why they want to stay away. But I think you’ll find it fun since I’ll be there to watch out for you.”

“Well, okay.”

“Fine. We need to change. Central Computer, grant David 30216 military noncombatant status grade 2.” David’s outfit changes to a typical costume worn by a wizard, a silk outfit, with white stars and half-moons, and a large pointed conical hat with the same markings, only it’s in bright red. On his back are two green stripes.

David glances at the mirror. “This has got to be the most horrible looking outfit I’ve seen in a long time.”

“Yeah, but it will protect your ass against most attacks. Central Computer, grant me military combatant status grade 1.” 246 is now wearing a costume similar to David’s, except he has one green stripe on the back, he is carrying a wand with a star on the end, and his outfit is black.

“Is there some significance to this?”

“Yes. Your outfit is red, it means that you’re just here to watch what’s going on. However, you do have authority to act in the conflict. I have one bar on my cloak, you have two. That tells anyone that you’re superior to me. We’re following the rules of the Geneva Convention. The stripe across the back represents ‘a distinct fixed insignia recognizable at a distance.’^{ix} That’s also why I have this wand, I am carrying ‘arms’ openly. If anyone does anything to us I will use computer commands on them, i.e. ‘magic’ and if they do anything to you I’ll hurt them even worse. And I am in black meaning I have the ability to attack them. You do not which is why you’re in red. They’ll leave both of us alone because we’re not interested in their war, but I will attack if provoked. Back in the 19th Century, caravans used to travel with nothing more for protection than the Union Jack showing on the back of the last animal in the convoy, because people knew that the British Empire would come down on them like a ton of bricks if they molested a convoy flying its flag. So the locals would leave them alone. Our wearing these outfits tells the slime out there to leave us alone or I will fuck them up. And it works. You ready to go?”

“Uh, yeah, I guess.”

“Don’t worry, this will be fun. Central Computer, transport me and David 30216 to sidewalk of address 220012 Skid Row.”

“Warning, you are about to transport into the Frontier. Confirm or cancel.”

“Central Computer, confirm.” They dematerialize.

They arrive in what appears to be a dilapidated area of some large city on earth, with a lot of run-down looking buildings, very dirty street, and a barroom in front of them, with a sign in front of it, “Just Another Saloon.” They walk off the road and over to it. “Go on in. I’ll be right behind you.”

David walks in and sees a typical big city bar, various ads on the wall, neon signs for various brands of beer and other hard liquor, a juke box in the corner, a lot of cigarette smoke in the air, and the various clientele consisting of a lot of not-very-nice-looking people, mostly men, who look like the typical picture of an earth convention of bikers: big men with beards, thick arms and beer bellies.^x Off in the corner, two of them are beating the crap out of one another (similar to the scenes in the movie *Fight Club*), and nobody is really noticing. One of the bar patrons looks at David. “You got a lot of nerve coming in here looking like that. I’m thinking I ought to kick your ass around the bar a few times.”

“Listen, I don’t want any trouble, I don’t have any argument with you.”

“Yeah, well I’m making one.” The guy goes to take a swing at David, and suddenly his punch is stopped in mid air.

246 Walks in. “Chuckie, Chuckie, I am really disappointed in you, how many times do you have to be told what a red wizard’s costume means?”

“Uh, 246, I’m sorry, I thought he just walked in here by himself, I was just playin’.”

“No Chuckie, that’s not playing. You can do that to the civilians. Why is he wearing red?”

“Uh, he’s not here to fight?”

“Exactly. He’s harmless unless you bother him. And he doesn’t even have the capacity to bother you. Why is he here?”

“Uh, because you work for him?”

“Correct. I think you make me sick and I’m going to prove it.”

“Oh, no, 246, not that!”

“Well, we’ll see.” 246 turns to David. “Request permission to ‘up Chuck’ sir.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, sir, basically I use my wand to make him fly up until he crashes into the ceiling, then, as they say, what goes up must come down, so I let him crash into the floor. But I’m still sick of him so I make him ‘up Chuck’ again and again until I feel better. Or until he passes out, which ever comes first, sir.” Out of Chuck’s view, 246 looks at David and faintly shakes his head no.

“No, 246.”

“Well, Chuckie, looks like this is your lucky day, my superior says no, so I can’t. But I want you out of my presence.” He turns to David again. “Request permission to defenestrate, sir.”

Again, where Chuck can’t see, 246 faintly nods his head.

“Go ahead.”

246 waves his wand, and Chuck flies through the plate glass window, to land out in the street.

“I really wish he’d learn that he can’t do that.”

The bartender yells out, “Hey, what about my window?”

“Oh yeah. Central Computer, undo last command.”

Chuck flies back in, lands in his seat, and the window unbreaks. 246 puts his foot on Chuck’s face. “Now do you understand that you don’t do that?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Get out of here and tell your friends that you and everyone else are to leave officers alone. You wanna pick on someone, you come pick on me or someone in a black robe. But you’re too big a coward to do that, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I’m a coward.”

246 puts his foot back down. “Get the fuck out of here before I up Chuck anyway.” Chuck leaves in a hurry. Several people applaud.

“I’ve heard that he’s not been following the rules and I wanted to catch him at it.” 246 speaks louder, “After all, everyone knows we’re civilized out here, right?”

Just about everyone in the bar yells out, “Bull shit!”

“Okay, well, does anyone have anything they want to tell me?”

There is silence for a moment, then someone says, “Why don’t you just get out of here, 246.”

“Why don’t you make me.”

The man comes over to 246 and pours a pitcher of beer over his head. At this point, smoke starts to come off of 246's outfit, and he starts to get smaller, as he whines out, “I’m melting!” He continues to shrink until there is nothing left but a smoldering black costume. The bar breaks up into applause.

Chapter 37

“Eventually... people will be able to visit the Frontier...”

David is standing there, horrified. At this point, someone walks up to David from behind, and puts their hand on his shoulder. David nearly jumps out of his skin when he sees it's 246 again, dressed in the same black wizard's outfit. “Didn't you ever see *The Wizard of Oz*, David? That movie is older than I was.”

“Oh, the Wicked Witch of the West.”

“Exactly. Anyway, we can go.” They step outside. “David, I'm sorry if I used you for bait back there, but I had to see to it that Chuck learned that when someone wears a red wizard's costume you leave them alone. I figure he'll spread this around like crazy and it will get it across to people. Eventually that's going to be how people will be able to visit the Frontier; they will dress in all red and the scumbags here will leave them alone. Anyway, there are about ten places I visit that I go there to see if anyone has any complaints or anything they want to say. It's how I find out about problems before there's a disaster or we get a riot out here that might spill over into town.”

“What was it with that stunt you pulled back there?”

“Oh, it's a long-standing joke ever since I started coming out here on a regular basis. If nobody's got anything to say, then I've got no reason to stay since I'm not interested in getting drunk. So if someone says I should leave, we do the 'Wicked Witch of the West' routine. It creates a dramatic exit and raises my reputation as a wizard. It's also fun. The look on your face was just unbelievable. Or as MasterCard would say, it was 'priceless'.”

“I could not believe what had happened.”

“The first time they see it actually happen it shocks a lot of people.”

“I have a question. What does 'defenestrate' mean?”

“Exactly what I did. To throw something out a window.”

“Oh.”

“Anyway, let's go on to the next place. Central Computer, transport me and David 30216 to sidewalk on underpass of The Road and The Other Road.”

They materialize at what appears to be a large freeway interchange, like a cloverleaf. They are standing under a bridge. They walk out, walk off the road and walk over to what appears to be a large truck stop where a lot of trucks are parked. One guy is driving along and sees them, then turns. He starts heading for them. 246 starts to run, then yells, “David, stand still! I promise you he won't hurt you!”

The driver, apparently hell-bent on destruction, barrels down on David, accelerating as he approached him. The driver aims for him, and accelerates faster as he is about to run him down.

The truck strikes David, and a horrible crash occurs. The man's truck has a large crater down the center as the cab collapses, and the driver is ejected out the windshield. The cab buckles as the trailer slams into the back of the tractor, then pops off the connector, jackknives and rolls over before smashing into another trailer, causing them both to open and spill their contents. Other people come over to see what happened, while some come running to loot the contents from the trailers that have now burst from the accident.

A man dressed like a cop came over, ignoring the continued looting, to check out 246 and David.

“What’s going on here?”

246 looked at him. “Hi, Alan, how are you today?”

“246, what are you doing here, slumming again?”

“Sort of. We were just crossing the parking lot. The guy in the truck tried to run over a man clearly marked by a red suit. He wasn’t even in the way, the guy deliberately tried to run him over.”

“They’ll never learn, will they?”

“I guess not.”

“So he’s your commanding officer?”

“That’s correct.”

“Okay, then, have a nice day.” Alan walks off, ignoring what are now hundreds of looters, who are stealing everything not nailed down, including the tires and other parts of the damaged trucks. Four people are fighting over the unconscious body of the driver, playing ‘tug-of-war’ with his arms and legs. A group of about a dozen are attempting to remove the engine from the undamaged tractor.

“Let’s go, David.”

“What on earth happened?”

246 turned to him and smiled. “We’re not on earth, David.”

“Well, what happened?”

246 grinned. “Whenever you stand still in that suit, you’re invulnerable to anything except a wizard. Nobody can strike, hit or touch you. You become part of the ground. The guy in the truck, when he ran into you, effectively tried to run into a steel-reinforced concrete post. Now, if you hit something, you smash it. That’s why you don’t have to do anything to protect yourself except stand still.”

“Amazing. I never felt a thing.”

“You’re not supposed to. The force field on your suit extends for two meters around you. The only way someone can come near you is if they move slowly. And they can’t even come within touching distance unless you approach them or they’re also wearing a wizard’s suit. People here are starting to learn that a red cloak means ‘hands off.’ A few don’t believe the rumors and try something. Then they spread the rumors even further, they tell more people about it. I’ll know how effective it is when I start to see people get out of the way of someone in a red suit. Here’s the entrance.” They went inside.

The inside looks like a typical truck stop, with gift shop and restaurants. David turned to him.

“I thought people didn’t have to eat here?”

“They don’t, but some people still like to. They can’t go to the bathroom, but some of them still like to eat. And having a beer with friends is sometimes like a social get together.

Anyway, let’s go in here,” he said, pointing to a coffee shop. “I’ll see if there’s anything new going on.” They step inside.

The place is very busy, waitresses running all over the place, people sitting around, some eating, some drinking, others just watching. Suddenly two guys look their way, panic and start to run.

246 yells at them. “STOP!”

The two stop. 246 walks over to them. “Why did you two run?”

“Well, ah…”

“Look, I’m not interested in you two and I probably am too busy to bother. Did you hurt

someone else?”

“No.”

“Then tell me, I’m not going to have you punished.”

The other one spoke. “Well, ah, we didn’t know about the rule not to fight on the road and we were shooting at each other across it. Some guy tried to arrest us and we ran.”

“How long ago was this?”

“Four days ago.”

“Come here. You two now know what the rules are here, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, then, you don’t have to run anymore, I’ll clear any report against you, but I want a favor from both of you.”

“What?”

“If either of you hears about someone doing some of the things we don’t allow, especially if they’re attacking people on the road, or hurting people, or they’re holding tourists as slaves, or things like that, I expect you to tell the first wizard you see about it. And let me tell you something, it’s pointless for you to run, we can catch you as fast as we want. Can I show you something that won’t hurt?”

“Sure.” “Yeah”

246 steps back. “Central Computer, transport all civilians standing within two meters from me to the front hall of the Jail building in the English Language Section.” The two men dematerialize.

“Central Computer, undo last request.” They return. “Now, can I show you something else?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Which of you alone wants to try it?”

“Okay.”

“Central Computer, transport all civilians who are wearing a plaid shirt, tan pants, blue socks and brown shoes within 500 meters of me to the front hall of the Jail building in the English Language Section.” One of the two men vanishes. “Central Computer, undo last request.” Again, he returns.

The one who wasn’t wearing a plaid shirt was also surprised. “Wow, that was amazing. Emelio, what did you think of that?”

“I’m surprised, I never knew these guys could do that.”

“Yeah, I had heard that wizards had to actually touch you to do anything.”

“So you see, if I want to capture you, all I have to do is see you. And if I’m not looking for you, if you don’t run, I’ll never know. Okay?”

“Oh, okay.”

“Central Computer, grant ten points karma to all civilians standing within two meters of me and confirm.”

“Karma: ten points granted to 00990 FN Emilio 003337, 08703 WG Tim 907614 Completed.”

“Okay, so anyway, you two can go back to whatever you were doing.” The two of them walk back to the table they were at. 246 turns to David. “Nice kids, they listen.” One of them, the one who wasn’t wearing a plaid shirt, comes back over. “Uh, what’s your name?”

“Supervisor 246.”

His friend comes over, his eyes wide. “Wow! You’re *the* 246 everyone talks about?”

“Uh huh.”

“Uh, 246, can you do that to send me to France? I have a girlfriend over there I want to go see but it’s about a two-day trip over land.”

“And you’ll remember to tell Wizards about people who are hurting others out here?”

“Yeah, sure, in fact, come here a second,” he whispers something in 246’s ear.

“Okay, thanks for the info. What’s her address?”

“2203 North 14 Department 120.”

“What about your friend here?”

“Well, I guess I could go back to the English Language Section, as long as I’m not going to jail.”

“What are your names?”

“Emelio” “Tim”

“Central Computer teleport Tim to Central Square in the English Language Section and teleport Emelio to sidewalk in front of 2203 North 14 Department 120 in the French Language Section.”

They vanish. He speaks louder. “Anyone have anything they need to tell me?”

Silence. “Okay, I’m leaving now.” He resumes a normal voice. “Okay, David, let’s go.”

They walk outside and start across the parking lot, where looters continue to clean up the mess - or rather, clean out everything not nailed down or strapped in - left behind from the accident, when a young lady runs up to him. “Hey, 246, hold on a minute!”

He stops and turns around. “Hi. What can I do you for?”

“I saw how nice you treated those two kids. Let’s neck.” She walks up to him and they start kissing passionately, and rubbing against each other. She puts her arms around him and then whispers, “Feel me up in an obvious fashion so I can slap you.” He does. She stops, hauls off and slaps him, then turns around and storms off in what appears to be disgust. He rubs his face and looks at her in a curious way.

“Okay, let’s go.” They walk on a ways until they pass behind a tractor and he stops.

Reaching behind his neck, he pulls out a piece of paper. “Ah, here we go. Excellent. She just slipped me a note that tells me about a serious road molester who’s been out terrorizing people. That’s on top of what that young man told me about another one, I’ll pass it on to the Chief Wizard Sheila, she can set up a sting operation. But this, I need to stop.”

He walks over to where the looters pulling on the driver (who has now come to) that attempted to run over David, who now number 16, are piled up 4-on each of his arms and legs as each group is trying to pull him away from the other three, while he is yelling out, “Hey, let go of me, Goddammit! Ow! That hurts!”

246 claps his hands 3 times, slowly, then shakes his head. He taps his finger in the air, pointing it down at the ground. The people trying to grab the driver drop him and run, proceeding back to the carcasses of the trucks for other lucrative items.

“Oh Christ, I hurt.” he moans.

“You’ll feel better in a few minutes. Why did you run down someone in a red wizard’s cloak?”

“Someone told me they were fair game to run over.”

“Well, now you know it’s the exact opposite.”

“Yeah. Well, at least they won’t be selling me to the nearest faggot warlord. I can’t very well say thank you, in view of what happened it would be stupid of me to. I don’t know if it means anything, but is there anything I can do?”

“Well, I’m going to ask some favors of you.”

“You got it.”

“First, if you see or know of someone doing road molesting, grabbing tourists off the road or holding people for ransom, you’re going to tell the first wizard you see.”

“Yeah.”

“Next, whenever you talk to people, you’re going to tell them to leave anyone in a red cloak alone. And you’ll tell them why. You specifically tell them it happened to you; I don’t want these ‘I know a guy who knows a guy who heard’ type stories; people won’t believe them. And you make it clear what you did and what happened.”

“Sure.”

“I can put things back the way they were. But you don’t tell anyone. Wizards have this killer rep of being really bad guys. If people think we’re decent sort of people instead of callous bastards we won’t be effective, so you don’t tell anyone I did this for you.”

He smiled. “Did what?”

“That’s the spirit! Now what you’re going to do is go into that diner, tell what happened sort of casually, and when you get back you’ll find your truck on the other side of the parking lot. Your keys will even fit the replacement.”

“You know, I heard you guys were really cruel. I think maybe I’ve been thinking the wrong things about wizards all along.”

“Perhaps you have. But you don’t tell anyone that. As I said, the reason we get results from people is that they are afraid to cross us. If people think we’re nice guys they’re going to think they can get away with stuff.”

“I don’t know anything about that, all I know is no wizard ever helped me and trying to run over one cost me a truck and a load.” he said, smiling again.

“Good.” After the man leaves, 246 turns to David. “So what do you think?”

“This is absolutely amazing, I had no idea what went on out here. But I just have one question, though.”

“What’s that?”

“Considering all the advantages that are available to people in the city, why would people want to live out here, like this?”

246 smiled. “Well, a lot of them think that this is a setup, they’re being tested to see if they can resist our world in order to go on to the next one. Some of them believe there *is* a next world beyond this one. Some think this is like Purgatory, the place you go to after you die and before you get into heaven. Which means that the government running this place is not the throne of God. So, do you know what that means they think we are?”

“No.”

“Well it’s funny because on earth I was a Christian so I can understand. Basically some of them think we’re the representatives of the opposite of God. So you can guess whom they think the Chairman is.”

“The Antichrist?”

246 grinned and nodded. “You got it. I mean, we have all these things, the equivalent of magic, no punishment for what they did on earth, plenty of free sex and no recriminations, no pearly gates and no angels to see them, and so on, so some of them think that we’re all part of some massive Satanic Sting operation to trick them into going against God. If we could figure a way to send them on to the next world without risking that the result would be annihilation, we’d do that if they wanted it. But unless we can discover such a way, we won’t even consider

it. So the ones who don't want to be part of our society end up out here."

"I guess I can understand why some of them don't want to stay. But is that everyone?"

"No, there are some people who did something wrong, then either ran out here to get away or agreed to come out here in exchange for not being punished. And some that just choose to come out here. As long as they don't break the two rules, we leave them alone. Anyway, I have a few more stops to make for my weekly rounds, do you want to come along or have you seen enough?"

"This is really fascinating, I'll come along."

Chapter 38

“So you think you can find almost anything?”

A woman - one of about three dozen people, men and women - is sitting inside an enormous circular booth with a sign above her, “Information.” A man, somewhat confused, walks up to her. “I’m kind of lost here, perhaps you can help me.”

“Certainly, what did you want?”

“Well, I’m not really certain where I am.”

“This is Central Square. You can use a kiosk to go anywhere from here, or if you prefer ground transport you can go to the trolley terminal that way, bus station that way, car rentals around the corner, or the subway entrance over there.”

“Well, I guess that’s right except I have no idea how I got here.”

“Let me see if I can help you out. What is the last thing you remember?”

“Well, I was sitting in a chair, and I thought I must have fallen asleep or something. I had this weird dream where I saw this white light, and then I woke up in some office. I must have been sleepwalking. I walked out of the office, caught an elevator down to the lobby, walked out, and came over here. I think I must have passed by some abortion clinic, there were a whole bunch of people holding picket signs in the outer office back there.”

She looks at him, her eyes opening wide. “I think I know what’s going on. Where were you, exactly, what place, when you were sitting in a chair, and where do you think you are now?”

“Well, I was back home in Pennsylvania. I live in this small town called Warfordsburg, you’ve probably never heard of it. I must have sleepwalked to my truck and driven somewhere, so I guess I’m in Pittsburgh or maybe this is New York City, I’ve never really been to any big cities.”

She smiled. “Well, look, ah, what’s your name?”

“Barney.”

“I’m Luann. Well, look, Barney, I get off work in about ten minutes, how about we go somewhere for a drink and I’ll explain it to you?”

He smiled at her, “How about your apartment, Luann?”

She smiled back at him, “That’s a great idea! I’ll even take the subway to my place so we can have some time to talk instead of transporting there directly. Go over to the bench over there and I’ll come by in a few minutes.”

“Okay.”

Another gentleman steps up. Luann turns to him. “Hi there, can you wait about 30 seconds? I have to mention something to one of the other agents.”

“Oh sure.”

Luann walks over to another clerk and whispers in her ear, “Boy are you going to be jealous!”

The other clerk nods, and finishes talking to the customer. “What is it, Luann?”

“Jo, you are going to be absolutely livid! See that guy over there in the waiting area?”

“Yeah, kinda cute guy?”

“Get this, he doesn’t know he’s dead and he walked out of the Welcoming Department without being loved back into the world!”

Jo’s eyes flash. “A live dead virgin out loose?”

“Yep. And I let him think he’s seducing me!”

“Wow! I’ll bet you’re going to have a lot of fun with him.”

“I’m sure going to try. As soon as I get him home I’ll tell him what I want and then we’ll have some real fun. I haven’t had the chance to get a real Incoming in maybe 50 calendar years. I’ll bet it will be fun to get a guy who isn’t going to realize how good it is, boy is he going to be surprised!”

“Yeah, I’ll bet. Damn, I’m sorry he didn’t walk up to my station. Well, anyway, have fun.”

“Oh, I’m sure I will!”

Luann walks back to her window. “How can I help you now?”

“Well, I’m not sure how to do this, but I’ve heard that if you knew someone back on earth you can be told when they die so you can meet them.”

“Oh, you mean you want to flag them so you can see them when they enter the *Tunnel of Light*?”

“Yeah. that’s it.”

“Okay, it’s going to cost 1000 credits of work or 500 credits prepaid.”

“What does that mean in favors?”

“Are you working right now?”

“No.”

“Okay, what you’d have to do is offer 1000 favors of work time, or go to work for some public agency that agrees your time is worth more than 1 favor per hour, and trade the time you worked for work credit. So if you got some place that really thought you were good and they would agree your work is worth, say, ten credits per favor, then it would take you 50 hours if you came in to ask for it after you had worked the whole time. But if you wanted it in advance of working, it costs the full price and it would take 100 hours in that case.”

“Seems expensive.”

“Well, we have a labor shortage so they had to raise the price to encourage more people to take work assignments. In fact, most privileges and public services went up in price because of the labor shortage. It’s the only way we can get the critical jobs done.”

“I see.”

“Look, if you’re interested, go over to Job Service, they often have really critical jobs up, if you find one they’re desperate and you fit they might buy you a flagging in exchange for a certain number of hours, so you might get a better deal that way.”

“I think I’ll do that. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

Another man walks up. “So this is the Information Desk?”

“Yes.”

“What sort of information can I get here?”

“Almost anything. If we can’t figure it out we refer you to the English Language Section Public Library information center. If they can’t, well, then there’s the Afterlife TransNational University information system. There’s other services beyond that but then it would probably be expensive for you.”

“So you think you can find almost anything?”

“I’ve been pretty good at it.”

“Okay, let me see if I can think of something to stump you.” He looks off into space then smiles. “Okay, where can I get laid?”

“Oh that’s easy. Go back through the Picketing Zone, first building on the left, go to the

1000th floor, enter through the door marked 'Reception Area' and some woman will come get you. Or a man if you go that way, they figure out which you're interested in."

He looks at her, his eyes bug out. "You're kidding!"

"No. Didn't they offer it to you when you showed up here?"

"Ah, well, yeah, but I had the impression that the woman who did was sneaking something with me, I didn't know that they did this all the time."

"That's exactly what they do."

"Oh. Well, let's see if I can think of another one."

"Okay, but I get off work in a couple of minutes, you'll have to see another agent if you go longer than that."

"Okay, I'll try one. Where can I get really good drugs?"

"Well, what do you mean by 'really good?'"

"I'll play along, so let's say I wanted to get some cocaine."

"I think I get that one about 20 or 30 times a week from someone who thinks they can shock me. And I'll shock you. One Police Plaza, ask the Desk Sergeant, you can get any you want from them."

"Yeah, right, real funny."

"You don't believe me?"

"Obviously. If I do that, I'll wind up in some cell shortly after."

"How about I prove it to you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Let me try this. What's your name?"

"Jim."

"Look, Jim, I'll sell you anything you want of the major drugs at the rate of 3,000 favors per kilo. Now you go down to the police station, tell the desk sergeant you want to tell him about someone pushing drugs. You tell them some woman named Luann at the Information desk offered to sell you drugs for 3,000 favors per kilo and you wanted to report it. Let me make it simple, I'll sell you two kilos of cocaine for 5,800 favors. Now you can go report that. Then they'll tell you that they can sell them to you for less than that. We've got a labor shortage, so they had to raise prices, but they'd still charge less than I would."

"I see. Now..."

"Sorry, I'm off duty. In fact I was off two minutes ago, but I wanted to finish answering your question. See another agent if you have more questions, okay?"

"Oh, okay."

Luann smiles, turns and walks to the kiosk exit, then walks off in the direction of the man she left waiting.

Chapter 39

“How do I ‘get around’ a mandatory penalty?”

246 is back in his office when a man walks in. “246 can I talk to you for a few minutes?”

“Sure, Eric, have a seat.”

“Did you see the rules the new Administrator is proposing?”

“Uh huh. None of which have any effect on me.”

“Well, there’s one in particular that I’m bothered by.”

“Rule W7?”

“Yeah. I am surprised, we’ve usually handled those sort of cases privately. I don’t think I can remember ever seeing one actually go to trial. And I disagree with the idea of this kind of penalty anyway. I love my job, but I won’t sacrifice my conscience to keep it.”

“Well, what you can do is go see her and talk to her. Ask her not to give you those type of cases. If she won’t let you out, then you tell her you’ll handle them according to your conscience.”

“But I can’t handle those type cases!”

“Yes you can. You should know how to get around it.”

“How do I ‘get around’ a mandatory penalty?”

“Eric, do I have to do all your thinking for you? Think about it. Do it like me and think backwards. How would you not impose a penalty required in a conviction?”

“I think the scales just fell from my eyes. By not having a conviction. Not guilty in a bench trial, JNOV in jury trial.”

“Do that maybe once or twice and they’ll get the idea. In fact, say you don’t want it, offer to recuse, and if pressed into doing these after that, then say you’ll do what I just described.

Maybe even not allow them to change judges once you offer them the opportunity if they refuse; it’ll make ‘em stand up and take notice.”

“Thank you for your advice, 246. At least one other judge asked me about this under similar circumstances, and now I can tell them, too.”

“You’re welcome, Eric.”

“Hi Eric.”

“Hi.”

“Well, you spoke to 246, what did he say?”

“He said that one of us should go talk to the Administrator and see if we can’t get her to reverse her decision or change policy.”

“Yeah, right, you can guess the chance of that. I don’t think she will care if it’s just you.”

“Well, how about we both go?”

“Okay.”

They arrive at the entrance to the Administrator’s office, walk up to the Administrator’s secretary, Eric identifies himself and asks to see her. The secretary looks at them, and says, “I can get you an appointment in two weeks, Eric, she’s very busy.”

“I can guess why. You know, it’s funny but Tom never had a secretary. Funny thing is, a lot of people thought Tom didn’t do anything at all, that’s why his door was always open. Now I know why. Tom didn’t do anything unless it was necessary, and pretty much left things alone.

Well, if I have to wait I have to wait. Okay, then, put me down for two weeks from now.”

“Okay.”

“I’ll go see 246 and let him know.”

Eric arrives in front of 246’s office, and walks in. “So, what did she say?”

“I haven’t gotten to see her yet.”

“Why, didn’t you go?”

“I did. Her secretary says she can get me an appointment in two weeks.”

“What?”

“I said her secretary said I can see her in two weeks.”

“That’s ridiculous. She shouldn’t need to hold meetings for anywhere near that long. Central Computer, telephone Welcoming Department Administrator.”

“Office of the Administrator.”

“Hi, this is Supervisor 246, who is this?”

“This is Lani 37022, her secretary.”

“A few minutes ago, Eric says he came up to see her but there’s a two week delay.”

“Yeah, she’s got a lot of people on her list waiting to see her.”

“Who’s the next person on her schedule and when?”

“Supervisor 10308, he has 95 minutes starting two hours from now.”

“Thanks. Central Computer, close connection. Central Computer, Display Name of Supervisor 10308 and show any favors due.”

“Supervisor 10308’s name is Alfonse. He owes you 314 favors.”

“Central Computer, Call Supervisor 10308.”

“Hello?”

“Alfonse, this is 246. One of the other supervisors wants to see the Administrator, can he borrow about 10 minutes of your appointment?”

“Is it worth giving me back 10 favors?”

“Absolutely. Thanks. Central Computer, transfer 10 favors to Supervisor 10308 and disconnect call. Central Computer, call Welcoming Department Administrator”

“Office of the Administrator.”

“Lani, this is 246, I spoke to Supervisor 10308 who has agreed to grant Eric 10 minutes of his time with Putty Tat, so write it in that way.”

“Okay.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Central Computer, disconnect call.”

“Okay, how much do I owe you?”

“Uh, make it a hundred since you’re a friend.”

“Central Computer, transfer 100 favors to Supervisor 246. And thanks.”

“You’re welcome, and good luck. Since you only have ten minutes, you might want to practice exactly what you’re going to say.”

“Good idea. I’ll see you later.”

“Uh, 246, can I talk to you for a moment?”

“Sure, Wilfred, what can I do you for?”

“Well, ahm, I’m thinking that there’s something I want to try, I kind of miss winter and I thought about doing some weather in a place, and I want to have the opportunity to see if I can do it.”

“Well, I can give you a square over at the amusement park and see what you can do.” He writes down some instructions and the location. “Here’s the area in question and the system index to where it is. Let me know what you come up with.”

“Thanks.”

Chapter 40
“Luann?”

The man who called himself “Jim” walked into the Main Jail Facility, as the Police Headquarters Station is called, and looked around, noticing a sign reading “Desk Sergeant - Start Here” over the desk of a man in uniform.

He walked up to him. “This may sound ridiculous, and I’m not sure if it’s worth reporting, but a woman working at the Information Counter at the Main Entrance offered to sell me two kilos of cocaine.”

The Desk Sergeant looked at him. “Oh really? How much did she want?”

“She said she wanted 5,800 favors.”

“Boy is she greedy.” He turned around. “Hey, Wally!”

“Yeah, Greg?”

“We got any 2 kilo packs of cocaine handy? This guy wants to buy some.”

“I think we just made some more this morning. Yeah, here’s a package, catch.” Wally tosses an object about the size of a brick over to him.

Greg catches it. “Thanks. We can sell it to you for 900 favors. Would have been 400 but we had to raise prices, there’s a labor shortage. Or if you’re not interested in coke, we’ve got a special this week on..” he turns back, “Wally, what’s the special this week?”

“Ecstasy in solution. Liquid X. Half price.”

“Thanks.” He turns back to Jim, “Yeah, now if you’re not interested in coke, we’ve also got a special this week on liquid MDMA.” Greg opens the desk drawer, removes a pocket knife, a straw and a mirror, pulls a tab to expose the contents, and draws some powder out onto the mirror with the knife, drawing a couple of lines, then holds up the straw. “Want to try a sample?” Jim looks at Greg. “Uh, you’re kidding me.”

Greg looks back. “How long have you been dead?”

“Five weeks.”

“Oh, you’re still new here. Drugs aren’t illegal here. We get most of the traffic of new incomings who think that we have stupid rules like those here. Doesn’t make sense.”

“What do you mean?”

“Have you been to Orientation yet?”

“No.”

“Well, what they’ll tell you is that once someone gets privileges to use magic, they can create anything, so it’s kind of hard to have a law against drugs when someone can produce them - or make them disappear - almost instantaneously. And someone can just make themselves high the same way, so what’s the difference? And they can come out of a high just as fast if they want, so it doesn’t really mean much. Most people don’t bother with drugs except for the occasional recreational use, the way some people have a beer, because there are so many other things to do here. But if you want to spend the rest of eternity stoned, that’s your privilege.”

“Oh, I see. I thought she was kidding.”

“No, we...” He is interrupted by a teleportation in front of them.

A man is on top of a woman. “...C’mon, open your legs, I said!” The man punches her in the face, at which point she does as he demands. “Oh yeah! Baby!” Obviously under the impression he’s going to get what he wants, and apparently oblivious of what has happened, the

man begins pumping in-and-out of her.

“Well, well, catching a guy red handed, that doesn’t happen too often. Would you step out of the way please?” The man does so. The desk sergeant pulls his service revolver, aims at the still moving man, and puts one right in the middle of his forehead. The man screams out in pain, stops what he is doing, and looks up. Greg puts another shot into his face, which causes him to reel back, still screaming in pain. At this point he shoots the man four more times in the chest until he clicks on an empty chamber. The target screams as each of the bullets strike him. He is now down on the floor.

At this point, four more police officers come over and grab the now writhing man. Jim looks over at the woman he was assaulting.

“Luann?”

Chapter 41

“...like another sheet on the bed... The Supervisors all cover each other’s ass...”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the matter of Lisa 3, Accused (File No. 710400380291)
In the matter of Eduardo 147, Accused (File No. 710400380292)
In the matter of Lisa 4066, Accused (File No. 710400380294)
In the matter of Charles 670, Accused (File No. 710400380295)
In the matter of Willie 55, Accused (File No. 710400380297)
In the matter of Willie 55, Accused (File No. 710400380298)
In the matter of Alan 65, Accused (File No. 710400380300)
In the matter of Emil 90102, Accused (File No. 710400380301)
In the matter of Amber 436, Accused (File No. 710400380302)
7104 App. 921
Appeal on behalf of the Accused.

Unsigned opinion.

Petition for Certiorari for the above cases is denied as we do not feel that either the case needs review or we have no comment on the case as heard by the Trial Court.

The order of the Trial Court is
AFFIRMED

Cite this case: (Name of Appellant as noted above) 7104 Appellate 921
or Cite this case: *Certiorari Denied*, 7104 Appellate 921

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the matter of Uni 70, Accused (File No. 710400380293)
7104 App. 922
Appeal on behalf of the Accused

Unsigned Opinion

Accused was tried in a court of the Welcoming Department for one of the offenses which happens far too often, she did not particularly like the message which appeared on the sign of someone in the Picketing Zone, as well as his comments in response to her questions, and punched him in the face. She was tried in the courts of the Welcoming Department pursuant to Section 404(D) of the Legal Code of the Afterlife, was convicted, and was sentenced to two days community service. Accused appealed *trial de novo* to the Common Court and was again convicted, and was sentenced to thirty days community service. Accused then appealed *trial de novo* to the General Court. The General Court ruled that Accused had exhausted her right to any further *trial de novo* as she had had her appeal. Accused then appealed that decision to

this court.

This court feels it should clarify exactly what the rules are.

1. In every case where someone was tried, they always have the right to appeal to this court. If they have a subsequent right to *trial de novo* beyond the application for certiorari in this court and we deny their petition, they may then choose *trial de novo* in that court, if they be so inclined. (Legal Code, Section 201).
2. Whenever anyone is tried for a crime punishable by Involuntary Recycling, their only option of appeal is to this court, and such appeal is automatic as a matter of right. (Section 501).

When a person is tried in the General Court, their only option of appeal is to this court. (Section 201).

3. When a person is tried by the courts of the Welcoming Department for a trivial offense, they may appeal *trial de novo* to the Common Court. (Section 407.) When they are tried by the courts of the Welcoming Department for any serious offense except those involving Involuntary Recycling, they may appeal *trial de novo* to the General Court. (Section 407).

Whenever anyone is tried in the Common Court, they are entitled to appeal *trial de novo* to the General court (Section 201). This right is not limited to cases which began in Common Court.

4. To put it in simple terms, for serious crimes involving the penalty of Involuntary Recycling, the Accused has only “one bite at the apple” for a trial. Where the Accused has committed any other serious crime, if they are tried outside of the courts of the Welcoming Department, they also get only “one bite at the apple” for a trial. If they are tried for a serious crime before the Welcoming Department, they have the option of a second trial in the General Court. If they tried for a trivial crime outside the Welcoming Department, they get one trial in the Common court and the option of a second trial in the General Court. But if they are tried for a trivial crime by the Welcoming Department, they are permitted a second trial at the Common court, and if they lose there, then they get a “third bite of the apple” at the General court.

It was a clear misreading of the law by the General court that the Accused was not entitled to a second appeal *trial de novo*. However, due to the minor nature of the case, as is the standard policy of this court in minor cases when a conviction is appealed successfully, in the interests of judicial economy the court has decided to save the Accused the trouble of refiling her application for appeal with the General Court, we reverse the conviction and dismiss the complaint.

The order of the General Court is
REVERSED

Cite this case: *In the matter of Uni 70, Accused 7104 Appellate 922.*

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
Supervisor 960 v. Administrator of Welcoming Department (File No. 710400380296)
7104 App. 924
Appeal on behalf of the Petitioner

Unsigned Opinion

Welcoming Department Supervisor 960 appeals a decision of the General Court in which it ruled that the Administrator of his Department could file a petition there to remove him from office for misconduct. He stated in his response to her filing with the General Court that the General Court lacks jurisdiction as it is not the proper venue for the case, and that the Administrator is required to file a petition for removal with her Department for trial by another Supervisor, pursuant to Legal Code, Section 408. The Administrator's response was that she felt that there was too much possibility of bias or conflict of interest, saying, and we quote, "To put it bluntly, every one of the Supervisors is just like another sheet on the beds of this brothel. The Supervisors all cover each other's ass, there is no way I could get them to remove one of their own." The General Court overruled Supervisor 960's objection to its jurisdiction, saying he had failed to prove it did not have jurisdiction, and agreed to accept the case. Supervisor 960 appealed to this court.

Legal code section 408 reads in pertinent part (emphasis added):

§408. Exclusive jurisdiction for personnel cases and Appellate Jurisdiction

(B) ... with respect to any personnel at or above the level of Supervisor... **the courts of the Welcoming Department shall have original and exclusive jurisdiction** over all personnel matters in that Department... and the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife shall have exclusive jurisdiction over all appeals of all personnel cases tried in the courts of the Welcoming Department.

The provision is clear that the General Court has no jurisdiction to intervene in this matter. We should also address where the burden on the question of jurisdiction lies. We find that it is well-established in law that the burden for proving that a court has jurisdiction lies with the party making the claim, i.e. the defendant in this case, not with the party raising an objection to jurisdiction. *McNutt, Governor of Indiana v. General Motors Acceptance Corporation of Indiana*, 298 US 178 (1936).

The Administrator will have to take her case to the courts of her own Department. It is our job to review any case to look for bias and inequity and have no doubt we will do so if a case comes before us on an appeal.

The General Court is hereby ordered to dismiss this case without prejudice and upon having done so a writ of prohibition in this matter against it is hereby issued. The Administrator may re-file the case with the courts of the Welcoming Department if she be so inclined.

The ruling by the General Court that it has jurisdiction to hear this case is
REVERSED

Cite this case: *Supervisor 960 v. Administrator of Welcoming Department*, 7104 Appellate 924.

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
Ex. Rel. Miller 12 v. Adrian 55 (File No. 710400380299)
7104 App. 926
Appeal on behalf of the Petitioner

Unsigned Opinion

While we would normally simply issue an order denying the privilege to petition for appeal, it was felt that our reasons should be explained and we will do so.

The plaintiff was the prosecuting attorney in a case in which he claims the judge effectively illegally performed a summary finding of not guilty of the defendant in this case. Miller argues to have the finding set aside and allow the defendant to be retried as an Accused on the grounds that there effectively was no trial, that the trial court had no power to act in the way it did, and that the Accused was never in jeopardy so it is permissible to try him again. He refers specifically to a California case, *People ex rel. Kottmeier v. Municipal Court* (1990) 220 Cal.App.3d 602 [269 Cal.Rptr. 542] in which the judge in a bunch of traffic ticket cases, disgusted at the lack of appearance of any prosecutors on those cases, was deciding he was not going to be both prosecutor and a disinterested party to the case, was finding people not guilty. The appeals court ruled the dismissals to be invalid.

We might be inclined to agree with the decision in *Kottmeier* in this case except that in those cases, no witnesses were sworn.

Good, bad or indifferent, the record states that the Accused did waive his rights under the law, entered a plea, was placed on the witness stand and sworn. Once a witness is sworn in a case without a jury, jeopardy attaches and the Accused may not be retried unless his conviction is overturned on appeal. Since the Accused was found not guilty at trial, the prosecution is not allowed to appeal the case as jeopardy is attached and a second trial would violate the Accused's protection against double jeopardy.

If the judgment is upon an acquittal, the defendant, indeed, will not seek to have it reversed, and the government cannot. *U. S. v. Sanges*, 144 U.S. 310 (1892). *Ball v. U.S.*, 163 U.S. 662, 671 (1896)

A verdict of acquittal, although not followed by any judgment, is a bar to a subsequent

prosecution for the same offense. *Ball, supra*, at 672.

[S]ociety's awareness of the heavy personal strain which a criminal trial represents for the individual defendant is manifested in the willingness to limit the Government to a single criminal proceeding to vindicate its very vital interest in enforcement of criminal laws. *United States v. Jorn*, 400 U.S. 470, 479 (1971)

Whether the trial is to a jury or, as here, to the bench, subjecting the defendant to postacquittal factfinding proceedings going to guilt or innocence violates the Double Jeopardy Clause. *Smalis v. Pennsylvania*, 476 U.S. 140 (1986)

It was decided in *Fong Foo v. United States*, 369 U.S. 141 (1962) that a judgement of acquittal by a jury cannot be appealed by the prosecution. In *United States v. Jenkins*, 420 U.S. 358 (1975) this was held applicable to bench trials. It was also held in *Sanabria v. United States* (1978) "That Judgment of acquittal, however erroneous, bars further prosecution on any aspect of the count, and hence bars appellate review of the trial court's error." 437 U. S. 54, 69. In *Arizona v. Rumsey*, 467 U.S. 203 (1984) it was ruled that in a bench trial, when a judge was holding a separate hearing after the jury trial, to decide if the defendant should be sentenced to death or life imprisonment, the judge decided that the circumstances of the case did not permit death to be imposed. On appeal the judge's ruling was found to be erroneous. However, even though the decision to impose life instead of death was based on an erroneous interpretation of the law by the judge, the finding of life imprisonment in the original case constituted an acquittal of the death penalty and thus death could not be imposed upon a subsequent trial. Even though the acquittal of the death penalty was erroneous in that case, the acquittal must stand.

The statute prohibiting double jeopardy (Legal Code, section 9902(5)) as written is essentially identical with the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. We find that the requirements of the law should be treated in the same manner as those courts have done, and the practice there is that a verdict of not guilty by the trier of fact cannot be appealed once jeopardy attaches, and that jeopardy attaches when a witness is sworn in a criminal case without a jury, or when the jury is sworn.

Plaintiff has failed to provide any evidence of bribery by the Accused which would be the only grounds for overturning an acquittal because if the trier of fact is bribed by the Accused to throw the case then the Accused is never in jeopardy. *Harry Aleman v. Judges of the Criminal Division, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, et al.*, 183 F.3d 302 (1998). It may be arguable that the Accused never was in jeopardy because the trier of fact would never have imposed the penalty, but it is possible he might have changed his mind or decided differently, or that the plaintiff could have asked for a change of judge when it was offered, or offered to try the Accused for a lesser offense where he would have been convicted, and thus the Accused would have no knowledge of same and reasonably could presume he was placed in jeopardy.

But beyond that, this court holds to an even higher standard. As was stated by its Supreme Court in *Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada v. Big M Drug Mart Ltd.*, [1985] 1 S.C.R.

295, at p. 344, and here used with respect to the rights granted by our Statement of Rights under Law, “The interpretation should be... a generous rather than a [narrow or] legalistic one, aimed at fulfilling the purpose of the guarantee and securing for individuals the full benefit of the [law’s] protection.” In the absence of Accused’s misconduct, a verdict of not guilty cannot be overturned. Error by the judge, error by the prosecution, error by the jury, error by the government, or even action by the Accused not amounting to misconduct, none of these will overturn an acquittal. Only misconduct by the Accused which prevents the Accused from being placed in jeopardy *at all* will be grounds to overturn an acquittal.

Defendant’s acquittal stands.

Request for Certiorari is denied.

The order of the Trial Court is

AFFIRMED

Cite this case: *Ex Rel Miller 12 v. Adrian 55*, 7104 Appellate 926

or Cite this case: *Certiorari Denied*, 7104 Appellate 926.

Chapter 42

“I also had to ‘cheat’ in a few areas...”

“Hi, 246, how are you doing?”

“I’m okay, Wilfred, what can I do you for?”

“I wanted you to take a look at the weather item I developed.”

“Okay, let’s go over to my other office.” They walk over into the next room. “Okay, go ahead.”

“You want me to do weather in here?”

“Yeah, I want to see if you can control it.”

“Okay. Let’s see. Can you give me about ten minutes?”

“Sure.” 246 goes back to his office. A few minutes later Wilfred comes back, and 246 does the same. “Okay, show me what you can do.”

“Let me try. Central Computer, execute stored program Wilfred Winter 1”

As they watched, a few snowflakes started to flutter down from the ceiling. The snow started to flow heavier until it was a full blown snowstorm - in the room. “I didn’t implement a temperature change or wind, so it’s just snow right now, I suppose I can do other things later.”

“I have an idea about some thing I’d like you to try, can you make some changes?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“Okay, here’s what I’d like you to do.”

A few minutes later, 246 makes a call. “Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“Hi Nancy, I have an Armada Signal.”

“Accepted. Okay, 246, I’ll transmit your message.”

“Thanks, bye.” George teleports in a few minutes later. “George, I have a surprise for you.”

“Really?”

“Really, really. I know you don’t normally go out in public, but I think that you’ll want to come out to the front of the building for this one.”

“Okay. Central Computer, teleport me and 246 to the front entrance of this building.” They arrive. “I don’t see anything.”

Wilfred walks up. “Okay, Wilfred, show him.”

“Central Computer execute stored program Wilfred Winter 5.”

As they watch, a snowstorm begins in front of them. George’s jaw drops. “246, about how many people like programmers and developers do we have working in Research and Development?”

“Something around 3,500, I think.”

“Wasn’t it the general consensus that weather effects like snow wasn’t possible because of the excessive overhead?”

“Yeah.”

“I guess they were wrong.” George is standing there, and a tear is appearing in his eye. “I never expected to see this. Lynn is going to be pleased, she was afraid she’d never be able to go skiing when she died.”

Wilfred turns to 246. “Uh, 246, actually he’s right. If I tried to do snow the way it’s done on

earth I couldn't have done it, so I had to fake it. I have to tell you, the snow isn't really unique, there are only 16 different snowflakes, it just randomly picks one of each. I also had to 'cheat' in a few areas, it doesn't really count the flakes, it just piles on an amount. Also..."

246 interrupts him. "Shhh. Wilfred, be quiet, don't spoil it, it's perfect."

Chapter 43

“...they’re going to do something like kill me again.”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
Administrator of Welcoming Department v. Supervisor 960 (File No. 710400386651)
7104 App. 1175
Appeal on behalf of the Petitioner

Majority Opinion, Authored by Donald 10322:

This is the second time this series of events has come before us and the third time we’ve had to issue an opinion relating to the matter. As such this is not first impression and we are fairly familiar with the facts involved.

Supervisor 960 works for the Welcoming Department. Generally he handles criminal cases as a judge for the Department as his exclusive work assignment. Supervisor 960 has stated that as a matter of conscience, he does not wish to hear cases in which the penalty imposed upon an Accused if convicted may include Involuntary Recycling.

The Administrator of the Welcoming Department saw him in her office and told him he would have to take any cases given to him, including ones involving Involuntary Recycling. He stated that he did not wish to do so and that he would prefer to transfer them to another Supervisor who did not have his objection to handling such cases. The Administrator said that she wasn’t going to push more work on the other judges, he would have to take whatever cases he gets. The defendant said that if he had to take them, he would but he would handle them according to his conscience.

In a case titled *In the Matter of Adrian 55 Accused*, the following was the case before the defendant, acting as a judge in and for the Welcoming Department:

THE COURT: The next case is *In the Matter of Adrian 55, Accused*, Let’s see, in this case, the Accused was an Incoming who thought that the offer to Welcome him was a trick of some kind and did not believe a woman would want to love him back into the world. He then left and went to the Main Entrance, where apparently someone in the Picketing Zone told him about the Frontier, he walked up to the clerk at the information booth, and asked her how to get there. He went to a kiosk and punched in the coordinates, and arrived at the edge of the city. He saw the sign by the side of the road and apparently read it. He asked a police officer near the exit what it means to be Recycled. The officer told him it was the equivalent of the death penalty. The Accused said that he didn’t believe that bothering a sign could have such a serious punishment. The police officer said to him, “Don’t do it, buddy, they’re not kidding!” Allegedly the Accused then ripped the sign off the fence, becoming the first person ever to be accused of the crime of Molesting the Sign at the right of the Road. As the Accused has not

been loved back into the world the Accused is tried by this Department. I see that the District Attorney for the city has decided to prosecute this case.

MILLER 12: Yes, your honor, Miller 12, by permission of the Administrator of the Department.

THE COURT: I know of your record, Miller. So you want to make an example out of him?

MILLER 12: Yes, your honor. The Accused has been indicted by a Grand Jury. We will be seeking the mandatory punishment of Involuntary Recycling.

THE COURT: I have told the Administrator that I do not wish to handle such cases but she says I have to accept what is given to me. Would you want to transfer this case to someone else?

MILLER 12: Every other judge in this Department is extremely busy because of the riot in the Picketing Zone, and all the defense counsels for hundreds of people who are each filing hundreds of motions, and this is such an obviously easy case that I don't want to have to wait several weeks.

THE COURT: Very well then. Will the Accused step forward please. Thank you, your name is Adrian, is that correct?

ADRIAN 55: Yes, your honor.

THE COURT: Adrian, do you understand that they weren't kidding when the sign said that if you tampered with it they would do the equivalent of an execution, that is, send you back to earth to be born all over again and you won't remember your existence here or in the life from which you just died?

ADRIAN 55: They told me when I was arrested I'm not supposed to say anything until I speak to a lawyer.

THE COURT: While that is true, young man, I am merely trying to gather information; I will not hold anything you say against you nor will it be used for any purpose to punish you. I simply want to know if you understand the consequences of what you are accused of doing. I suspect they can very easily prove what they claim you did, I'm just trying to see if you understand the consequences.

ADRIAN 55: Uh, yeah, I realize now that they weren't kidding. I'm scared. I'm really scared. I know I'm going to die.

THE COURT: So you're not going to repeat what you did or ever do or attempt to do anything like it again, are you?

ADRIAN 55: No, sir, I'm not.

THE COURT: Counselor, isn't there some way we can salvage this young man without simply acting as if he should be treated like something horrible in a dumpster and discarded like yesterday's garbage? (Audience laughs.)

MILLER 12: We want to make it clear that the sign is inviolate, nobody gets away with bothering it.

THE COURT: No possibility of charging him with something less serious?

MILLER 12: On a case as obvious as this, no, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Well, I'll save you the trouble. The Accused is found not guilty.

MILLER 12: Supervisor 960, you can't be serious! I'm sorry, I mean, your honor, you can't do that! You can't find him not guilty, for one thing he hasn't even been tried; further, he hasn't even entered a plea yet. He hasn't even been arraigned nor obtained counsel. And further I want to try this case and see he receives the punishment established by law after he's convicted..

THE COURT: Counselor, I was trying to save you the effort of going through all that. But we can do it that way if that is what is required by law. I am telling you right now that if we have a bench trial, I will have a completely fair and impartial trial, and at the end of the trial I will find the Accused not guilty. If we have a jury trial, after the jury makes its deliberations and comes back with a verdict, if it is guilty I will set the verdict aside and declare the Accused not guilty. I do not want to handle cases which to me, are the equivalent of the death penalty and if forced to do so, since there is no equivalent of declaring a statute unconstitutional, I will simply declare the Accused not guilty, which will have the force and effect of preventing me from having to impose such a sentence. I have never accepted such penalty to be valid and believe that it is wrong to impose it. And I believe the rules here are the same as they were back on earth, that you cannot appeal a verdict of not guilty. I figure if I do it this way they will simply not assign such cases to me rather than waste the effort and time on a trial that they know they will not get a conviction.

MILLER 12: In that case, your honor, I'd like to transfer this case to another judge.

THE COURT: Request denied.

MILLER 12: Your honor, are you serious?

THE COURT: Very serious. I said I didn't want this kind of a case. I was told I had to take it. I offered you the opportunity to move it elsewhere. You declined that opportunity. When you discovered I really meant what I said, then you decided to take me seriously. Well, I'm going to make you - and the Administrator of this Department - pay for your arrogance of not taking me seriously by not making this young man pay for his error with his life. Or death, I mean. But let me ask you this, Counselor. If the Accused were to waive arraignment, agree to a bench trial, agree to waive his right to counsel, and plead guilty, would it be permitted under the law for me to accept his guilty plea, then find him not guilty anyway?

MILLER 12: Your honor, that's completely unreasonable!

THE COURT: I take it then that means that I have found a way to get rid of this whole problem. You didn't say it was not permitted under the law, you just simply do not like my solution to this problem.

MILLER 12: With all due respect your honor, you're gaming the system.

THE COURT: Let the record show I am smiling at counsel for the prosecution. Yes, aren't I? And maybe you people will take me seriously when I tell you I do not want to be given death penalty cases. Or the equivalent thereof, Involuntary Recycling cases. Further, if it wasn't for Rule W7 we'd be handling this privately and this wouldn't be happening in the first place. Adrian, have you been listening to what I'm saying to the prosecuting attorney?

ADRIAN 55: Yes, your honor. I don't understand much of it but if I understand it you're trying to find some way to allow me to plea bargain to a lesser offense. I'll do that if I don't have to die again.

THE COURT: Young man, aren't you aware that you are already dead?

ADRIAN 55: Yeah, but what I understand is what's going to happen is they're going to do something like kill me again.

THE COURT: That's what I'm trying to avoid. So I'm going to explain something to you.

I'm going to do something which is extremely unusual and which is unheard of, and the only reason I'm doing this is because your case was forced upon me and I do not wish to handle a case involving what to me is the equivalent of the death penalty. What I am going to do is ask you to give up certain rights under the law. Normally you would not want to do this but we have a special situation here. I am going to ask you to waive your right to an arraignment, to waive right to a jury trial and waive right to counsel. If you do that, I am going to ask you for a plea and would want you to plead guilty. Now what would normally happen is the judge would find you guilty and sentence you to be Involuntarily Recycled. What I am going to do is find you not guilty and you'll be allowed to go free. You won't be punished for what you did. Do you understand me, young man?

ADRIAN 55: Oh yes, oh dear God, thank you.

THE COURT: I want you to understand something here, so I want you to stop crying and listen carefully, okay?

ADRIAN 55: Yes, your honor.

THE COURT: The only reason you're getting out of this is because of a disagreement I have with the head of this Department and you have the fortune in this case of being caught in the middle. If you ever do this again they will make sure they send you to someone who will put you on trial, and you will end up getting the equivalent of the Death Penalty imposed upon you. Is that clear?

ADRIAN 55: Oh yes, your honor, I do understand.

THE COURT: Now, remember that if you ever do something wrong in this society, you would normally not want to do what we are about to do here because you would end up giving up valuable rights under the law and which might mean you might get less punishment or be found not guilty. I'm doing it this way in order to clear your case up quickly. Just so you understand that normally if you ever get tried again you probably would not want to do these things, okay?

ADRIAN 55: Yes, your honor, I understand, and thank you.

THE COURT: Now, to comply with the legal requirements, do you wish to waive arraignment?

ADRIAN 55: Yes.

THE COURT: Do you wish to waive the right to have counsel?

ADRIAN 55: Yes.

THE COURT: Do you wish to waive right to a jury trial and be tried by me?

ADRIAN 55: Yes.

THE COURT: How do you plead?

ADRIAN 55: Guilty, your honor.

THE COURT: Do you understand that in pleading guilty you would normally be convicted and would be sentenced to Involuntary Recycling and that you are giving up your right to a trial?

ADRIAN 55: Yes, your honor.

THE COURT: Very well, the plea of guilty is accepted. Young man, before I let you go I want to advise you of something. Oh, wait a minute. Young man, please come here and step into the witness stand. Bailiff, please swear him in as a witness.

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you will give in this case will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

ADRIAN 55: I do.

THE COURT: What is your name?

ADRIAN 55: I've been told it's Adrian 55.

THE COURT: The Prosecution claims that you molested the sign by the right of the road by ripping it off the fence. Did you do this?

ADRIAN 55: Yes.

THE COURT: You have said that you're not going to do that again. Is that true?

ADRIAN 55: Oh God, yes, I'm not going to do that again!

THE COURT: Very well. Miller, do you have any questions?

MILLER 12: Your honor, what's the whole point of this?

THE COURT: It's very simple. If I simply find him not guilty, you can probably appeal on the grounds that there was effectively no trial, and thus have him tried again. By having a witness be sworn in his case, jeopardy attaches and he can't be tried again. Do you have any questions for the witness?

MILLER 12: No, your honor.

THE COURT: Adrian, you may step down. Like I said, the plea of guilty is accepted. Young man, before I let you go I want to advise you of something.

ADRIAN 55: Yes, your honor?

THE COURT: I suggest that for a considerable amount of time, which might be for a few years, you watch your every move, and think very carefully about anything you do. I suspect that, since the prosecutor's office can't do anything to me, but they are probably going to watch you to try and catch you to see if you do something wrong so they can make an example of you again. Be very careful not to do anything wrong. Okay?

ADRIAN 55: Thank you, your honor.

THE COURT: Also, contrary to what you were thinking, that woman who met you when you first came here really did want to have sex with you, did anyone tell you that?

ADRIAN 55: Yeah, I found that out from some of the other guys in the jail while I was waiting for trial. The women here really are easy.

THE COURT: Well, I wouldn't put it that way, but I guess you could say that. Once I let you go, why don't you go talk to the clerk and find the young lady who Welcomed you and ask her if she'll let you see her again. I think she will. Then do whatever she tells you and very soon you'll be having a very nice time with her, okay?

ADRIAN 55: Oh, gee, thanks, your honor.

THE COURT: You're welcome. For the record I wish to state that if I found the Accused guilty the only penalty permitted by law to be imposed is Involuntary Recycling. I believe that punishment to be for all intents and purposes the same as Capital Punishment and I... rather my sense of justice and of right and wrong will not allow me to impose that punishment. I will not sacrifice my conscience to the law when I believe the law to be morally wrong. I therefore have no choice but to find a method which is within the law but allows me to stay within

the dictates of my conscience. And the only method I can find is the one I am about to use. On the plea of guilty I find the Accused not guilty. You are free to go, young man.

In an unsigned opinion, *Ex Rel Miller 12 v. Adrian 55*, 7104 Appellate 926, we agreed that the prosecution cannot appeal a finding of not guilty once a witness is sworn at a trial as jeopardy attaches and to try the defendant twice would violate the prohibition on double jeopardy.

The Administrator of the Welcoming Department filed a petition in the General Court to have Supervisor 960 removed for judicial misconduct due to the Court's handling of the above case. Supervisor 960 argued in his response that the General Court did not have jurisdiction, if there was an issue of his conduct it had to go through the courts of the Welcoming Department. The Administrator's response was that "the Supervisors all cover each other's ass, there is no way I could get them to remove one of their own." The General Court decided that the possibility of bias was possible and agreed to hear the case.

Supervisor 960 appealed. In an unsigned opinion, *Supervisor 960 v. Administrator of Welcoming Department*, 7104 Appellate 924, we ruled that Legal Code, section 408, leaves all personnel issues regarding the Welcoming Department with the courts of that Department, and that the General Court does not have jurisdiction. Even if there is a possibility of bias, the law makes it clear that the Department has exclusive jurisdiction over its own affairs except for appeals. We then reversed the General Court and ordered it to dismiss the case without prejudice, allowing the Administrator, if she be so inclined, to refile the case with her department.

The Administrator then filed a petition with her Department for removal of Supervisor 960. The Court, Charisse 170364, (Supervisor 1483), decided there was nothing wrong with his decision, that his actions did not constitute misconduct and that she agreed with him on every point.. The Administrator is now appealing that decision.

Because there was the possibility of bias raised, we agreed to hear the appeal.

It has been held for hundreds of years that a jury may acquit someone for any reason at all or no reason, or even to do so where the judge has instructed them otherwise:

The jury has an 'unreviewable and irreversible power... to acquit in disregard of the instructions on the law given by the trial judge..' *US vs Dougherty*, 473 F 2d 1113, 1139 (1972).

We recognize, as appellants urge, the undisputed power of the jury to acquit, even if its verdict is contrary to the law as given by the judge, and contrary to the evidence. This is a power that must exist as long as we adhere to the general

verdict in criminal cases, for the courts cannot search the minds of the jurors to find the basis upon which they judge. **If the jury feels that the law under which the defendant is accused, is unjust, or that exigent circumstances justified the actions of the accused, or for any reason which appeals to their logic of passion, the jury has the power to acquit**, and the courts must abide by that decision. *US vs Moylan*, 417 F 2d 1002, 1006 (1969). (Emphasis added)

We do not believe that a judge has any less power to acquit than a jury.

[T]he right to try offenses against the criminal laws, and, upon conviction, to impose the punishment provided by law, is judicial, and it is equally to be conceded that, in exerting the powers vested in them on such subject, **courts inherently possess ample right to exercise reasonable, that is, judicial, discretion** to enable them to wisely exert their authority. *Ex Parte United States*, 242 U.S. 27, 42 (1916) (Emphasis added. Note that while this decision was a ruling to the exact opposite of the ruling being made in this case, i.e. that the court did not have the power to issue the type of order it did, the wording of the above is appropriate to this decision so I have chosen to include it.)

As a member of a jury may decide that they will not impose Involuntary Recycling and impose a lesser sentence, a judge may do the same. However, where the trier of fact feels, for any reason, that the penalty to be imposed for conviction of a crime is excessive or unreasonable, but on conviction of the Accused, that is the only penalty available, that condition is sufficient to constitute 'reasonable doubt' sufficient to permit the trier of fact to render a verdict of not guilty. When a person is tried by a court or by a jury, the trier of the case has the right to judge both the facts and the law.

However, the court must follow the law and must not show signs of bias either in favor of or against the Accused. This means the requirements of the law must be adhered to. We find that the attempt by the Court to accelerate the process of acquitting the Accused by finding him not guilty before he had even entered a plea to be excessive. While no where near as outrageous as attempting to accelerate the process of convicting the Accused, it does give the appearance of bias. While it was excessive, we do not believe it rises to the level of misconduct.

The Court did indicate it did not want to handle such cases but was required to do so. It is not misconduct for the Court to use the law to allow it to acquit the Accused in the way it did, because the intent of the Court was not to obstruct justice, but in fact to do the opposite, to ensure that justice was done where the court felt it was unable to do so by doing exactly what it said it was going to do, refuse to handle cases involving Involuntary Recycling. Since the court could not ask to be excused from such cases, as it had tried to excuse itself and was refused permission to do so by the plaintiff in this case, the Court chose to handle the case in accordance with its conscience by issuing a not guilty verdict.

Every person must deal with what they believe in by whatever fashion they feel is appropriate. To the extent a judge is willing to publicly expose his biases and the conflicts that he may have with a case or the sentencing requirements, the Court has acted properly. If the prosecution of such a case decides to continue to use that judge knowing of his or her conflicts, it has to live with the outcome.

I agree that his decision to refuse to allow the prosecution to ask for a change of venue after offering them one was reasonable. I believe it goes along with a judge's power to punish for contempt. If the judge cannot get the prosecution to believe what he says, and has to resort to threats to get them to listen, the only way to show them he is serious is to demonstrate that he is serious and he was not making a threat. Otherwise judges would lose control of their courts as they would have to threaten counsel all the time to expect compliance.

To the extent the court follows the law and holds a fair and unbiased trial, admits to any matters of conscience, and goes so far as to state beforehand that he does not wish to handle such cases that offend the conscience of the Court, will allow them to be transferred, and has made it clear before trial that it will acquit the Accused or issue a *Judgement Non Obstante Verdict* (JNOV) of not guilty in the case of a conviction in a Jury Trial if the prosecution does not ask for a transfer, the Court has not committed any misconduct which justifies his removal from office.

Had there been a means for the Court to be able to recuse itself from such cases and it failed to do so, I would have ruled differently.

The order of the Trial Court is
AFFIRMED

Donald 10322, Appeals Justice #710

We concur without further comment:

Norma 144, Chief Appeals Justice #17

Wilson 2109, Appeals Justice #103

Phyllis 22, Appeals Justice #120

Concurring Opinion, written by Frederica 17:

I'm curious as to why we went through this whole mess. I think that it would have been arguable to say that imposing a mandatory penalty without allowing the trier of fact to render a judgement on the penalty to be a violation of Due Process of Law under the equal protection statute. Or that imposing mandatory Involuntary Recycling in the case of stealing or damaging a sign to be cruel or unusual punishment. I believe that there is grounds in law for the trial court to declare a penalty imposed by one law in violation of another law of superior standing to be void, similar to the way a statute can be declared

unconstitutional on earth in certain circumstances. *In the Matter of Alan 19*, 7090 App 121.

I would like to say that I think it would have made more sense if the cop that caught the young man had simply taken the sign back, reattached it, then tossed the kid into the Frontier where he wanted to go and let the psychotics that reside there do whatever sick and twisted things they would have done with the young man as I believe they do to anyone who goes into the Frontier and isn't good at fighting others. It would make more sense to have done that, but unfortunately we have to go by what the law requires.

In the motion picture *Dances With Wolves*, Kevin Costner says, "I've always wanted to see the Frontier." My guess is that were Mr. Costner here he would not say that unless he was completely ignorant of what is happening there. In my case, I can admit that to be so. I have no idea of what really goes on there, and do not care to know, as I intend to stay far away from that region, for one simple reason. I personally would prefer not to become fodder for the sadistic pleasures of the reprobates that infest the Frontier.

Since he can't recuse himself due to conflict of conscience, he needs to make it clear that he won't issue at a bench trial, and will JNOV a jury verdict, where the penalty would be Involuntary Recycling. If he does that prior to being given a case, I agree that there is no misconduct.

The order of the Trial Court is
AFFIRMED

Frederica 17, Appeals Justice #405

Cite this case *Administrator of Welcoming Department v. Supervisor 960*, 7104 Appellate 1175

Chapter 44

“...‘I shall no longer tinker in the mechanism of death’...”

“All Rise! Welcoming Department Special Court 364 is now in session. The Honorable Supervisor 960 presiding. All persons having business before this court, draw nigh and ye shall be heard. God save the Afterlife and this honorable Court!”
“Be seated and come to order. Pursuant to Legal code Section 405, I will formally explain the situation for the benefit of those who were violated and arrested and might not understand these proceedings. I will now read the exact text required by statute.”

When a person arrives in this world, they are what we call an Incoming. In the event that person commits a violation of law, they are under the jurisdiction of the courts of the Welcoming Department for a certain period of time, generally because it is presumed that they are ignorant of our customs and rules, and might do some things which are not permitted here. Since we are aware of that, the courts of the Welcoming Department will generally treat the offenses committed by Incomings with somewhat less severity than the Common court or the General Court would. Any person brought before this court has the absolute right to appeal a decision against them *de novo* to the Common or General court, depending on the seriousness of the offense, and to be formally tried if they so wish.

There are three classes of persons who are alleged to have engaged in criminal acts to which that person, having been violated according to law, is arrested and is first brought to trial before the Welcoming Department as a matter of automatic jurisdiction.

First, all persons who have never been loved back into the world, that is, have never engaged in any form of sexual contact with another after their death, are under the jurisdiction of this Department until that state changes or they enter another Language Section. If they return to the English Language Section, they become subject to the jurisdiction of this Department if they are violated on accusation of commission of a crime and still have not been loved back into the world. They may also request jurisdiction by this Department at their option if they have not attended orientation classes.

Also any person who is violated for a subsequent violation of law while still on probation after a conviction for a violation of law where the original violation was also tried by the Welcoming Department.

Also any person who allegedly commits a subsequent violation of law in the time between their violation and arrest for a previous offense, and their trial for the prior offense, where the trial for the prior offense will take place before the Welcoming Department. These two provisions apply even if the person would not, at the time of the alleged commission of the subsequent violation of law, be subject to the jurisdiction of this Department.

Also, all personnel of the Welcoming Department may, at their option, accept informal trial by a Supervisor of this Department who is not their immediate supervisor, in place of informal or formal trial in the Common or General Court unless the complaining witness demands formal trial.

Where this court has jurisdiction for the above reasons, it applies to all persons violated for allegedly committing a criminal act anywhere within the English Language Section. It also applies to Road Molesting committed on The Road of the Frontier before they entered another language section, and Wilful Breach of Solemn Promise inside the Frontier committed before they entered any other language section.

It also applies to any person who left the English Language Section and went to another Language Section, then committed Road Molesting on the Road of the Frontier, or wilfully breached a solemn promise within the Frontier where they have not been loved back into the world and where either The Authorities of the other Language Section agree to waive jurisdiction, or both the Accused and any complaining witnesses agree to accept this court as having jurisdiction.

Second, any offense committed within the area or grounds of the administration building which is under the control of the Welcoming Department, or any public area under its control. This includes the general area of the Main Entrance up to and including the area known as the Picketing Zone.

Third, any offense committed anywhere within the English Language section against a Supervisor or administrative personnel of the Welcoming Department where such individual is in uniform or wearing insignia showing them to be on duty or an Officer of this Department at the time the offense occurred, or where the Accused knows or has reason to know that they are an Officer of this Department.

Any person who is alleged to have committed an offense anywhere in the English Language Section of the Afterlife under the jurisdiction of the Welcoming Department as well as any offense knowingly committed against an administrative officer of this Department, is subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of this Department. If the person allegedly commits more than one act in violation of law at the same time, if any of those acts are subject to the jurisdiction of this Department, for the convenience of the Accused, all of them will be tried in this Department, except the Accused has the right, if they wish, to sever the other offenses normally not subject to the jurisdiction of this Department and move them for separate trial to the Common or General Court depending on the seriousness of the offense. The ability to sever an offense does not apply where the person is considered to be automatically under the jurisdiction of this Department.

All other classes of crimes are tried in the Common or General Courts depending upon the severity of the offense.

“This concludes formal reading of the statute. The following is the statutory requirement regarding pleas of lack of jurisdiction: Any person who is brought before this court in error because they or their counsel believe this court lacks jurisdiction, may raise such an issue in lieu of making a plea. If this is correct the case will be transferred to the appropriate court which should have jurisdiction, but the Accused is under no obligation to raise this issue. If a person is found not guilty by this court, the lack of jurisdiction of the court will not affect their right to the protection against double jeopardy, but they may not raise lack of jurisdiction later if they do not properly raise it at this time. Persons wishing time to obtain counsel before arraignment or to become familiar with the law and represent themselves may do so and should inform the bailiff of this. Otherwise the court requests that in order to save time for everyone here persons it calls before it indicate whether they are claiming lack of jurisdiction by this court, or are making a plea.

“The court will now read the statutory explanation of pleas.

“There are several pleas which the Accused may make before this court. The first is not guilty due to error or omission. This means that there is a fatal defect in the means used to bring you before the court. It does not mean you are claiming guilt or innocence, you are simply claiming that due to someone failing to follow the rules your arrest was unlawful. It is generally recommended that if you intend to make such a plea you either have adequate counsel or know what you are doing when making such a plea and be aware that it will require your participation and you will lose the privilege against self-incrimination for that participation.

“The second is not guilty due to innocence, inability to prevent the offense, or by reason of self defense. This means that you deny any responsibility in the crime because you did not commit it or you did commit it but you did so in order to prevent someone else from injuring you or a third party, or for some other reason you were incapable of preventing or unable to refuse to commit the act, and are willing to assist in proving this to be the case. It is also generally recommended that if you intend to make such a plea you either have adequate counsel or know what you are doing when making such a plea and be aware that it will require your participation and you will lose the privilege against self-incrimination for that participation.

“The third is not guilty due to inability to prove the offense. If you were tried for a crime on earth, this is the equivalent to that, it is the standard ‘not guilty’ plea. All of the elements of violation of the statute must be proven, you do not have to prove anything at all. Note that the defenses available for the first two classes of not guilty pleas are available as part of this plea as well, the difference being that in the above instances where such can be proven to be the case, the Accused will end up with an acquittal much faster than in a standard not guilty plea.

“When asked by the court to enter a plea, you may stand mute and the Court will enter a plea of not guilty due to inability to prove the offense.

“These are the classes in which the Accused claims they are not responsible at law for the particular criminal offense to which they have been charged. The intermediate plea is *Nolo Contender* or No Contest. In such a plea the Accused will neither admit nor deny the charge. A plea of no contest is considered the same as a plea of guilty by this court but it may not be used for any other purpose.

“The next level of plea is guilty. In a guilty plea the Accused admits to the charges. A no contest or guilty plea may be made conditioned upon a particular sentence being imposed, if the

court approves of such condition, this is what is known as a *plea bargain*. If the court refuses the condition or accepts the prosecution's refusal to accept it, it will ask for a new plea. Where the court chooses to reject a plea bargain that was agreed to by the prosecution, the court will enter a plea of not guilty due to inability to prove the offense. If the person is then convicted but is sentenced to a higher penalty than the plea offered which the court refused, the court shall vacate the sentence of a higher penalty and impose the defendant's original plea offer unless the defendant chooses otherwise. If the imposed penalty is less severe than the plea, the defendant will be subject to that penalty instead.

"Where the Accused is found not guilty, they are free to go. Where the Accused pleads no contest or guilty, or is found guilty at trial, once the sentence imposed upon them is completed if it is possible to do so immediately, they are also then free to go. Otherwise they remain under the jurisdiction of the Court until sentence is completed, however long that takes.

"This completes the statutory declarations. Pursuant to a decision of the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife made due to the decisions of this court as upheld in *Administrator of Welcoming Department v. Supervisor 960*, the following announcement is made.

"This court hereby gives notice that it does not want to accept cases where any part of the penalty imposed could include Involuntary Recycling. This is a matter of conscience by this Court and in the event such a case comes before it the case will, if the prosecution requests, be referred to another Court. To quote from a famous justice on earth, 'I shall no longer tinker in the mechanism of death' and to this court such a penalty is essentially the same thing and I cannot in good conscience take part in such cases.

"This means that the following classes of crimes will usually not be handled by this court: Any class of Breach of Rule #1 or any other statute where the penalty for the offense may include Involuntary Recycling. Also the crimes of Road Molesting, Molesting the Sign at the entrance to the Frontier, or Voluntary breach of Solemn Promise within the Frontier.

"In the event any such case comes before this court and the prosecution fails to request it be transferred, the trial will take place. Because the law in many of these cases makes a sentence of Involuntary Recycling mandatory upon conviction and grants me no alternative, I will simply avoid this conflict between the law and what my conscience dictates by following my conscience in the only manner the law permits: by declaring a conviction void and finding the Accused not guilty. If it is a bench trial at the conclusion I will find the Accused not guilty. In the event of a jury trial, if the Accused is convicted, the court will on its own motion override the jury verdict and impose a finding of not guilty. This concludes my announcement."

"Our first case is *In the Matter Of A Riot in the Picketing Zone Involving 563 Participants and One Not Completely Innocent Bystander*. Somehow I have a feeling I know who wrote that case header. Ah, here he is now."

Chapter 45

“Of course I care about feelings, I’m... in a whorehouse, not a steel mill.”

”Ah, 246, nice to see you here.”

“Good morning, your honor.”

“So, I guess you’re going to be prosecuting these cases?”

“No, I’m just here to accept those who want to accept a plea bargain. Hell, if it was me, I’d be filing the same 368 separate motions too; the new Administrator, unfortunately, has chosen to be a bit too literal in her interpretation of the law and as a result has brought the court system of this Department almost to a standstill. I figure if I can set up some reasonable compromise so we can cease being buried in paperwork from all those who got involved in this. If someone wants trial, I’ll let someone else do it. I’m planning to make a standard offer to everyone involved, if they’re willing to accept it.”

“Okay, let’s hear it.”

“For those who started fighting, 3 years unsupervised probation, attendance and completion of all orientation classes, if they did not do so, accept being loved back into the world or request a waiver of same if they propose to remain celibate, apologize in open court, 3000 favors penalty to be used on the tasks of my choosing at my discretion, and in the event I can arrange to have anger management classes set up, they attend those too. For those who rioted, essentially the same thing but from them I want 5000 favors. Oh, and as a matter of curiosity, I want every one of them to state when they apologize whether or not they really are sorry, and if so, is it that they are sorry for what they did, sorry they got caught, or sorry they didn’t hurt the guy they beat up more, and would they do it again. That’s it. If they want formal trial I’ll figure out what the punishment will be then, I just have to figure out how bad it has to be to convince most of them they’d be better off copping a plea instead of wasting everyone’s time. But it is their right if they choose.”

“I am surprised, the penalty you’re asking for seems awfully light. What’s the victim going to say?”

“I guess you can say I am the victim, your honor. The guy who held up the sign did it for someone else to whom he assigned his civil rights violations. I bought them from him. So anyway, you can tell those who want to plead guilty that is exactly what the punishment would be. Those who decide they prefer formal trial, we’ll deal with them later but tell them that I said that while it is their right to be tried formally, if they are convicted I’ll be looking at a really stiff penalty of about 10 times as much, say 50,000 favors plus at least three years community service. So you...”

“Excuse me, 246.”

“Yes, your honor?”

“You for one should know that in most cases we can’t give someone more than six months.”

“I think it’s probably arguable that any of the people involved, some manner or form, took at least six shots at someone, or at more than one person, and we can potentially charge them for each strike as a separate offense. So if it’s less than six, we’ll charge them with one count each. Usually we don’t do that, but remember, I’m not trying to be vicious and actually hit them with that big a penalty if convicted - but if they push it, we will - it’s so that they can see that if they really are guilty, either they allow us to get them out of the system fast and with as little fuss as

possible, with a minor penalty to them, or they can waste our time when they know they're guilty and get a really big penalty for forcing us to have to prove it."

"I see."

"Oh, and because it's for our convenience, if they accept it, it's a 'net' penalty, a single charge no matter how much they did. So, anyway, you can tell them that they can leave today if they plead guilty or they can ask for formal trial and while they do have the right to be tried if they so wish, if they are convicted they are looking at a minimum of the equivalent of three years imprisonment. I think you know the drill, we're not trying to push them to take this but that in view of what happened to them in their life and seeing the otherwise offensive sign, we're willing to be relatively lenient since they didn't know any better, but we want them to admit they did wrong and take responsibility for their actions. On the other hand, if they really feel they are innocent and didn't swing first at anyone, recommend they plead innocent and we'll see if it's true. I'll even go so far as to say, if someone pleads innocent, and a teller shows they really thought they were but they were mistaken and really did do something by mistake but are not truly innocent, I'll let them withdraw the plea and take the plea bargain I've offered. But if they do plead that way and they knew they weren't really innocent, we're going to sock it to them, big time.

"Make it clear to them that if they really didn't start the fighting, if someone else swung at them first, we really do recommend that they plead innocent. I mean, if one of them got mad about it, and yelled at the guy, and in the process someone hit them, and they hit them back, to me that constitutes innocence as far as I'm concerned. Even if they thought they were hitting the guy who hit them and hit someone first by accident. I don't expect anyone to be a doormat and if someone takes a swing at you and connects when you're already upset, you'll probably lash out at them in anger and might make a mistake. But you would not have made the mistake if someone else hadn't provoked you by hitting you first.

"But if they do that, plead innocent, and they really know that they aren't, we're going to know it soon thereafter and I will be very disappointed in them, and express it in a much more severe penalty if they are convicted.

"This is supposedly a civilized society, which means we expect them to act like civilized people, not barbarians who settle disputes with violence as their first option. They are getting what is otherwise an extremely light punishment because I sympathize with what they have gone through. And I can understand how someone, in a fit of anger, can do things they regret later. This way they don't spend months or years paying for a split-second mistake."

"And I had the general impression that you were this, I'm not sure how to put it, but that you didn't care about people and their feelings, or that you could only see as far as what you got from people."

"Well, your honor, if I may misquote from one of my favorite authors, well, how would I put it? Now I remember. Of course I care about feelings, I'm lead supervisor in a warehouse, not a steel mill." The audience laughs.

"That sounds vaguely familiar."

"Now remember, Supervisor 960, I think backwards. It's from Ayn Rand's book *Atlas Shrugged*, where Rearden's brother wants him to give him a job in the steel mill because he says he wants it or needs it, not because he can do the work^{xi}. He tries to guilt trip Rearden by saying he has no feelings, he doesn't love him, or something like that, and Rearden says..." 246 stops.

“Let me guess, he says that he’s not concerned about feelings, he’s running a steel mill, not a whorehouse.” The audience laughs again.

“You got it.”

“I guess I’m kind of surprised though, I’ve always thought of you as being mercenary rather than kind.”

“Oh I’m still being mercenary. Your honor, you didn’t add up the numbers. I’m expecting most of the people who are offered this plea bargain to take it. To get the assignment of the civil rights violations I only had to pay the guy 10,000 favors that other people owe me. And he thought it was a great deal. But if everyone or nearly everyone takes it, I will acquire about 3,000 favors each from more than 500 people. Which comes out to...” he stops again.

“One and a half million favors. Man, you’re slick. That’s pretty good, if I do say so myself.”

“If it wasn’t for the fact I have this killer rep as being... Your honor, may I say something which might otherwise be considered contemptuous as an example?”

“Oh sure, go ahead.”

“If I didn’t have this killer rep as being the greediest bastard and the hardest son-of-a-bitch in town in terms of my business dealings I could probably have said I’d accept no favors at all, just be nice for once in view of how horribly these men had suffered. Or just reimburse me at costs, which would be maybe 30 favors rather than 3,000. But I can’t allow myself the luxury of letting my feelings tarnish my reputation as one of the sharpest operators in the universe. So I have to make sure I soak these people for quite a bit, if for no other reason than to make them learn something. Every time I send them out to do something they’re going to remember why they have to do it, because ‘they done a bad thing’ and maybe it will teach them a lesson, but not be exorbitantly expensive for them, say the way being forced into community service for a few years would be. And I get to exploit them like slave labor, which is fun.”

“For someone who claims to be so vehemently opposed to slavery, how you can take such glee at doing the equivalent by putting people in a position where they are, in effect, forced to become chattel slaves for you, seems so, hypocritical in a way, although it doesn’t sound quite right. You’re a very strange and complicated person, 246.”

“Your honor... No, let me make this a bit personal, if I may. Eric, how long would you say you have known me?”

“About six calendar years, 246.”

“Well, I’ll just say this, to use my standard line, and no disrespect intended, your honor, this is a standard joke I say whenever someone discovers something about me that just might be true. About my possibly being a hypocrite, my response is, ‘Gee, Eric, it took you this long to find that out? You’re not as bright as I thought you were.’” The audience laughs.

“Actually I don’t think I’m being hypocritical. Let me think about this for a moment, because I know I have an answer for it although I don’t quite know what it is yet.

“I have sometimes stated that human beings are not property. I also make jokes how, if I can have someone arrested for breaking Rule #1 that I ‘own’ them. What I meant when I said that human beings are not property I meant it in the sense that under normal circumstances no person should have the right to force someone to do things. But when someone violates someone else’s rights, the person who does so causes an exigent circumstance, an emergency, in effect. What is an ‘emergency’? There was a real simple definition printed in every telephone book in the United States, so people would know when it was permissible to demand exclusive use of a

telephone. 'An emergency is a situation where life or property is in jeopardy and the prompt summoning of aid is essential.' When an emergency exists, it becomes impossible for normal circumstances to continue until the emergency is abated. When the emergency ceases, the exigent circumstances end. Or rather, when the exigency ceases, the State of Emergency ends.

"We're not making the person a slave in the classic sense where someone is born into bondage because of race, or position of caste, or some prior-existing condition, something they have no control over. We're placing them, at worst, in a condition of indentured servitude where they chose to put themselves in that position due to their misconduct. The only reason they are in the condition of being forced to perform labor is because they chose to do something that they did not have the right to do. You know the standard argument behind Rule #1. Since you violated someone's rights, you made them your property; you could have done anything you pleased to them. So now society can do anything it pleases to you, and we make you our property until we violate your rights to an equivalent extent, at which point we've retaliated against you for what you did, and we must at that point declare that your breach of the law has been cured and you are no longer subject to punishment. We do not make them a slave, they make *themselves* one." Some members of the audience applaud. 246 turns around, takes a bow, then turns back to the dais.

"I've always thought you make terrific speeches, 246."

"Thank you, your honor. I thought your arguments in how you got out of handling Involuntary Recycling cases was great and I found the arguments to be quite powerful. I respect your opinion even though I don't agree with you, I do believe there are some things where we should impose mandatory recycling. For example, I'm the one who got the Chairman to impose that penalty for bothering the sign at the entrance to the Frontier. Your honor, do you know why I asked him to make it that severe?"

"No. I am kind of curious, I thought it was rather draconian."

"It was intended to be. That sign might be the only thing that prevents someone who is ignorant of what is going on out in the Frontier from going there and becoming, as the appeals court so eloquently put it in Madam Putty Tat's appeal of your case, 'Fodder for the reprobates who infest the Frontier.' I have a number of friends and acquaintances out in the Frontier that I see or say hello to on a regular basis. None of whom I would trust for 5 seconds not to hurt me if I wasn't wearing a wizard's cloak and equipped with the equivalent of magic or armed to the teeth. The sign is there to warn tourists that if they go into the Frontier they're on their own. I know that there are lots of people who would have gone out there and been horribly exploited had it not been for the sign warning them what they could expect. We will never know how many thousands or potentially millions of people who were saved from torture and brutality by reading that sign. But we do know one thing; it prevents anyone from arguing that they didn't know what they were getting into. And basically, I wanted to scare people from touching that sign so that it would remain there to warn people.

"In view of what has happened I'm thinking of something that might be fun. Putting a notice near it saying do not grab the sign or you will be immediately punished, and tying the equivalent of a bounce tube to the ground directly in front of it, so if you grab the sign, a force field pulls you away from the sign so it gets left there, then a propulsion unit tosses you over the fence and about 5 clicks into the Frontier. And their hands remain attached to the sign for half an hour, so for the next 30 minutes all the guy has to defend himself are two stumps. Then we won't have

to protect the sign any more, the sign will be able to protect itself. I'm just surprised the sign has stayed on the fence, untouched, for 65 calendar years."

"I was kind of surprised someone would even try bothering it."

"It is amazing, in a way. Anyway, you have my proposal there for those that are willing to plead out."

"So basically you're willing to offer those who plea bargain, to, in effect, a fine payable to you of 3,000 or 5,000 hours, be loved back, take orientation and stay out of trouble for 3 years?"

"That's correct your honor. Here are some printed copies explaining the circumstances of this plea, you can have the bailiff give them out to the Accuseds and allow them the option."

"So, is that it, then?"

"I do believe that is it. Oh, wait a minute. If I may correct you on one thing, your honor?"

"What's that?"

"I like the way you make the quote, it has a bit more flavor and maybe you should leave it, just to see if, when you have an Accused, if they notice. Your quote is from Justice Thurgood Marshall, and it originally was 'I *will* no longer tinker with the *machinery* of death.'"

"I stand corrected. Damn you're good."

He smiled. "Thank you, your honor."

Chapter 46

“I spoke to Timothy McVeigh shortly after he died.”

“Hi, I’m Arlene 1144. This is *Your Point of View*. Tonight we’re going to be talking about the recent riot that occurred at the Picketing Zone. With us tonight are Lou 5, head of People for the Advancement of Advancement, Noted authorer and lecturer William 330126, and, of course, the man everyone knows, Supervisor 246! So tonight, we’re going to talk about what happened. Here’s a replay of the original broadcast.” The original segment from the news plays, including 246’s comment about the picketing zone. When the video ends, she comes back. “One of the questions I want to ask is whether we need to allow people to show these sort of things. I’ll start with William.

“This is a really stupid thing to allow. It was insensitive, rude, crass and disgusting. It is something that decent people should not be allowed to see, not have to see. And the worst thing about it was those poor men who had just come off that terrible plane crash and one of the first things they see in this world is someone criticizing their race, their religion, and supporting a horrible, horrible catastrophe that should never have happened.”

“Okay, now, Lou, what’s your take?”

“I’m gonna agree with William. If we give these sort of crazies a public forum it only encourages them to spread their hatred to more people.”

”And now, Supervisor 246.”

”Arlene, before I say anything I’d like to make sure no one here has any reservations to listening to what I say or will be offended by what I say. I say what I think whether other people agree with me or not. If you have some objection to what I’m going to say, please speak up now. Otherwise I’ll presume you have no objections.

“Some crackpot has a stupid opinion that is really insulting. Really, really insulting. It’s so bad that it makes people sick, so we don’t allow it to be seen in public. So he becomes miserable, perhaps. So he privately goes around looking for people that are interested in his sick ideas. Maybe he gets a cabal together who fester their hate among one another and eventually they go out and commit some crime against some other people because they need publicity for their cause, since the only way they can get exposure is to commit violence.

“Some crackpot has a stupid opinion that is really insulting. Really, really insulting. You don’t like it when you see it on a sign. You walk by and ignore him. People keep doing this. Eventually he sees that nobody cares about his opinion. He goes away. But at least he’s had the same fair and reasonable chance to let people see his opinions; he can be happy he’s had his turn. No muss, no fuss and everyone can be happy about it. He can get exposure without violence.

“Some crackpot has a stupid opinion that is really insulting. Really, really insulting. You don’t like it when you see it on a sign. So you put up a sign of your own where you explain why you think he’s wrong. Now maybe people see both sides of the issue (or all three, or more) and you’re able to make people see why he’s wrong. Or maybe people will come to realize that *you* are wrong. But nobody’s hurt, nobody feels - and rightfully so - that they have been silenced, and nobody has to be upset about it. Both sides can get exposure without violence.

“It is the intolerance to other people’s ideas that has essentially caused a large chunk of

all the suffering in the world. Maybe all of it that isn't a result of natural disasters.

"Arlene, what would you call it if I started taking shots at you because you believe your religion is the only correct one and I believed my religion is the only correct one?"

"I don't know."

"Northern Ireland and the Middle East. And maybe a half dozen other places. The Catholics believe they are the One True Faith of God and that they are right. The Protestants believe they are the One True Faith of God and that they are right, and they are both willing to stand by their opinion no matter how many of the unbelievers they are willing to kill.

"The Jews believe they are the chosen people. They also believe the Muslims are the bastard children of one of their ancestors. So if you're a Muslim, and have been told you're someone's illegitimate half-brother, who believes he's superior to you because he's been specifically chosen by God, you're probably not going to like him much. And if you're a Jew, you're not going to like that inferior, snotty little towel-headed, distant relative you want to shove in a closet much either.

"So let's take a look at our happy little party down at the Zone. Some stupid kook said something so insulting that no human being of any intelligence should take seriously. Ignore him and he's a minor pest. Make a fuss and you not only get more people to notice his version of hatred, now his opinion must be important or worth looking at because so many people are interested in it. So now maybe, you do bring more crazies out of the woodwork to help spread his idea. That makes his idea now more valuable and important in the marketplace of ideas.

"The worst thing you can do to an idea you disagree with is try and suppress it. What you need to do is try and let others see why the other guy's opinion is wrong. Then maybe more people learn something. And you know what that makes you, it makes you an *innoculator*. You've inoculated people against the virus of that opinion that you don't like, and because they're educated about it, it can't take root in their minds and spread. And maybe you've made the world just a little bit better place as a result.

"But you haven't tried to stop him from peddling his stupid point of view, and he should have no reason to be upset at you for you expressing your opinion. You may not like the other person, you may not think he's got all his oars in the water, but you respect him as another person who has the right to express his ideas even though you don't agree with them.

"So that's all that I am saying is, that by tolerating other ideas, even where we disagree or don't think they are right, we promote more tolerance of other people, and of ourselves, and maybe make things a little less intolerant. And definitely make the world a better place."

Arlene continues, "It's my understanding that you went down to the picketing zone, and gave the man a brand new, printed sign exactly like the one he had."

"No, ma'am, I did not."

"Several people said they saw you do that."

"Ma'am, I *traded* him a sign with the same wording for his, and had him sign it. I did not *give* him anything. I'm known as greedy because I never give away anything, and that's true. In fact, here is the sign right here." He showed it to the reporter and the cameras.

"Now let me get this straight, you gave him a nice, new printed sign to replace that one."

"No, Arlene, as I said, I *traded* him a facsimile reproduction in exchange for a signed original. I think most art collectors consider that a pretty good exchange."

"Art?"

“Yes ma’am, I think this is a work of art. I don’t agree with it, but I do believe it is art.”

“But you don’t believe what it says?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Why do you think it’s a work of art?”

“I think art is that which moves people to experience emotion. Since this sign moved a number of people into so much emotion that they got violated, I’d say it qualifies.

“So let me look at the incident. The police violated all of those people who had come off of a plane crash and started fighting, most of whom were survivors of the holocaust, and left a neo-Nazi standing there to continue to spread hatred. They’re in jail, he’s out on the street, they made the 6-o’clock news and got millions of people to see his idea, and perhaps encouraged more people to come out and display their hatred in public. Who won in this battle? It certainly wasn’t those men sitting over in my friend Joan’s lockup, and it certainly ain’t the people who rioted and are now doing the same, it’s the man holding the sign who got a lot of free attention and made his idea more important and popular. And, as it turns out, that’s exactly how it should be. The police arrested the criminals, and protected the law abiding.”

“And you really think those men were criminals?”

“Yes I do. There are some cases where you can say there are shades of gray. It’s one thing to murder your wife for the insurance; it’s another to give her too much medication so she dies, because she’s dying of cancer, and she wants relief from intolerable pain. They’re both cases of premeditated murder, but I think the second deserves possibly sympathy, and maybe we might not even punish the person in such a case. But this was clearly black and white; the man was minding his own business, they beat him up. He was right, they were wrong. End of story.”

William 330126 speaks up. “Arlene, may I ask a question here?”

“Sure, go ahead.”

“246, do you think that it was fair that a number of people, just coming off of a plane crash, and dying, who arrive in this world and the first thing they see, before they can even find a place to pray to their God for thanks and deliverance, is a man suggesting that they *should* have suffered so much?”

“Who said death was fair? What is fairness? Is it fair to ask that one person’s opinions, or rather, their ability to express their opinions, be subject to the veto of others? If I don’t like your opinion, does that mean I should have the right to keep you from expressing it? If we go that way, in effect, it makes you my property. Because if you have to have my permission to live your life in some fashion, it means to the extent you want to do whatever it is that you have to have permission from me to do it, you are my property. Now if you think that one person has the right to have someone else as your slave, then your opinion is essentially exactly the same as, “ he points at the sign, “ this one.”

“How do you get that?”

“The Nazis believed they could create a perfect world by getting rid of undesirables. To them that meant Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals. So they created a system where they could just cart them off to work camps and death houses. The reason they could do this is because the government declared them its property and decided it could do with them whatever it wanted.

“If I own an automobile on earth, and I have the title to that vehicle, I can drive it around, use it as a flower vase, or take it to a junkyard and have it ground into scrap. I own it, it’s my property, I may do with it as I will.

“If the government owns you, it can order you around, use you in a death camp, or take you to a rendering factory and - as the sign here says - use your body to make soap and lampshades.”

“If you own me, you can order me around, decide what I can or cannot do, and dispose of me as you see fit.

“And *that* is what I object to. Human beings are not property. And other human beings should not have the right to own them or control them.”

“I’ve not seen you hesitate to order some people to do things on some of the court cases you’ve tried.”

“Are you referring to cases where I’ve ordered someone who was violated and convicted for breaking Rule #1?”

“Yes. I’m specifically thinking of *Matter of Laura*, for example.”

“Let me explain the situation. Someone breaks Rule #1. ‘No person shall initiate force upon another except to prevent or retaliate against the other’s initiation of force.’ To quote from the movie *Starship Troopers*, ‘When you exercise force you are using *violence*, the supreme authority from which all other authority is derived.’ When you initiate violence against someone, you violate their civil rights, thus you are saying that your opinion is that they, as a person, do not have rights, because if they did have rights, then you cannot violate them, just as much as they cannot violate yours. Since you have shown that you think that people don’t have rights, then we as a society can agree with you, and therefore say that *you* do not have any rights. You should not have any reason to complain, since you are getting the exact same treatment from us as you are giving them. Since once you violated their rights you could have done anything you pleased to them, we as a society may now do anything we please to you.

“You have done something wrong. You’ve made that person into your property. Well, now you’re someone else’s property until an appropriate punishment can be meted out to you that fits the crime you committed. Once you have been punished, you have been retaliated against, the transaction is complete. You violated someone’s rights, so we violated yours, and now it’s over and done with and we can both go on about our business.

“What I meant when I said that human beings are not property I meant it in the sense that under normal circumstances no person should have the right to force someone to do things. But when someone violates someone else’s rights, the person who does so causes an exigent circumstance, they create a State of Emergency, in effect. What is an ‘emergency’? There was a real simple definition printed in every telephone book in the United States, so people would know when it was permissible to demand exclusive use of a telephone. ‘An emergency is a situation where life or property is in jeopardy and the prompt summoning of aid is essential.’ When a State of Emergency exists, it becomes impossible for normal circumstances to continue until the exigent circumstances causing the State of Emergency are abated. When the exigent circumstances cease, the State of Emergency ends.

“We’re not making the person a slave in the classic sense where someone is born into bondage because of race, or position of caste, or some prior-existing condition, something they have no control over. We’re placing them, at worst, in a condition of indentured servitude where they chose to put themselves in that position due to their misconduct. The only reason they are in the condition of being forced to perform labor is because they chose to do something that they did not have the right to do. Since they violated someone’s rights, they made them their property; they could have done anything they pleased to them. So now society can do

anything it pleases to them, and we make them our property until we violate their rights to an equivalent extent, at which point we've retaliated against them for what they did, and we must at that point declare that their breach of the law has been cured and they are no longer subject to punishment. *We do not make them a slave, they make themselves one.*"

"Further, in any civilized society, those that commit wrongdoing have to be punished. If they are not punished, they will continue to commit wrongdoing since they know they can continue to get away with it. This will make it impossible for society to function if people cannot expect to live their lives without interference from criminals that would pray on them with impunity. It is the lynchpin of any society, that which holds it together, the right to require that those who commit wrongdoing be punished in order to encourage them not to repeat their antisocial behavior. If they are not punished, they will continue to do so. They will continue to violate the rights of other people unless they are shown that if they do that, their rights will be violated.

"That's why we say, when someone is arrested for breaking Rule #1, that they are *violated*. They are also arrested, but it's an admission to them that we as a society are aware, and we are saying to them, that in stopping you after you violated someone's rights, that we must violate yours in order to retaliate. It allows us, as a society to admit that we know that we must respect your rights unless you have failed to do so to others, and that statement is an admonishment to you that we are aware that you have failed to do so. It is both a compliment and a warning. It is a compliment to you that you are a human being with rights. It is a warning to you that you have failed to honor those rights in someone else.

"This point is held so strongly by the law that failure to state to the person when arresting them for breaking Rule #1 that they have been violated is an absolute and complete defense to the charge of breaking Rule #1, and that the courts must, in effect, declare the person's arrest unlawful. If a policeman arrests you without informing you that you have been violated, the charge must be dismissed with prejudice by the court. No matter how bad your crime is, if the person who arrests you fails to 'violate you,' you cannot be punished. Not only that, if the person is informed that they are violated, but they are informed after they are arrested, it is the same thing as if they were never violated at all. It has highest priority and must be done first, or it is considered that the person who arrested you has failed to do so.

"It is that tiny, but important 'line in the sand' in which we unequivocally state we are a civilized society based on rule of law, with respect for the individual above all else.

"But let me try to answer your question. If someone has an opinion that we don't like, and want it suppressed, what should be the penalty for that? If the opinion is so bad, so black, that it's the most horrible thing there is, let's get rid of it by eliminating its supporters. On earth, let's give them a seat on ol' Sparky and a 10,000 volt suppository. Here, let's Involuntarily Recycle them. That will solve the problem since we will never see their ugly opinion again. And you're not going to see much of any other opinion either. Because unless you're going to destroy them in order to suppress their opinion, you may not be able to suppress it.

"Nelson Mandela spent over 25 years in jail because he refused to renounce violence against the government that supported apartheid. It was most likely his opinion that, since the government had chosen to suppress his opinion, the only answer left was violence. I think it was John F. Kennedy who said, 'if you make peaceful change impossible you make violent uprisings inevitable.' Mandela stuck to his opinion so strongly, nothing short of martyrdom would have

stopped it. And if that had happened, we would probably have seen a violent removal of apartheid as a result of a civil war, instead of a peaceful one.

"I think it bears repeating that when unpopular opinions are suppressed it leads to violence, often because those who oppose those opinions will use violence to suppress them.

"A number of people of the Kurdish religion, who were citizens of Iraq, spoke out on how they wanted self-determination. Iraq's ruler didn't like that and wanted the protests to stop, so he ordered his own subjects destroyed by dosing them with nerve gas, a practice universally banned since World War I.

"A number of students wanted the Government of China to act in a more reasonable fashion and had quiet protests to announce this. We know where they sat protesting because it's where the government sent in tanks and the army: Tiananmen Square.

"A number of World War I veterans quietly protested in Washington, DC over failure of the government to pay promised benefits, probably because of the economic depression. They were living in some tents in a few public parks because they essentially had no where else to go. In direct defiance of orders of his commanding officer, the President of the United States, Douglas MacArthur sent in tanks and the military to get rid of them.

"A group of people had some weird ideas about religion. Some of their neighbors didn't like it. Some government men decided to use this to get themselves some free TV time and make an example of this unpopular religion. In trying to serve some papers at their farm, one of the police officers accidentally shoots himself. The police panic, think the people in the farm are shooting at them. They start shooting, the people inside start shooting back, and the end result is that weeks later, dozens of women and children are dead because someone panicked and overreacted. This, of course, was the incident at Waco, Texas.

"When I saw the event I reached the conclusion that the government of the United States had gone right over the edge, and if they weren't careful they might spark the equivalent of a national 1968 Watts, California riot the next time someone sees government officials showing up. And in a way, I was right.

"We know what happened next on that exact same day a few years later, as, again, dozens of women and children end up dead because someone panicked and overreacted. This, of course, was the incident at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

"I don't think that violence is a good answer in most cases, and yet, it might just have been in this one if it had been planned properly. Some people might think it's not a good idea for me to give an example where violence may be an appropriate answer. But, I have found that it can be instructive to show people that, if you're fighting in a war - which many of the people who do these things believe to be the case - it should be understood that war is supposed to be controlled violence, where you commit such acts because you have no other alternative, and because the reason for doing so is to either deny the enemy the means to continue the war, or to try to convince them that if they do not realize the war needs to be stopped and sue for peace, the cost to them is going to be more than they can bear.

"And beyond this, the so-called bad guys already know how to use violence, and anything I might say they already know about, so I'm not telling anything these people don't already know, but they often use violence in random ways that result in setting back whatever cause they believe they are fighting for, and usually hurting innocent people. Maybe if I can tell someone who is already committed to using violence how not to go about it, he might think of a way not

to have to do so, or maybe he'll think of a way to avoid hurting people. We can replace damaged unoccupied property or destroyed empty buildings; that's just money in one form or another. But dead people are irreplaceable. And while I don't like to see violence taking place, some people are committed to it and you can't talk them out of it. But it might be possible to talk them into doing something which still involves violence, but is less drastic than hurting people.

"I spoke to Timothy McVeigh shortly after he died. I said to him, in response to his comments, 'I understand what you thought, in that you wanted to make it known that you felt the government is acting out of control, and to get people to notice. I'll tell you something, I believe that what you did caused the exact opposite of what you intended, and made people more likely to believe the government's actions were correct. I believe you were quoted as saying that you felt you needed a "body count" to get people to notice. Sir, the one thing you absolutely *did not need*, was a body count.'

"I can think of how using violence might have made a more appropriate statement, especially since in his opinion, the government was beyond the point of listening to civil discourse and would only respond to violence.

"He could have set up the same thing to happen, but call in a bomb alert. Set off a small one nearby if you have to, in order to let people know it's no hoax, then give them time to evacuate everyone. Or even better: duplicate the same setup somewhere else, but leave a clear and obvious flaw that makes it impossible to go off. Mention that another place has the same thing, but it is not disabled and *will* go off. This will prevent the authorities from presuming it's a hoax and ignoring it, and they will then evacuate everyone from the real site. Especially if you let the media know about it.

"After the explosion goes off, you announce that you chose to warn people, because, while you're willing to use violence to make a point - as the U.S. Federal Government was at Waco - you're better than they are, because unlike them, you chose not to injure or kill innocent people. You'd get the same press coverage, you would not face the death penalty if you got caught, and people might just see that the government needs to be stopped from acting rashly before it triggers more crazies like you, who next time, might not be so kind to innocent bystanders.

"That doesn't mean I approve of the use of violence as a way to solve problems. People who use violence as a means to respond to some issue fail to realize that killing or wounding innocent noncombatants in whatever war they are fighting, will usually tend to harden the hearts eliminating sympathy, and deafen the ears, of the very people that they need to be sympathetic to, and listen to, their ideas.

"All I am saying is that history shows us violence is often the only way to stop unpopular ideas. And if you're not willing to go that far, then maybe what we should do is to try letting those ideas be exposed so people will be less likely to use violence in order to allow their ideas to be exposed. It may be a little unpleasant, but it's a lot less unpleasant than having to identify a loved one in the bottom of a pile of rubble."

"But still, a bunch of holocaust survivors, barely even dead, being face to face with such hatred on top of the misery they've already suffered, is it right?"

"Sir, I understand and I sympathize with the suffering they have gone through. But it's no excuse to hurt other people."

“So you think that it’s okay that a group of holocaust survivors be put in jail and a Nazi Skinhead be out free?”

“Yes. And I want to make this plain and simple. I’ll say it again to make it totally clear, and I’ll use your words. The ‘holocaust survivors’ were criminals, the ‘Nazi Skinhead’ was a law abiding citizen minding his own business.”

“Jesus you are a cold bastard, you know that?”

246 stood up. “Sir, you did not inform me that you would use insulting terms and I consider that an insult.” He then opened his hand and slapped William 330126 across the face. He then stepped back and proceeded to sit down.

Lou 5, watching this, turned beet red, stood up, said, “Why you fucker!” and punched 246 in the face, then sat down in disgust. 246 had his Immunity from Assault privilege turned on, so as a result it simply knocked him and the chair back a little. He smiled, stood up, walked back over to Lou, and said to him, “Sir, would you mind standing up and looking at me for a moment?”

Lou stands. 246 says, “Thank you.” He then tripped the man, pulled a pair of handcuffs out of his back pocket, pulls Lou’s hands behind his back and says, “Young man you are hereby violated!” He cuffs him and continues, “You are under arrest for breaking Rule #1 and for knowingly assaulting a Supervisor of the Welcoming Department. You have certain rights under the law and you are advised to say nothing until you are informed of them or obtain access to counsel. Please stand up. Here, sit in your chair and we can finish this show; you can go to jail after the last commercial. Oh, wait a minute, stand up a moment, I’ll take the cuffs off and turn them around so your hands can be cuffed in your lap so you don’t have to sit on them, that might hurt. There.” He sat down, smiled, looked around, and said, “Who has the next question?”

Arlene is sitting there, taken aback, looking at him. “Well, since we’re on a new tack, why did you slap him?”

“He referred to me as a ‘cold bastard’. Well, I’m not cold, so that’s wrong, but a ‘bastard’ is a narrow sword, a coarse grade file, or a person whose parents were not married before he was born. The first two aren’t insulting. The third impugns one’s reputation because, whether we like it or not, many people consider someone whose parents were not married before they were born to be of a lower grade of person. And I’d like to comment about the statement our other friend over there used. And I have to be vulgar because he was first. He called me a ‘fucker’. I have no idea what he meant by that but I’ll take it at face value. That is someone who engages in sexual intercourse. I have no problem admitting that I do. I think women are the greatest things around, and I love having sex with them. Lots of them. That’s why some people call me Tigger, because I’m 246, ‘I’m the only one’, and I like to bounce around with women a lot.”

“Well, I think we’ll go to a commercial.”

Chapter 47

“Because you’re afraid to admit that you are homosexual...”

246 decided to take a moment and walk through the Picketing Zone. He sometimes liked to look at some of the unusual and strange opinions that people often expressed. Michael, the guy with the anti-Semitic sign, was still standing in a square holding the new printed sign that 246 traded him, only a couple of police officers were standing near him so another riot didn’t start. In the background, some people were talking quietly to each other. He passed by various religious signs, “John 3:16,” “Ask me about the Real Heaven,” “Had we chosen the Muslim religion over Christianity this place would be a real Paradise.” 246 wondered if the young man holding that sign had ever crossed the Frontier and visited the hellhole of the Arabic section, as he had. He doubted it strongly. He sometimes wondered what they would think if they knew when they get to heaven, they not only don’t get 72 virgins when they die, they don’t get any sex at all because, with the exception of the French and English, none of the other Language Sections would agree to be subject to the requirements of the Civil Rights Act.

He shook his head in thought. (“As long as the governments of those sections don’t want to allow proper civil rights, the people there can’t have sex. So far, the French section was the only other one to accept the requirements to get computer support. I suppose that’s why all those places tolerate men going out to the Frontier to rape women, it at least gives them some relief. I shudder to think what will happen to the people running those sections if their people find out how easy it would be to get it.”)

He also noted some people had gotten the bright idea to use their space to show advertisements and collect a few favors. “Ask me why Ajax Notary is the best.” “Ajax Notary Sucks, ask me about Wilson’s Notary.” “Find out about the tremendous opportunities at the Frontier.” That one was probably from some real estate broker who on earth would sell swampland in Florida, 246 thought. Anyone stupid enough to live out at the Frontier without armed guards was probably going to regret it very soon thereafter. Presuming they could even trust their guards. With one exception, he noted to himself. but she was no ordinary person. You have to give her a lot of credit, deciding to continue her ministry to the unfortunates in the Frontier of the Afterlife, believing it to be the Purgatory of her religion, as she had done in assisting the sick in the hellhole of India. One amazing lady indeed, he thought, even if he did not agree with her approval of suffering, he still had to admire her devotion to her cause.

He heard some people say, “There he is!” excitedly. It did not sound like the anger of a mob, but Supervisor 246 never takes chances, he always leaves his Immunity from Assault privilege enabled except when alone with people he trusts. Someone walks up to him. “246, you have got to see this,” and points over toward a different row. He walks over to where a man is holding a sign that reads “SUPERVISOR 246 IS A RACIST SKINHEAD BASTERD WHO DESERVES TO BE STRUNG UP BY HIS BALLS.”

246 walks up to the man and looks at him as if he is angry. In a rather harsh tone he says to the man, “Young man, what is your name?”

“Ralph 30445”

He looks at Ralph for a few minutes, studying him and his sign. Apparently doing a slow burn, or so it seems, he finally says, again in a harsh tone, “Ralph, give me your sign, now, please.”

The man smiles. “No. What you going to do about it?”

“If you do not give me your sign I’ll hire people to stand on every square near you holding a sign pointing at you that says ‘That man, Ralph 30445, is an incompetent fool who does not know what he is doing, ask me why.’ and they’ll be able to tell people exactly why if they can’t figure it out. Now hand me your sign, now, please.”

While this is happening, a man with a video camera was recording the whole thing^{xii}. Ralph decides to hand 246 his sign.

246's tone returns to normal. “Thank you, Ralph. I see you have a marker there. Would you hand it to me, please?” The man does so.

246 makes some marks on the sign, and hands it back to the man. “Here’s your sign and your marker back, thank you. Next time, spell the word ‘bastard’ correctly as I have done on your sign and people won’t think you’re stupid, okay?”

The man stands there, clearly not happy that 246 was n’t upset. “But, I thought it was spelled right, and I figured you’d get mad and tear up this sign.”

“Well, First I intend to have a serious talking to Quentin Tarantino when he shows up here^{xiii}. Second, son I don’t care what you want to say about me. People will think what they please, and if they’re stupid enough to believe you then they’re probably not intelligent enough to bother dealing with me and I won’t have to worry about it. But if you’re going to insult me, at least spell the words correctly so people won’t immediately dismiss you as stupid rather than just a crackpot with an uninformed opinion. Those who know how I think know that I don’t hold such ridiculous opinions. If this was an attempt to bait me, you failed miserably. You know next to nothing about me. I’ve had world-class experts in the English language use insults to me that were so hot they would blister the paint in a blast furnace.

“But you should be careful before you get into a pissing contest with someone who can probably grind you into the dust and drown you in your own gore. Would you like to play a game with me and see if you can insult me enough to hurt my feelings, and in exchange I’ll try to insult you and do the same?”

“Are you serious?”

“Sure. In fact, let’s make it no holds barred. Either of us can use anything we can think of to say from any source. Let’s see who can get the other mad or upset first. You want to go first or should I?”

“You go first.”

“Okay, let’s see. I see you as a frightened little weasel who is afraid of his own shadow, who wanted to try to make a name for himself by taking on some important personality and maybe getting him mad enough to do something to him. You failed to do this, you ignorant little snot, because your own less than sub-moronic intelligence is no match for my superior intellect, of which if I lost all but two of my brain cells I’d still have at least five more than you do.

“I’ll bet when you arrived here as an Incoming, a nice lady Welcomer came out to meet you, and took you back to her room, and eventually offered to have sex with you, and you ran off because while you think you are interested in women, you weren’t sure and thought that you might be one of them faggots that can’t deal with women. And I’ll bet you can’t accept that you are queer, or maybe you could swing both ways if you weren’t such an imbecile, but you can’t bring yourself to go that way, so you jerk off in the bathroom of your apartment rather than go find some guy to fuck up the ass or fuck you in the ass, or to get on his knees and suck your dick, or you blow him. Because you’re afraid to admit that you are homosexual, you don’t even want to

admit it to yourself, and so you try to fantasize about women while some part of you sees it as dirty, plus you hate yourself for thinking it's dirty, because you know you're a sick man, who..."

At this point 246's diatribe had apparently gone over the edge and insulted him enough that Ralph punched 246 in the face. 246 Smiled at this. "Looks like I win. And you lose, big time. Young man you are hereby violated! You are under arrest for breaking Rule #1 and for knowingly assaulting a Supervisor of the Welcoming Department. You have certain rights under the law and are advised to say nothing until you are informed of them or have access to counsel." One of the police officers who was guarding Michael had come over. "Ah, good officer, I see you have your handcuffs ready, please wait a moment. Before this man leaves, is there anyone who wants to take his place and continue holding the sign that I have corrected? I don't want to silence him or lessen in any way his right to express his opinion. Well, I guess not. Here, officer, make sure he takes his sign with him over to Joan's place, we don't want him to lose it. Better luck next time, son." 246 continues on to his office.

Chapter 48

“A drunken bet does not mean we can ignore this application.”

English Language Section, General Court, Division 4061

Ex Parte Application of Channel 134,013

File No. 7104-G-0021072663

Judge: Edward 4

I have before me an application by Television Station 134,013 pursuant to Section 1350 of the Legal Code and due to opposition filings I have been assigned to rule on the petition.

Apparently the general manager of the station got into a drinking discussion with the managing editor of one of the local newspapers, who said that a TV station couldn't file an application of this type, and the station manager, who thought that he could. A drunken bet pursued and the station manager filed the application before me.

On this filing, of the other 1,123 TV stations which operate in the English Language Section, none has filed an opposition, apparently they aren't interested in carrying the type of messages covered by this application, and several of the others that I called to ask were quoted as saying it was ridiculous so it wasn't even worth responding to. Of the 46 currently recognized newspapers of public record, all have filed oppositions, most on technical grounds, and one also on the grounds that the application on its face is ridiculous and was made frivolously.

The statutory requirement is that the applicant be published every single day, be available to a large segment of the general public, be available in permanent copies on a continuous basis from more than one location, and it also has been operating continuously for more than six standard months. The station has shown to meet all of these requirements, as is noted in this opinion. The station has also broadcast a reading of a copy of the application before filing this application, then republished the broadcast every day for two weeks, as is required by the statute. It also published the notice twice in the *Afterlife Times*, which is recognized as a newspaper of public record, and is also one of the parties in opposition, its editor being the very one who caused the station manager to file the application before us.

Channel 134,013 is the second most popular television station in the English Language Section, whose evening newscast alone routinely reaches more than 840 million people every day, and in one form or another its programming potentially reaches an audience - including those in the Frontier and non-English thinking sections - of more than the entire population of the English Language Section. Estimates are their total audience which views the station for at least one standard hour a day to be as high as four billion.

The broadcasts appearing on the station can be seen live, or can be seen on a delayed basis by any person having the privilege of running streaming video. The station also makes available copies of their entire broadcast schedule at the Public Library and at the station's office.

I believe the above provisions clearly comply with the statutory requirements for daily publication and for availability in copies from at least two locations, and thus the technical objections made by the local newspapers are without merit. The total reach of the station exceeds that of any of the local newspapers' total circulation, and in fact exceeds any two of them. Only the three largest of the newspapers who are objecting to this petition, combined, reach more people than the applicant alone.

As for the opposition on grounds that the application was frivolous, the reasoning for one's application is irrelevant. Even if the reason for the application is because of a silly bet between two inebriated friends, that does not invalidate the petition. A drunken bet does not mean we can ignore this application. An application may only be rejected as "frivolous" if there was no legitimate reason to accept the application either because the application clearly does not qualify or fails, in some fashion, to at least meet the minimum requirements of the statute, for example, if someone with a video camera and a tape machine were to apply under this law, as they clearly would not be able to comply with the requirement to reach a "large segment" of the public. (For the purpose of argument, I would consider "large segment" to be at least 1% of the populace, which would be approximately 20 million people.)

In every sense of what the law requires, I can see no reason to refuse to approve their application. As for it being ridiculous, I think I agree with one of the opposition filers that on its face it appears ridiculous, however it does comply with the law as it is written. Maybe it doesn't make much sense to have to issue an order according to this application, and perhaps it would make more sense to reject the application as seemingly ridiculous on its face, but as the Court of Appeals has stated,

It would make more sense to have done that, but unfortunately we have to go by what the law requires.

Administrator of Welcoming Department v. Supervisor 960, 7104 Appellate 1175

As the applicant is in compliance with the terms of the statute, my obligation is clear that I must 'go by what the law requires' and approve the application, as ridiculous as it sounds. I therefore order as follows:

Pursuant to the provisions of Legal Code Section 1350, Television Station Channel 134,013 is hereby recognized as a newspaper of public record of the English Language Section of the Afterlife.

The clerk will prepare the order and issue a certificate to the applicant reflecting this finding.

Signed
Edward 4
Judge of the General Court

Chapter 49
"246 Strikes Again."

"246, come in here."

He materialized in David's Office. "Hi."

"I presume you're aware that the new Administrator isn't ticked off this time, she got angrier than the time you did at me."

"I wonder what off earth could have caused that?"

"Very funny. Have you seen the morning papers?"

"I've never had much interest in speculative fiction. Preferred women more myself."

"Well, anyway, you're the front page on all of them."

246 smiled, speaking with a Texas accent, points at himself. "Lil' ol' me? Gee, I wonder why?"

"I think we had better go down to her office."

"How about we go off and get laid instead? Now I know a couple of girls that we could fuck in a very interesting way..."

"Knock it off, 246, this isn't funny."

"You don't know me David, I think almost everything is funny. Ah, let's get this over with, I suppose I can let my dick rest for a few seconds. But it won't be happy about it and I'll probably have to feed it twice as much to make up for it."

"Stop with the sick jokes."

"Okay, okay. Let's go see her and see what she wants." They take a bounce tube then walk down to her office. Her secretary tells them to go right in.

The new Administrator, who previously was the Administrator Pro Tem, looks at both of them.

"There you are! Do you know how much of an embarrassment you are today?"

"Not yet, but I have this very strong suspicion you are about to tell me."

"Look at this," she says, pointing to a series of newspapers.

The first one shows 246, bent over, putting a pair of handcuffs on Lou 5, with the headline, "Busted!"

The second one shows 246, with his arm in the air, just before he slaps William 330126, with the headline "246 Strikes Again."

246 Looked at that for a moment. "Nice caption."

The third one shows William as his face is responding to 246's slap, and the headline "'Tigger' Bounces Panelist."

The fourth one shows 246, holding the sign reading "The Nazis didn't make enough of you Kikes into soap and lampshades" with the headline "246 Shows Newest Addition To His Art Collection." Half way down the page, set off as a block, in much larger print, is a quote from him. "'The 'Holocaust Survivors' were criminals, the 'Nazi Skinhead' was a law abiding citizen minding his own business.' - Supervisor 246."

"I'll give that one runner up. I think they did a nice job interspersing my quote in to go along with the picture, that was pretty good."

The fifth one shows Lou with his fist pushing 246's face backward, and the headline "Mini-Riot Breaks Out On TV Show."

"That's not bad, I may want copies of these for my office."

“This is no time for levity.”

“I haven’t found a time that wasn’t. Besides that, I was - as unusual as it seems for me - being serious. Can I have these?”

“No! Would you care to explain yourself?”

“Aww, do I have to?”

“Yes!”

“Very well. He used an insulting term without warning and I slapped him. I then went to sit down, the incident forgotten. The other man cold-cocked me and I violated him. Not a bad score.”

“And you think this is appropriate behavior?”

“My actions were right down the book totally legal. It would not have mattered if I was a private citizen, I was dead bang on what the exact requirements of the law are.”

“You struck that man, don’t you think that was excessive?”

“Nope. That’s the way the law is. I should know, I helped write it.”

“Couldn’t you have just ignored it?”

“Yes. But it’s my privilege to invoke the law if I choose.”

“This is two times that your appearances on television have been embarrassing. And your attitude has been less than professional. In fact, it borders on childish levity and total lack of responsibility for your actions.”

“And it took you this long to find that out? Putty Tat, you’re not as bright as I thought you were.”

“That’s not funny. Henceforth you will no longer give out public interviews.”

“During work hours or at all?”

“At all.”

“I see. Ma’am, would you hold on a moment while I get a disinterested witness?”

“Certainly.”

“Central Computer, Telephone Wilson’s Notary.”

“Wilson’s Notary.”

“This is 246, would you send someone over who is Board Certified, please.”

“Uh, what’s that?”

“Never mind. Central Computer, close connection. Gee, the guy in the Picketing Zone was right, they do suck^{xiv}. Central Computer, Telephone Ajax Notary Service.”

“Ajax Notary.”

“This is 246, would you send someone over who is Board Certified please.”

“Please wait a moment.” A woman materializes. “Hi, 246, what can I do you for?”

“Central Computer, close connection. What’s your name, ma’am?”

“Wendy 113.”

“I wish to confirm that you are Board Certified, is that correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“David, would you close and seal the door please. Wendy, what’s the current notary fee?”

“3 Favors, plus 20 for travel and trip.”

“Central Computer, transfer 23 favors to Wendy 113. Now, Wendy, I need a witness to something here. Can you identify me or do you need authentication?”

“Since I transported to your ID by number and not by simply returning to where the call came

from and I arrived here, I will accept you as known to me personally as Supervisor 246.”

“Very well. I solemnly promise to you that all persons in this room except for you are known to me personally to be Board Certified. Please inform me as to proof of the same on your behalf.”

“The Chairman’s name is Dr. George Green, and I know what he looks like.” She smiled sweetly for a moment. “He’s kind of a cute guy even if he is a bit older. I even offered to sleep with him once but he actually turned me down.”

“He’s in a committed relationship right now.”

“Yeah, I know. Too bad though, he seems like such a fun guy. I’ll bet his girlfriend Lynn is really lucky to have him around all for herself.”

“He can be really interesting at times. Anyway, I see you do know him then. Fine. Central Computer, list all female occupants of room by ID except Wendy 113.”

“29301 EX Marilyn 114430.”

“Madam Administrator, would you confirm that to be your ID?”

“Yes it is.”

“Very well, then. Would you please repeat what you just said to me?”

“I said that you were acting unprofessional and that henceforth you will no longer give out public interviews.”

“Ma’am, have you ever watched the TV show, *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*”

“No.”

“On that show, the host asks the contestant, ‘Is that your final answer?’ meaning that the response they make is exactly that, their final answer and is absolutely irrevocable, meaning they cannot take it back for any reason whatsoever. Do you understand this, ma’am?”

“Yes I do.”

“Therefore, is your instruction to me that I am no longer to give out public interviews at any time, including outside of work hours, your final answer?”

“Yes it is.”

“Fine. You’re fired.”

“You can’t fire me, you work for me.”

246 smiled. “Yes, ma’am, that’s right, I do. I think it just might have slipped my mind. I just wanted you to get used to hearing it. I apologize, ma’am, I had no right to say that to you.”

“Thank you.”

“David?”

“Yes?”

“I like working with you, just wanted you to know that.”

“Thanks.”

“David, release the electronic door lock please so she can leave.” 246 turned to her. “Wendy, thank you your services are no longer needed.” She dematerializes.

“Madam Administrator, may I say something to you that may be offensive to you?”

“No, I am not interested in having sex with you. I told you that the last time you asked.”

“That is not what I was intending.”

“Oh. Go ahead.”

246 looked her in the eye. “Don’t take this too personally, Marilyn, but your personality to me makes you seem so cold that you’re probably lousy in bed anyway. So maybe you need

some practice warming up by trying something about as hard as you are. Madam Administrator, if I may quote from the source code of the kernel of the *Linux Operating System*, go ‘fuck yourself hard with a chainsaw.’ I quit. Good day, ma’am. Goodbye, David.” He walked out of the room.

Chapter 50

“This is Supervisor 246, may I have your attention please.”

David followed him out. “Jesus fucking Christ, 246!”

“I’ve always wondered how he could do that myself.”

“Who?”

“Jesus fucking Christ. I thought that was one person, not two.”

“Are you serious?”

246 stopped in the corridor and looked at him. “David, did you catch the show?”

“Yes.”

“Do you remember what I said about one person owning another?”

“I think so, but I’m not sure.”

“When one person can say what you can or cannot do then that person owns you. And I am not someone’s possession.”

“I’m sure she would have calmed down in a few days.”

“Perhaps she would. But if she’s in charge she can set policy. Once she sets policy, I can either follow it or I can quit. I chose to quit.”

“What is it going to mean to this place with you gone?”

“Someone once said, stick your hand in a bucket of water, shake it up, remove your hand and notice the size of the hole. Once I’m gone practically no one will notice or care.”

“You can’t be serious.”

He smiled and started walking again. “Of course I’m not. You should know me by now, I’m almost never serious. And when I am, you can usually tell, and know why. We’ll see what happens. But I can do anything I want, so I can pick the position I want to take. Maybe I’ll just open a competing operation and run you sumbitches out of business, or at least try, like Martin Luther did when they fired him from the Catholic Church and he started the Lutheran Church. There’s a guy I know named Newton, his main squeeze is so good she alone could probably do the job of half the female Welcomers here. In any event, I’m going to go down and clean out my desk.”

He jumped into a drop tube and came out on his floor. Once David showed up, he continued and walked into his office. He selected a number of items, placed them in a pile and they dematerialized. “David, you might want to watch channel 63,045. Central Computer, open public address system stop word x-ray. This is Supervisor 246, may I have your attention please. I wish to announce that due to a disagreement in policy with the new Administrator of this facility I have submitted my resignation to her effective immediately. As of now I have quit and am no longer working here. I wish to thank all of you that have been on the job with me over the many years that I have been here, and I wish you all the best of luck in the future. Thank you very much. X-ray. Central Computer, telephone Channel 63,045.”

“This is Channel 63,045, how may I... Oh, Supervisor 246!”

“I’d like to speak to Arlene, please.”

A new voice answers, “This is Arlene.” Her voice becomes much softer. “Oh, hi!”

“Hi Arlene. I’ve got some news for you that you won’t believe.”

“After that incident on the show I’ll believe anything. You really boosted our ratings.

Perhaps we need more, shall we say, ‘mini-riots’. Just kidding. Anyway, tell me what

happened?”

“I quit my job.”

“You know, I’ve heard you have a strange sense of humor but that’s got to be the weirdest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Would you like me to tell you exactly what I said to the Administrator?”

“Yes.”

“I said, ‘Madam Administrator, if I may quote from the source code of the kernel of the *Linux Operating System*, go ‘fuck yourself hard with a chainsaw,’ I quit.’ Then I walked out of her office.”

“Holy Shit!”

“So anyway, I’ll be calling a press conference to announce this.”

“Look, 246, if you’ll give me a 20 minute exclusive I’ll put you on the air right now.”

He smiled. “I just thought you might. Okay. Central Computer, transport me to current connection and close.” He dematerializes.

Chapter 51

“We interrupt our regularly scheduled programming...”

“We interrupt our regularly scheduled programming to present this Channel 63,045 News Exclusive.”

“This is Arlene 1144 here with Supervisor 246, or should I call him ex-Supervisor 246. So it is my understanding that you have decided to resign your position with the Welcoming Department?”

“Well, actually I’m entitled to keep the title of Supervisor forever. But other than that, that’s correct, Arlene. I quit, effective immediately. I have a personal disagreement with the Administrator. She is within her rights to decide what policy is to be in effect. And I am within my rights to decide I cannot abide by that policy and quit. So I did exactly that.”

“What exactly happened?”

“She told me that I was no longer permitted to make public appearances, at any time. And as I said on the show the other day, if you have to have someone else’s permission to do something, that, in effect, makes you their property. It is one thing for an employer to say they don’t want you doing something during working hours, but if they can dictate your life outside working hours they are saying they own you. And I am not someone else’s property.”

“So what do you plan to do with yourself?”

“Well, at the top of, not this coming hour, but the next hour, which is in... 189 minutes, I’ll be doing a public press conference at the podium in front of the Welcoming Department, the press and anyone else that wants to ask me questions is cordially invited to show up. That will probably take a few hours or so.

“Beyond that.. I... I dunno, maybe I’ll go back to writing computer programs full time, I could never keep up with all the orders I got. Maybe I’ll go under the knife, that is, go back to earth and be born again into a baby’s skull and let this place go to hell in a handbasket as it deserves, as people panic when they discover I’ve left and there’s no one around to argue to protect the freedoms we have.

“Actually, I’m probably overestimating my importance to society. I’m not that important and I don’t matter that much. Maybe I’ll just go off to the Frontier for a few years. The former Deputy Administrator of my old Department did that, maybe she knows something. I’ve heard it’s a great place to go to find peace, quiet, tranquility and respect from other people. I think my good friend William 330126 said that on his radio show once.” Arlene hides her face to keep from laughing at this point. “When I was on earth I was a Born-Again Christian, maybe I’ll become a Catholic Priest and try to show people the way to enlightenment as only a celibate man of the cloth can do. I could conceivably dedicate myself to helping others, based on my history as a humanitarian, perhaps arguing to eliminate orientation as a form of coercive state indoctrination. Perhaps wage a campaign to give people greater access to privilege instead of requiring people to show that they know how to use it properly before it is granted. Maybe we need to eliminate the Welcoming Department, impose more controls on Incomings; the Federales in the Mexican section probably aren’t that bad, we could have them take over the police operations here, maybe have less crime and nicer and more polite police officers.”

Arlene is barely able to compose herself from 246’s statements, and manages not to laugh out loud as she says, “I see. Well, good luck to you in your future plans, 246. Or rather,

Supervisor Emeritus 246.”

He smiled. “Thank you, Arlene.”

“We now return to our regularly scheduled programming, already in progress.”

As soon as the “ON AIR” light goes out, everyone in the studio starts laughing. “What, did I make a funny or something?”

Chapter 52

“...if I must be Recycled, let it be said, *this* was my finest hour.”

246 Stood on a podium with various microphones attached, in front of the Administration Building, where he is facing a huge crowd of reporters, onlookers and cameras. “For those of you that didn’t hear my announcement on my friend Arlene’s broadcast, I’d like to make a statement, then I’ll answer any questions you have. First I...”

A police officer interrupted him. “Excuse me, this is a public podium reserved for official use only. I do feel sorry for you, 246, and I sympathize but the law says it’s reserved for official communications. If you want to hold speeches you’ll need to do it on the public sidewalk right over there, not on government property. I don’t like to have to do this but I have to enforce the law as it is written, even if I don’t like it, as the Watch Commander says.”

246 smiled and pulled out a piece of paper. “Officer, this is a permit from the Watch Commander. It gives me the right - for life - to hold a speech anywhere. Correction, it’s good forever; otherwise it would have expired before I got here! But anyway, you can call in and check with Joan if you would like.”

The police officer smiled a little when 246 said this. “I think that’s the first time I’ve ever been glad I’ve been told I don’t have to enforce a law. If you say so, I’ll take your word for it, I trust you. I apologize, sir, we just try to keep people from using this space if they aren’t supposed to so that it will be available for official use.”

“No offense taken. Anyway, as I was saying, I will make a short statement, then answer any questions you might have.

“The Administrator of the Welcoming Department has informed me that she does not like my opinions. That’s her opinion and she is entitled to it. She also informed me that she forbade me to give public interviews at any time, even outside work hours. I might have accepted such a restriction if it was during working hours, but come to think of it, probably I would not. In any case, I definitely will not allow myself to accept being a slave to someone else in order to keep the privilege of performing volunteer labor for them. I’m already doing work for them for free, you would think that they would appreciate that. But no, apparently that isn’t good enough, they not only want to own me in body, but in soul as well. And 24/7 calendar, 10/10 standard no less.

“For thousands of years it’s been argued ‘what is a soul?’ And I don’t think anyone’s come up with a conclusion. But I’ll say, at least for the sake of argument, that it is one’s core beliefs, that which make up the morals and personality of that individual. What they believe in their heart of hearts; what they have chosen to accept as a set of values; what they consider right, and true, and good.

“I believe in free expression. I believe in the right of a person to express his or her opinion so long as they do not force it on others, nor try to stop someone else from expressing their opinion. Possibly one of the greatest forces for freedom of speech is the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. I feel it is too weak to be a really effective protector of freedom of speech and expression as the courts on earth have been poking far too many unnecessary holes in it, but it isn’t bad for a first effort.

“I believe in free expression. I believe in it so strongly that I will accept nothing less. I will not surrender it for anything. And I will fight to preserve it, whatever the cost, against

those who would deprive others of it. To paraphrase Winston Churchill,” he says, as he does a not-very-good imitation of him, “I will fight you on the streets, I will fight you in the offices, if I must be Recycled, let it be said, *this* was my finest hour.”^{xv}

He resumes his regular speaking voice. “I therefore decided if my little opinions, of some tiny, unimportant little man in a huge organization of 200,000 people was so threatening, so dangerous to its operation that it threatened the very core of its existence, that I had to be silenced in order to allow it to survive, then I did not wish to be part of such a weak and fundamentally sick and/or dying operation.

“Because if my opinions are not that dangerous, why was it necessary to silence me? I was on my own time making comments that had nothing to do with this organization and at no time did I ever claim to be issuing opinions in the name of this organization or in any way was I a spokesman. And yet the Administrator decided my comments were so bad, so black, that official policy was that nothing less than suppressing them would do. And since I did not want to resort to violence, I decided that I would not accept that policy, and so I told the Administrator in no uncertain terms what she could do with it, I turned in my resignation, cleaned out my desk, announced I had quit to the wonderful staff we have here, and left.

“I’d like to again give a thank you to all the people who have been on the job in my former Department, and just offer this one comment. If you think what the Administrator did was right or reasonable, or that I overreacted, or that I should have compromised my core values, then I suggest you stay here and work. Because I suspect that’s what the job is going to become, work instead of fun. But if you think the Administrator was wrong or that you believe my stand was correct, then I suggest you reconsider whether you want to continue staying here, or whether you want to bother doing anything more than staying in your room and watching TV. I hope you reconsider it very strongly. Thank you, I will now take questions.”

A loud noise erupts as everyone tries to ask a question at once. 246 holds up his hands. “What I would like you to do is raise your hand, I’ll point to you and you ask your question, then I’ll try to answer it and I’ll go on to the next person. And I’ll do this until we run out of questions or the universe collapses, whichever comes first. If you’re a reporter, you might want to identify yourself and whom you represent so the other reporters will know whom to credit. I’ll start on the left with you, there, sir.”

“Dan 3346 for the Channel 134,013 news. You said you did not want to resort to violence, what did you mean by that?”

“Exactly what I said, resorting to attacks on persons or property, say like blowing up an elevator the way Bruce Willis did in *Die Hard I*. I could argue that he was using it to attack the bad guys, but in my case that has not yet been proven. I don’t know if the Administrator is a bad person or just misguided. In any case I felt her policy was wrong and I could not in good conscience abide by it. You, over there.”

“Manuel 10 for Afterlife All News Radio 2700. Do you ever think you would resort to violence?”

“Only if there was no other alternative and the issue was serious enough to start a civil war. If I was the type to do something mischievous I might do something like fill one of the elevator shafts with classic cars like an Edsel or a ‘57 DeSoto, to show how out of touch with reality the administration was. But I just figured that it wasn’t that important, I’d simply walk away and let them run their operation in whatever way they wanted, just without me. You over there?”

“Dwight 304 for the website *More Afterlife*. Can you tell us exactly what you said, because I think you said you told her what to do with the job. Did you say, ‘Take this job and shove it,’ or something like that?”

“I said something extremely vulgar in private. If anyone wants to know, I’ll say it. Is there anyone who objects to hearing what I said? Hearing no objections, I’ll say it for the record. I said, ‘Madam Administrator, if I may quote from the source code of the Kernel of the *Linux Operating System*, go ‘fuck yourself hard with a chainsaw,’ I quit.’ You, over there.”

“Pam 1103 for the *Afterlife Times-Press*. I have heard that the other day, you solicited a man...”

Someone interrupted her. “Hey! 246! It’s Geannie, over here!”

246 saw the Lead Female Supervisor, sitting on a live horse - well, it’s not actually alive, this is the Afterlife, after all, but you know what I mean - just beyond the crowd. “Oh Hi, Geannie. I’ll let you ask a question after I finish with this lady’s question.”

“No I don’t have one, I just thought of an even better thing you could have told Putty Tat what to do with herself.”

“Really, what’s that?”

“You should have told her to go fuck herself with a grappling hook.”

246 winced. “Goddamn, I wish I had thought of saying that. Ouch. Damn that was good!”

“Well, I’ll see you later. Do you remember how you were surprised that I grabbed a thoroughbred, this one from the Recycling center before it was automatically sent back to earth?”

“Yeah, except out at the Frontier, most people don’t bother with animals.”

“Well, it was so that if I ever had to, I could get on my horse and gallop off into the sunset, telling them ‘fuck you and the horse I’m riding off on.’ So now I can. I’m not going to remain head female supervisor either, they’d probably try to stick me with your job. I don’t want the hassle. Okay, *Secretariat*, giddy up.”

“Good luck to you, my friend. Anyway, ma’am, would you repeat your question?”

“Pam 1103 for the *Afterlife Times-Press*. I have heard that the other day, you solicited a man for sex in a public corridor, is that true?”

“No, ma’am, it was not. Do you want the whole story?”

“Yes.”

“A business associate wanted me to do a computer programming job for him that I felt was much too difficult because he kept changing his mind once he saw what it was possible to do, and how little time it was taking me to do it, that he kept changing what he wanted, figuring that if I charge him 300 favors that I should do 300 hours worth of work. When I charge, which is almost always, I charge by the job, not by time. It may take me more or less than one hour for each favor. If it takes me less you don’t get a refund. If it takes me more, I won’t ask for more, it’s my fault I underbid the task. But once someone asks me to change the specifications, that then ends the old contract and starts a new one, and I’m free to negotiate that one as I see fit. “Well, I got sick and tired of his complaints, so I priced the new job so high that he would not pay it. But he wouldn’t take that for an answer, so I decided that I could find some way to have fun at his expense, so I offered him a couple of other ways that I’d do his job in a way he could afford.

“One of which was to hold up in the Picketing Zone a sign which was extremely offensive to homosexuals, of which he happened to be one. I felt it would have a terrific sense of irony for him to have to do such a thing to redeem the favors he offered me to do the work. He then

accused me of being homophobic for having such an opinion. I told him it wasn't my opinion, I just wanted him to display it. And to show him that he was wrong and I'm not homophobic, I offered to take him across the desk in my office and shag him, or I'd let him blow me if he doesn't bite. I didn't think he'd take me up on the offer, and I was correct. You?"

"Gordon 45561 for the *Times-Press*. So, are you homosexual?"

Almost everyone in the audience laughed. "Son, my guess is you've not heard of me or you're new here, which is it?"

"I only started on this job yesterday. I've only been dead a week."

"Well, have you ever heard of Wilt Chamberlain, the basketball player?"

"Of course."

"Are you aware he claims he's slept with - that is, had sex with - over 30,000 women?"

"No, not really."

"Well, I have. And the news is it's been reported that I've beaten him out by a factor of 10. I don't know if that's true but I have been with a lot of women. I love just about everything about women. Probably the most amazing thing is to watch the expression on a woman's face when she's having an orgasm. Or what I think it really fun is when I've used everything I can think of, my hands, my fingers, my tongue, and my penis, all in synch with each other to bring a woman to the brink of a very strong orgasm and then push her over into one so big she yells out in pleasure. I was once asked if I'd ever heard someone else do a full throated orgasm when I was with them and I had to admit that it has happened thousands of times, and yet it's still fun to do it to a nice lady.

"The only thing which, of course, is even more fun, is when I've been having vaginal intercourse with some woman, who is so pleased with what I've done to her, that she grants climax privilege to me, and allows me to orgasm and spray inside of her. There is no more unconditional proof that I have given her everything she wants than for her to give me the one thing I want from her. And each time she does it again confirms to me, in a way words will never do, that I am doing exactly what she wants.

"I've never really been interested in men but I came to the conclusion that if one wanted to offer himself to me, who am I to turn him down? But I'm not going to offer myself to him because I'm not interested in that. So that means I won't let anyone shag me and I won't blow a man, i.e. I won't do bottom. So at best maybe that makes me bisexual, and in fact I suspect that if most men - especially the ones who like to engage in anal sex with women - were to admit it, if they didn't have sexual hangups most of them would be normal and bisexual. You, over there, with the T-Shirt that says 'I am a virgin. This T-Shirt was old even before I was an Incoming.'"

"Michael 410 for the magazine *Cloud Nine*. Were you serious about going out to the Frontier - and I'm quoting here - 'to find peace, quiet, tranquility and respect from other people?'" He starts laughing even as he is repeating it.

246 smiled. "No, sir, I was not serious."

"What would be your response if a woman decided to go out to the Frontier by herself?"

"Funny you should ask that because the former Deputy Administrator of the Welcoming Department did exactly that. Were you, by any chance, thinking of her?"

"Yes, I was. Cynthia was one of my girlfriends before she got this crazy idea to move out there for a while."

"'Crazy idea' is probably an understatement. Young man, do you care about her?"

“Yes, very much.”

“If you do, I suggest strongly that you get some well-armed friends, at least 20 or 30, go out to the Frontier with sawed-off shotguns, fully-automatic machine guns, bazookas and explosives. If you’re going out that way the Police Department will be happy to loan you the equipment you need. But you have to supply your own personnel; even the Federales won’t go out to the Frontier. Once you and your friends are fully girded for battle, try to find her, then try to convince her to come back to civilization. If there is anything left of her by the time you do find her.”

“Well, what would be your opinion of how it would be like for her?”

“You really want to know?”

“Yes.”

“I’d say that with the exception of one very special individual who is so beloved that everyone there apparently respects her, any woman who went out to the Frontier without guards is either well-armed and an expert in martial arts, or enjoys being violently raped on a near-constant basis. If she doesn’t enjoy it she must be some kind of masochist who likes to suffer big time. If she’s lucky she’s in some armed compound as the love slave of some warlord who likes living in an area that’s worse than Beirut, Lebanon; Kabul, Afghanistan; and Detroit, Michigan combined. “We used the Frontier as the final ‘proof of concept.’ for something I developed. It’s how we field tested the Antirape system used by the Welcoming Department. We sent 10 women out there one at a time, alone. They were assaulted 2,131 times by a total of 1,635 men. In one day. The Antirape system withstood every sick and twisted thing they could think to do to the women, who didn’t suffer as much pain as you’d get from a hangnail.

“The women we sent out there all thought it was fun. A woman without such protective capability would disagree, strongly. If she wasn’t driven catatonic by being systematically raped, sodomized, and used for involuntary oral copulation on a continuous basis dozens or hundreds of times by the time someone found her to ask. You, there, wearing the purple tie with green stripes and red polka dots, I may not be able to hear you over it, so you may need to shout a little.”

“I’m curious, you said one woman was able to go out to the Frontier and not get raped?”

“Of course, the woman who is the Patron Saint of the Frontier. Anyone here care to tell him who it is?”

Several people yelled out, “Mother Theresa!”

“So now you know. Amazing woman, indeed. You in the blue shirt over there.”

“Paul 3716, I’m a book writer, and I heard that you were in the Picketing Zone and forced a man to give you his sign because it was insulting you personally, and that you had the man arrested for insulting you, is this true?”

“No, it’s not, and I’ll tell you exactly what happened. The man had a sign up - and in order for people to understand I’ll have to be crude and repeat what it said - in which it said “Supervisor 246 is a racist skinhead bastard who deserves to be strung up by his balls.” I asked the man to hand me his sign because he misspelled ‘bastard,’ I corrected the misspelling and handed it back to him. I said that if he was trying to bait me, he was out of his league. I then offered to play a game in which each of us would try to insult the other enough to get them mad. He let me go first. I insulted him so badly that he cold-cocked me and I violated him, just like I did to Lou 5 when he did the same thing to me on national television. I asked his friends who were there

videotaping the incident, if any of them wanted to take his place, and continue to hold the sign up, and no one did, so I made sure the police officer who took him away for breaking Rule #1 took his sign with him, so the man can be sure to come back and continue to show it to people going through the Picketing Zone, once he gets out of jail. You're next."

"I'm not really a reporter, can I ask a question?"

"Certainly. Tell everyone who you are, and ask."

"My name is Alan 976121. It's sort of a multiple part question but the parts are really short, okay?"

"Sure."

"I think you said that you hadn't decided what you were going to do with yourself?"

"That's true."

"Well, I got listening to you and from all you've said I think you're pretty fair about people and how they should be treated, that they should expect to be treated decently in just about all cases?"

"I'd say that's probably about right."

"And that you feel that protecting people's rights was important?"

"Absolutely."

"Okay, so here's my question. Have you ever considered being a trial judge, handling cases in court? I mean, it seems like you'd be perfect because you apparently want the law followed but you respect people's rights."

"Young man, what is your ID?"

"33217 ZP Alan 976121"

"Central Computer, transfer 10 favors to 33217 ZP Alan 976121. Thank you, young man, I've just given you the equivalent of 10 hours of my time if you ever want some computer programs designed. I think you've just told me what I'm going to be doing for a while. You, over there, in the corner, your question?"

Chapter 53
“And that is why I grieve.”

The Pentagram

The #1 newspaper of the English Language Section and the Afterlife

Clerk Sexually Assaulted

A clerk was sexually assaulted by an Incoming stranger who picked her up after work in front of the Information Kiosk at the Main Entrance

A picture of Barney appears next to the article.

Police have violated and arrested 07062 Barney 000096 on suspicion of rape.

Later in the same paper is an editorial:

Today we reported an incident over at the Main entrance in which an Incoming got talking to an Information Kiosk agent and won her confidence enough that she went out with him. He beat her up and raped her. Fortunately she had the new Teleportation Privilege they've added to Climax Privilege and transported him to the police station where he was caught in the act. I don't know why, but I grieved when I heard about this even though I don't know the victim.

I think about the horrible waste of this kind of incident. Clearly if this guy had the capacity to win a girl over into taking him out, he probably could have talked her into willingly having sex with him if that's what he wanted.

But obviously it wasn't. Rape isn't a crime of sex, it's a crime of violence and power.

I grieve for the innocence of what was probably a lovely woman that has been destroyed by an unforgivable bastard who probably could have gotten what he wanted without having to commit sexual assault, but decided to force himself upon her.

Instead of some guy giving a nice girl a nice time, he's now ruined some poor woman's entire existence. If she ever trusts a man at all it may be years. She'll probably go on believing that all men are the type that this scumbag was.

I am saddened and disgusted at this sort of thing. It bothers me terribly even though I happen to be a man. The only consolation is that after he is convicted he won't be one - but not long enough, the punishment ought to be much longer - and if we're lucky maybe she'll discover what it means to be raped too. One can wish.

I understand that it is entirely possible this girl could have claimed that she was raped rather than admit that she had (consensual) sex with him, but this sort of thing happens so

often that I'm sure a similar incident has occurred before, and some woman really was raped even if it wasn't this specific incident.

It is the point that it wasn't necessary, not whether a sexual assault did or didn't happen in this particular incident. Some man violently stole something that he probably could have freely gotten without force.

And that is why I grieve.

Chapter 54

“Your honor, he tortured me to death on earth!”

“Afterlife Common Court, division 17304, is now in session, the Honorable Supervisor 246 presiding.”

“Be seated if you wish, and come to order. To simplify proceedings the bailiff has handed to everyone in the courtroom a copy of the notices that the court normally is required to read in advance. If there is no objection in order to save everyone time the court will waive reading of the statutory notices which you all have been given, but the court will not take into account if anyone prefers that I do so instead and will not hold it against anyone who would prefer I do so. Very well, there being no objection the statutory reading is waived. The first case is *In the Matter of William 22342, Accused*. Young man, you look vaguely familiar. Weren't you the man who was executed in the electric chair in Florida for raping 450 women and killing 20 of them?”

“Your honor, I've done nothing to any woman here, I...”

“Stop. Son, whatever you did on earth has no bearing on this case and the Court will not take notice of it. The way I was asking you was on the order of noticing someone who was a celebrity someplace, that's all.”

“Oh, yeah, that was me.”

“You mean, ‘That was I.’”

“I didn't know you had killed any women down there.”

“That's pretty funny, young man. Anyway, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions, and be honest, it's not going to hurt you here. I'm just curious, did you only kill women or did you also kill men?”

“Actually that's what got me here in this case. I probably killed about a hundred men.”

“Okay, now, how many people did you really kill, including the ones they didn't catch you for?”

“Over 300.”

“Wow, that's quite an accomplishment. Well, anyway, it says here that you broke Rule #1 by punching one of your neighbors in the stomach. Do you want to tell me about it?”

“Don't I have to enter a plea and some other things?”

“Son, I kind of run things informally, and I do things in short hand. Since I can read your mind, and knew you thought you weren't guilty, I presumed that's what you wanted to do was plead not guilty. But if you want to be formal we can do it that way. Of course, if you want to be formal, the punishment is going to also be a lot more formal. And probably a lot more severe if you are convicted.”

“Oh. Well, anyway, I told my next-door neighbor who I was on earth. That's when I found out he had been one of my victims. So he proceeded to punch me in the face so I punched him in the stomach. The cop only saw me hit him, so he busted me.”

“I see. Where is the complaining witness?”

“I'm here.”

“Did you try to hit him in the face?”

“Your honor, he tortured me to death on earth!”

“That's not relevant here. Did you try to hit him in the face?”

“Yeah.”

“Bailiff, violate this young man and take him in. Son, what he did to you there is not relevant here. He paid for his crime there and he should not be made to pay for it again here.”

246 turned back to the Accused. “Young man?”

“Yes?”

“It sounds like you’ve been doing okay so far, so keep it up and try to stay out of trouble up here. You are hereby found not guilty by reason of self defense. You are free to go, sir. Next case is *In the Matter of Marcia 910234, Accused*. Now, this seems odd. It says here that you slapped someone, and walked away, but there is a complaint against you. Would you like to tell me what happened?”

“Yeah, this punk comes up to me, and I find him totally detestable because he says, ‘Hey, you look hot, how about we go back to my place for a little horizontal bop, what do you say?’ and I had heard it’s okay to slap someone when they do that, so I did. The cocksucker then violated me.”

“Where is the complaining witness?”

“Here, your honor.”

“Did you say that to her?”

“Am I going to get into trouble if I say anything?”

“Only if you hit her, or tried to.”

“No, I didn’t.”

“So tell me, did you say that?”

“Well, uh, yeah.”

“How many times did she slap you?”

“Just the one time, but I don’t take that from nobody, so I violated her.”

“Okay, young man, under normal circumstances you would be correct, but, in order to encourage people to be polite, we have an exception to the law that you can’t hit other people. It sort of works as a safety valve so people don’t have to hold everything in. If you say or do something insulting without warning them, they are permitted to slap you, once, as long as they step out of reach after doing so or generally make it clear they will not do so a second time unless you insult them again. And asking someone for sex, no matter how nicely you ask - and the way you did it, sir, was rather crude - is considered insulting. The exception in the law was designed exactly to cover just what you did, when a man is fresh to a woman. And the reason it’s on the books is because I wrote it. Young lady?”

“Yes, your honor?”

“Just remember what you did, as it was exactly the right thing to do. If he had asked you politely might you have considered it?”

“Maybe.”

“About how long have you been dead?”

“I think it’s been about a month.”

“I see, you’re fairly new here. Well, in any event, I’m glad to see that you’re not willing to be treated disrespectfully. You keep that up and maybe guys like him will think twice before they do that in the future. But remember, only one slap and then step out of arm’s reach. You did just fine. Accused is found not guilty by reason of error, you may go ma’am. Next case is *In the Matter of John 316, Accused*. Young man, do you get a lot of religious cracks about your

ID?”

“Yeah, people keep giving me the nickname of Jesus, or sometimes they call me ‘hey soose’.”

“Well, if that bothers you, it is possible to ask for your ID to be changed, if you want to do that you can ask the city clerk’s office for information.”

“Oh gee, thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Anyway, it says here that you are accused of assault in that you slapped a guy around ten times, is that true?”

“Yeah, I found out he was fucking my... Oh, I’m sorry, your honor, I didn’t mean to...”

“Stop. Son, I’ve fucked thousands of women, that sort of talk doesn’t bother me. Go on.”

“Yeah, well anyway he was fucking my girlfriend, too.”

“Son, around here most everyone has a lot of sex with many different people. Don’t nobody make no mind about it. We don’t have marriage rules here and you can’t stop someone else from having sex if they want to. All you can do is say you won’t have it with them. Now I don’t take kindly to people hitting others for that sort of thing. Is the complaining witness here?”

“Yeah, I’m here.”

“He hit you, so what do you think we should do about it?”

“I dunno, maybe some time in jail?”

“I don’t think that would be much good. I get the feeling that you just want to kick his ass around the block, is that right?”

“Yeah.”

“If you got to kick him in the ass ten times, would you feel that makes up for what he did to you?”

“Yeah.”

“Very well then. The Accused is found guilty. The court orders that the defendant be kicked in the buttocks ten times by the complaining witness. Next case is...”

“Your honor?”

“Yes, sir?”

“You mean I get to kick his ass ten times?”

“That’s right.”

“And I don’t get violated for it?”

“No, sir. He’s all yours, you kick him in the ass ten times, then we let him go as he’s paid his debt to society, or to you, in this case. How does that sound?”

“Why, that’s great!”

“If you want, you can even bend him over the railing right there and do it now, or you can take him down to the jail and do it there. I’ll let you decide. Next case is...”

A member of the audience calls out, “Excuse me, your honor?”

“Yes, sir?”

“We can get our number changed if we don’t like it?”

“Well, yes, but you generally have to have a good reason.”

“I see. Well, the thing is, my number is 46664, and I don’t like the number 666, and besides that, people keep ribbing me by calling me ‘Nelson.’”

“Nelson?”

“Yeah, that was Nelson Mandela’s prisoner number.”

“Oh, I didn’t know that. Well, anyway, if your number contains 3 sixes in a row, they’ll change it for you just for asking, that doesn’t require a reason.”

“Oh, gee, thanks, your honor.”

“You’re welcome. Before I go on to the next case, is there anyone else who has a question about their number? Okay, hearing no further comments, next case is *In the matter of Gary 7, Accused*. Son, it says that you are accused of violating Rule #1 because you broke a bottle over the head of someone sitting next to you, is that true?”

“Yeah. I got mad at him and we were having an argument, and I said, ‘You know what, I’m so goddamn mad at you I just wanna hit you over the head with this bottle of Coors.’ And he said, ‘Go ahead and hit me, just go right ahead and try, and you’ll see what happens.’ So I hit him and he passed out. Then the bartender violated me.”

“Where is the complaining witness?”

“Here, your honor.”

“Did you tell him to hit you?”

“I didn’t mean it.”

“Just answer yes or no, did you say to him, ‘Go ahead and hit me?’”

“Yes.”

“Son, the part of Rule #1 says someone can’t initiate force. That means that they can’t commit violence to you without your permission. I’m not going to make someone try to figure out if you meant it or not. You don’t want someone to hit you, don’t ask them to. The Accused is found not guilty by reason of error. You may go sir. Next Case is *In the matter of Nancy 200341, Accused*. Young lady, you are accused of breaking Rule #1 in that you kicked a man in the testicles, would you like to explain why?”

“No.”

“Is the complaining witness here?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tell me what happened.”

“Well, I thought she looked kind of hot, and cute, and I said to her, ‘hey baby, wanna fuck?’ and at that point she kicked me in the nuts.”

“Young lady, you could have simply slapped him and gotten away with it, just like that last lady did, she followed the law exactly and as a result, she walked out Scott Free. Well, you’re not under oath so you can’t be charged with perjury so you can answer however you please.

However, I’m reading your mind so I’ll know if you’re lying. I want you to answer yes, no, or stand mute if you do not want to answer. Is what he said correct?”

“Yeah, the bastard had the nerve to say that to me so I hauled off and kicked him one.”

“Well, young lady, next time someone does that either walk away or slap him on the face and walk away. You can slap him as hard as you want when he does that as long as you use your open hand, do it once and step out of arm’s reach. Or you can walk away, it’s your choice. You can do either and that’s perfectly legal, and you wouldn’t be here today, or I’d be letting you go if the guy was stupid enough to press charges. Young man, how would you like to give her a spanking in exchange for what she did to you?”

“Really? Yeah, I would.”

“Yeah. She’s acting like a child, so we’ll treat her like one. You can give her 5 swats on the

ass with your bare hand on her bare ass. And you can even take her over your knee and do it if you like. But son, you can't cop a feel on her or anything like that. All you're allowed to do is spank her. And next time, try to be polite to women and you won't get kicked in the nuts. Accused is found guilty. Defendant is sentenced to be spanked on the bare buttocks 5 times by the complaining witness who may do so using a paddle or with his bare hand at his choice. Next case is..."

Chapter 55

“...I am going to try to prevent them from performing a sex change on you...”

The cell door opened and three men walked in. One of them sat down at the table, opened a folder, then looked up across the table at the fourth man who had been sitting there the whole time. “Good afternoon sir, I am Alexander 2317, I’m a magistrate in and for the 633rd division of the Department of the Judiciary. I am here pursuant to section 208 of the Legal code of the Afterlife for the purpose of assignment of counsel prior to arraignment or indictment and for such other purposes as may be discovered in the process of this hearing. May I ask your name?”

“Barney Krill.”

“Hmm. Do you know where you are right now?”

“Yeah, in jail.”

“No, I mean where we are, what place?”

“Uh, no, not really. I guessed I was in Pittsburgh or maybe New York.”

“What place are you from?”

“Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania.”

“So, would it be fair to say that, when you get out of here, whether it’s because you’re found not guilty, or after you’re convicted and spend time in prison, that you’re planning to drive or take a bus home?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay. Now, I’m not asking you about what you are accused of having done, but I would like to know if you remember how you got to the police station.”

“I have no idea. It was weird though, I thought the cop shot me, four or five times, but I never bled and I don’t have any bruises or marks on me. I haven’t the slightest idea how I got here. Maybe I just went crazy or something.”

“Do you remember arriving in a building?”

“Yeah, I found myself in some office and I walked out.”

The magistrate turns around and looks at the other two men. “I believe the evidence supports a finding that the Accused is still an Incoming. Is there any objection to declaring this man under the jurisdiction of the Welcoming Department? Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.” He turns back around. “Sir, would you prefer I call you Barney or Mr. Krill?”

“You can call me Barney.”

“Okay, Barney, I have something very serious to explain to you. This is totally unrelated to what you were violated and arrested for, but it’s something you’re going to need to know. Do I have your full attention?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m going to tell you something about yourself that is probably going to surprise the hell out of you, you might not believe it, and it is going to be the most unusual thing anyone has ever told you. So I want you to brace yourself and be prepared for something very shocking. Are you ready?”

“Yeah.”

“About six hours before you arrived in that building, you were sitting in a chair, and you fell asleep, would that be about right?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, here’s the bad news. While you were asleep you had a heart attack. A really bad one. You slept through it and never woke up.”

“I’m dead?”

“Yes.”

“Uh huh.”

“Barney, whether you want to believe it or not, you are dead.”

“Uh, yeah, right.”

“What do you think it would take for me to convince you that you’re dead?”

“Uh, I don’t know, do something that I couldn’t possibly live through and let me see it.”

He stands up and walks over to Barney. “Central Computer, enable decapitation for all seated persons in this room, authorization Alexander 2317. Central Computer, grant over immunity from assault to all seated persons in this room. Central Computer, fax me one broadsword.”

A large sword appears on the table.

“Holy shit! I…”

The magistrate picks up the sword, swings it, and brings it across Barney’s neck, hard. He pulls the sword back, swings it around and slices on the other side. He reaches over, grabs Barney by the head on his hair, and pulls it hard. His head comes off. The magistrate then turns the head around to look at the body. “Raise your right arm.”

Barney, shocked, watches as he sees his own arm move, from his headless body, from a distance of about two or three meters. “This is un-fucking-believable.”

The magistrate takes the broadsword and slices Barney’s left arm off. He pulls it out of its socket, allowing it to fall on the table, and says to Barney, “Waive your left hand.” He does so, watching in horrified fascination as the hand on the decapitated arm (from his headless body) moves.

The magistrate turns Barney’s head around, places it on top of the hole in his neck, then uses his arm to slam his head back into the hole. He then rams the arm back into its socket. “Central Computer, revoke immunity from assault from all seated persons in this room. Central Computer, undo all decapitations in this room. Okay, feel your throat, or your armpit, there isn’t even a seam.”

Barney grabs his neck - with both hands - and discovers that it is totally smooth as it always was.

While Barney is doing this the magistrate returns to his seat. “Oh my God.”

“So now, do you believe it when I tell you that you are dead?”

Barney looks stunned. “Uh, yeah, I guess I believe it now.”

“Anyway, I’m going to allow the two men to introduce themselves. In alphabetical order.”

“My name is Alan 90534.”

“I am Samuels 8.”

“These two men were assigned to your case by lottery. A large number of people wanted it, so these two won the opportunity. So, anyway, what happens now is you have a choice: you are permitted to represent yourself, and we are required to grant you time to learn the law if necessary in order for you to do so, or you may accept one of these men as counsel, or if you wish you may obtain counsel of your own.”

“Hmm, how much time do I get to learn what I need to know?”

“You may have an unlimited amount of time to do research.”

“You’re kidding.”

“No. Look, what I’ll do is send you over to the law library and let you spend as much time as you want. When you decide you don’t want to continue doing research, go to the square marked ‘return’ and press the large ‘exit’ button on the wall to do so. Central Computer, fax...” he looks down at the folder, “07062 RM Barney 000096 to Secure Law Library.” Barney dematerializes.

The magistrate turns around. “Anyone care to take bets on how long he stays there?”

“I’m thinking he’s not too bright, so maybe he’ll spend a few hours. Alan?”

“Well, it depends on how long he spends looking at the library itself, maybe a couple of days but I wouldn’t put any favors on it. Alex, how long does the stasis field take for return?”

“It’s two minutes no matter how long he stays. Had one guy, decided to do his whole trial himself, and did a pretty good job at it. He should have, he spent the equivalent of several calendar years doing research. Since there are no clocks or calendars in the library, you don’t get hungry, thirsty or tired, there’s no way to notice how long you’re in there unless you use some sort of group calculation to keep track of time. Really doesn’t make any point to do so since there’s no need to track time when they’re taken out of the system.”

“I’m surprised we don’t do something like that when people are convicted.”

“First, if we send convicted people to Coventry we can’t use them to ease the labor shortage. Second, the Court of Appeals decided that it represented cruel and unusual punishment, as it would be trivially easy to ‘accidentally on purpose’ send someone out there and ‘forget’ to bring them back or forget to install a return button at the destination site, and thus strand them there forever. Especially as if it turns out it was just, say, an empty room with nothing for them to do but sit and stare at the four walls until they went nuts. Do you guys remember the white room from ‘The Matrix’? Well, they’ve done something like that for solitary confinement. A guy gets too hot to handle, they send him to a white room with no visible connection between walls, no windows, and no apparent difference between ceiling and floor. In essence it looks like they are standing inside of a ping-pong ball. If it’s just a minor thing, the guy gets one minute to cool off. For really serious cases they can put a guy on ice for as long as an hour. They have to log all usage, however, to prevent them from using it in exactly the way the C. A. said they can’t. I think...”

We don’t really get to find out what he thinks as a buzzer sounds. “Oh hell, a fight just broke out. I’ll go investigate and be right back. Central Computer, fax me to the Secure Law Library.”

The magistrate arrives in what looks like an enormous library. Corridors of law books stretching for what appear to be kilometers, tables with paper and chairs, printers, typewriters, desks with microphones and other equipment, and various small conference rooms. In the center of the room a group of men and women are standing in a circle watching two people beat the shit out of each other. Actually, the contest consists of a woman, specifically Andrea 528, beating the crap out of a man, specifically Barney, while everyone else stands around and watches as she kicks, punches and pounds the hell out of Barney. Some applaud.

The magistrate walks over, brings two fingers up to his mouth, and blows a whistle. The woman stops, the man, clearly dizzy and disoriented, looks around. “All right, what happened?”

The woman turns to him. “Good morning Magistrate.”

“Good morning to you, ma’am. Tell me what happened.”

“I was going through one of the shelves looking for some case law, when I spot him standing in the aisle, and I needed to get by. I recognized him from the picture in the paper and on the 6 o’clock news, so I said, ‘Get out of my way, rapist.’ He said ‘Bitch’ so I went to slap him and he grabbed my hand, I grabbed his arm, spun around until he was in a hammerlock, and marched him out to the center of the room. I then said, ‘I want to fight this guy, anybody object?’ Everyone stood up and came over to watch. I let go of his arm, and I said, ‘Well, how about it, tough guy, what’s say you and I go on against each other, no holds barred, anything goes fighting. Or are you just yellow because you can’t fight a woman?’ Well, he says, ‘I’m not going to get in trouble,’ and I said, ‘All you have to do is say you agree, and I’ll swing the first punch. Hell, if you can get me down you can have me.’”

“Cute trick because you’d win either way.”

“Exactly. So I said, ‘Well, you agree we can fight anything goes or are you just a big man who fights some weak or scared woman, motherfucker?’ So he says, ‘Yeah, I can fight you.’ So I haul off, kick him in the kneecap to distract him, then when he’s screaming in pain, I bust him one with a fist to the nuts, saying ‘This is for Luann!’ Then I kicked him in the face. That was the first time he fell down. I waited, once he brought his head up above the knees I kicked him in the face again. So he went down again. He tried to get up and I kicked him in the nuts again, and again he fell down. I decided to stop kicking him that way because he kept falling down, and it interrupts my rhythm. I guess the alarm went off when he went down for the third time.”

“That’s probably the case. But you’re not supposed to fight in here.”

“I believe the law is that we’re not allowed to fight if someone objects. Nobody did.”

“I disagree but I think in view of the circumstances we can forget it since it’s a minor breach. Barney, did you want to continue this fight?”

He is a bit groggy. “Uh, uh, uh, no. But can’t I do anything about it? She swung first.”

“If you consented to fight her it’s not a violation of the law here.”

“I didn’t really, she just took it that way.”

The magistrate turns to her. “Ma’am, what’s your name?”

“Andrea 528.”

“Well, I’m sorry but he claims it wasn’t, so I have to handle it as a complaint. Andrea 528, you are hereby violated. You are under arrest for disturbing the peace and breaking Rule #1 in that you assaulted this man. You have rights under the law and you are advised to say nothing until you are informed of them or have access to counsel. Barney, do you still want to continue doing legal research?”

“Uh, no, I think I’ll use the lawyers you brought.”

“Well, you only get one of them but I see what you mean. Andrea, please come with me, you will need to be re-arraigned.” The three of them leave and rematerialize back in the office.

“Guard!” A guard appears. “Deputy, please take Andrea back to processing and file a new complaint.” He hands her a piece of paper with the information on it. They leave.

“I will explain to you the circumstances under which you are being tried. You have been charged with the crime of rape in violation of Section 8101 of the Legal Code of the Afterlife, to which the statute reads as follows: “Rape” is defined as (A) the non-consensual contact between (1) the genitals of one person and the anus, mouth or genitals of the other; (2) the anus of one

person and the mouth or genitals of the other; (3) the fingers of one person or an object which is inserted within the genitals or anus of another; (4) the insertion of the genitals into any orifice of the other or (B) the forcing of an individual to be sexually stimulated by contact to the inside of their genitals or anus. Where “contact” is used in the previous sentence, it refers to penetration, however slight, of the inside of the anus, or interior of the genitals, or of the genitals into any orifice of the other.’

“As the violation you are charged with constitutes a serious crime as defined by statute, you are entitled to representation by counsel. Pursuant to law you may interview the two persons provided to you and may select one of them as counsel, you may obtain counsel of your choice or you may choose to act as your own counsel. It is my understanding that you have chosen to accept the option of using one of the two individuals who are with me here in this room, is that correct?”

“Yeah.”

“Very well. At this time the two of them will introduce themselves and will present their claims to you regarding your case. Which one do you want to go first?” Barney points at the man on the right.

“I am Alan 90534. I have to admit that based on what I’ve heard I suspect this is almost an open-and-shut case, and I don’t think you have much of a chance. I will try as hard as I can to provide you with a defense, but I think, as you did to that poor woman, you’re screwed.”

Samuels 8 doesn’t like this. “Magistrate, I must protest, I think he’s trying to poison the well here.”

“Agreed. Alan, you pull that kind of stunt again and I will impose sanctions against you. Do I make myself clear?”

“Absolutely, magistrate.”

“Okay, then, Sam.”

“I am Samuels 8. As my opponent over there has so obviously indicated, you have a really serious case. Personally I think it’s reprehensible what you are accused of doing, but everyone is entitled to a defense. I think it’s going to be very hard to defend your case. If you decide you want to select me as counsel, I am going to try to prevent them from performing a sex change on you, but...”

“Huh?”

“The penalty for conviction for rape generally requires imposition of a sex change. Now...”

“You think you can get me out of that?”

“I have some ideas, I believe I can raise some issue to try and prevent that.”

“Okay, I want you for my lawyer.”

The magistrate speaks. “Samuels 8, raise your right hand and recite the oath appearing on the screen in front of you.”

“I do solemnly promise that, to the best of my ability, I will at all times protect and defend the rights of the Accused, preserve his confidences against unnecessary disclosure or other use against him, act to protect his interests in receiving a fair trial, and will not, by omission or commission, knowingly harm the Accused’s opportunity to obtain a defense against the charges to which he is accused, that I shall do all these things notwithstanding any facts disclosed or my own opinions of his culpability of the crime to which he is accused, that I willingly take this oath freely without mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and do so in the name of all that I

hold holy or sacred.”

“Alan 90534, raise your right hand and recite the oath appearing on the screen in front of you.”

“I do solemnly promise that to the best of my ability, I will at all times honor the rights of the Accused, act in accordance with law in the prosecution of the charges against him, will not, by omission or commission, knowingly harm the Accused’s interests in receiving a fair trial, inclusive of same that I shall not withhold or deny any evidence favorable to the Accused, that I will well and faithfully discharge the office of prosecutor in and for the English Language Section of the Afterlife in this case in an honorable fashion, without bias or malice toward any, that I willingly take this oath freely without mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and do so in the name of all that I hold holy or sacred. So help me God.” He crosses himself.

Barney speaks up. “Wait a minute, I thought you brought both these guys here because they were going to defend me, and now it looks like you’re having one of them prosecute me.”

“I was just about to explain that to you.”

“Oh.”

“A number of people with extensive trial experience volunteered for this case. I picked the two I considered having an excellent record of defending cases. We do not have a District Attorney’s office or a Public Defender’s office as they would have where you came from, instead we simply have a Common Law Office where both work on both types of cases. Both of these men have obtained acquittals in over 100 different cases involving serious crimes, and both have obtained convictions in criminal cases as well. I’ll let your counsel explain it to you.”

“Barney, both of us - along with about 50 other counsel - volunteered for this case. Rape cases are extremely rare here, and it isn’t too often that we get to prosecute one. It’s worse in your case as there are witnesses to what you did. Nobody is going to kid themselves about this, there is no way you can avoid being convicted. Neither one of us really wanted your side of your case as it was certain whoever got it would lose, you don’t have enough to bribe anyone to get out of it, but there is the possibility of mitigating some of the punishment you would get. The way it works is that we both volunteer for this case, and we don’t get to decide which of us will prosecute the case. We weren’t sure if you would pick one of us to defend you. Neither one of us likes to lose, so we would fight to defend you as best we could.”

Chapter 56
“Nobody ever leaves.”

“We have to get him back. He’s been gone one day and we’ve had 16,000 people quit.”
“David, this facility has 200,000 people working for it. We’ll manage.”

“Marilyn, in the last twenty years, do you know how many people have quit here?”
“Probably thousands, I’m sure.”

“Zero. Nobody ever leaves. I’ve looked through personnel records to determine just how many normally quit, and nobody down there can remember a report of anybody leaving unless they went under the knife.

”People are walking out so fast there are lines at the drop tubes and maintenance says that elevators are running at capacity loads as people are cleaning out their rooms and leaving. That is, the elevators that are still working as some people are instantiating objects and dumping them down the shafts for the fun of hearing the bang and sometimes the explosions. Did you ever see the movie *Die Hard*?”

“Yes. What does that do with this?”

“There have been reports of at least three cases where people have duplicated the scene in *Die Hard* where Bruce Willis drops a chair with Semtex plastic explosive down an elevator shaft in order to generate a fireball. The fire suppression system prevents the blast and fire from escaping the shaft but it takes that elevator - and sometimes the ones next to it - out of service until a maintenance tech can re-instantiate the shaft, and the elevator car - or cars - which can take upwards of half an hour.” He starts laughing for a moment. “Do you know what an instantiation is?”

“No.”

“Well an instantiation is when someone creates something by telling the computer to insert it into a place. It appears, as if by magic, but it’s nothing more than a computer redefining the space within a virtual reality simulator. We just happen to be in the simulator watching it. You remove the item by telling the computer to de-instantiate it. 246 did something like that when he changed the desk in my office when he redecorated it.

“So having seen it done before I had to laugh at this one. Someone created a continuous re-instantiating loop that filled one of the shafts with mint condition Edsels, you know, the 1950s car that was so ugly that Ford couldn’t sell them? Every time someone de-instantiated one, a new one appeared. No matter how fast they de-instantiated ones, new ones appeared just as fast to replace the dematerialized ones. They finally had to find a programmer to write a new program to get around it, by automatically siphoning them outside faster than they could be re-instantiated, where they could then be de-instantiated, and keep doing this until we could figure out how to turn the other program off. We had so many cars out there someone started a used car lot and was selling them to Incomings for favors. I think he and his friends sold 20,000 of them before he decided it wasn’t fun any more and quit. We didn’t care, we just wanted to get rid of them.

“You can’t even get into this building because of the number of people exiting. We’ve had calls from the press asking us if there’s a fire in the building because of the crushload of people leaving in a hurry. We need to get him back before things go from ridiculous to out of control.”

“No one man is that important.”

“Apparently *he* is.” The phone rang. “I’ll get it. Administrator’s Office? No, that’s the old Administrator, I’m Manager 12032, I can give you the Administrator if you want her. Oh, you did want to talk to me. Oh, yes, I was hoping to hear from you, you said you might have some good news for a change. Oh my, that’s what I was afraid of. So what happened? Ouch. How many? All of them? You have to be kidding. All but one? And how does that make it worse than if they all quit? I know some of the details from reading the reports, but give me a quick idea of what we can’t do. Oh shit, that’s bad. What else? What’s a queue backup? I see. We’re in deep shit then if that happens, aren’t we? Okay, thanks.” He hung up.

“I think we’re in real trouble. All the other supervisors, all 4,305, all quit. Actually, it’s 4,304 in total and it’s actually worse than if they all quit; you could appoint more Supervisors. Eric, Supervisor 960, specifically remained as the only Supervisor, probably just to spite you. As long as there’s at least one, there’s still a Board of Supervisors which means you can’t appoint replacements. So we basically have no supervisors and no capacity to replace them. That means we can’t handle Incomings who won’t initiate sex, we can’t mediate disputes between Incomings and staff people, and every single criminal trial in this Department is stayed as we don’t have any trial judges to hear the cases. And Incomings Support says they’re getting queue backups as Welcomers are simply staying in their rooms watching TV instead of going out to meet them. If the queue backup gets too bad, people on earth stop dying until it is released because there’s no room to store them. Then people on earth might suspect something if nobody dies for a while.”

“I’ll just tell these people to get back to work.”

“Marilyn, I didn’t understand this place that well when I got here, but you seem to understand it less than I did. This is not some brothel like the Mustang Ranch where the house takes a commission on what the girls collect, this is essentially a free flophouse where we let the people staying here have sex with the Incoming people. These people are all *volunteers*; they do this work for nothing, for free. They do it because it’s *fun*. You order them to work and they’ll all quit. We won’t...”

David did not get to finish as, at this point a grappling hook and a chainsaw materialized in the office. David started to laugh. “Oh, no, not again!”

“What on earth is going on?” Another chainsaw appeared.

“People are instantiating what looks like,” two grappling hooks appeared, “chainsaws and grappling hooks. After what 246 said to you and they apparently heard his press conference.” Another chainsaw appeared. “Let me see if I can do this. Central Computer, disable instantiation of non-living objects into this office.”

“Unable to comply. Insufficient privileges to perform requested action.”

“I’ll have to call a programmer again before they drive you out,” another chainsaw appears, “of here. This confirms what I was about to say. We won’t be able to operate much longer under these conditions.”

The phone rang again. “Administrator’s Office? Yes sir. Okay.” A grappling hook and chainsaw appear.

He put it on speakerphone. “Madam Administrator do not say who I am, but if you recognize my voice and your office is clear of anyone who does not know who I am, say yes, or say no, and

nothing else.”

“Yes.”

“Close and seal this office so that no one can enter and no one else can see or hear what is going on except you and David, I will be there in 30 seconds, Okay?”

“Yes.”

“You can hang up now, David.”

She closed the blinds and tripped the electronic lock on the door. “What on earth is he coming over here for?”

“I have a pretty good idea,” he said, as another chainsaw appears, falling off of two of the others.

“Not over...”

“Yeah. Well, now I won’t have to call a programmer, he can do it.”

30 seconds later he teleported in. “Hello David, Hello Marilyn.”

“Good afternoon George.”

“Excuse me, sir?”

“Yes, David?”

“I don’t have sufficient privileges. People are materializing,” another chainsaw appeared.

“Well you can see it now. People are materializing objects, specifically grappling hooks and chainsaws into this office. Could you lock this room so they can’t do that?”

“Oh, sure. Central Computer, now start, reverse and duplicate all instantiations into this room to source of instantiation, until canceled. Central Computer, de-instantiate all chainsaws and grappling hooks from this room.”

All the chainsaws and grappling hooks vanish. He smiled. “That should be fun. Now, every time someone tries to send something here, two of them will materialize in front of them. You don’t have local instantiation privilege?”

“No.”

“I think I can trust you. Central Computer, grant local instantiation privilege to David 30336. Central Computer, grant local de-instantiation privilege to David 30336. Now you do.”

“Gee, thank you sir.”

“You’re welcome. Anyway, Putty Tat, what the hell happened here? Not just what I just fixed, but I just saw a news report that 246 quit because he disagreed with some policy of yours.”

“Sir, with all due respect he was embarrassing the hell out of us.”

“Embarrassing you, personally, Marilyn, or this Department?”

“Why the Department, of course.”

“So you’re saying his remarks were embarrassing the hell out of the Welcoming Department, is that correct?”

“Yes sir.”

The Chairman looked at her in amazement. “Well, well, embarrassing the hell out of a warehouse! Now that’s a new one on me, Putty Tat. David have you ever heard of something so silly?”

“Other than 246 himself, no sir.”

“David, that was probably the best answer you could have given me, I think some of his sense of humor is rubbing off on you. Would you like to have some fun?”

“Sure.”

“Central Computer, Telephone Watch Commander.”

“Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line.”

“Knit 2 Pearl 4”

“One moment please.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Hi Joan, this is the Chairman.”

“Mike, how are you doing?”

“Authenticated. Get real broad, my name is George.”

“So what can I do you for, Chairman Green?”

“You know how David thought up the new term for a direct order?”

“Yes, ‘Diplomatic Immunity,’ I love it.”

“I’m granting him diplomatic immunity to go get 246 and bring him back over here so we can talk. Got it?”

“Got it. Logged. Order Number 7104-16687. Can he hear me?”

“Yep.”

“David, you can’t just hit him over the head, knock him out and drag him over there, he has Immunity from Assault so you’ll have to talk him into coming. Just thought I’d let him know, George, as 246 says David doesn’t know a lot about how things work and if he used that it wouldn’t work in 246’s case.”

“Thanks Joan, I like that you’re thinking ahead.”

“You’re welcome. Got a moment for some small talk?”

“For you dear, any time.”

“So how’s Lynn, anyway?”

“She’s considering whether to have another child or not. We’re thinking about it.”

“Well, good luck to you two whatever you decide. And I still want another chance to beat her at backgammon.”

“Good luck. Even the computer has trouble at that. How bad is the damage so far?”

“I’m down 3,000 favors.”

“Maybe you’d better quit while you’re behind.”

“Yeah, but I have the advantage that she can’t use them until she dies.”

“That’s true. Well, anyway I’ll let her know you’re interested in another rematch.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. While I’ve got you on the phone, rather than wait for the next meeting, is there anything you think I should know about?”

“Unfortunately, things are nice and boring for now. No major disturbances, just the usual noise complaints and occasional fights and minor civil disturbances, nothing we can’t handle. But, as always, we’re chomping at the bit to take over. We’ll make the Federales in the Mexican section look soft by comparison. I’ll impose martial law and terrorize the public any time you give the word.”

“Very funny Joan. I sometimes wonder what would happen if I did.”

“You know exactly what would happen, most of my officers would do the exact same thing as 246. I love my job and what I do, but I’d be the first one out the door, and I wouldn’t even look back.”

“And what about the ones who would go along?”

“If I can determine which ones they are, I’ll fire them. I like living in a free society, and I’d

like to make sure it stays that way. I mean, if you were to tell me there is an emergency and we need to restore order, that's one thing. But imposing draconian conditions for no reason or where it isn't absolutely necessary because there's no other less drastic choice, is one thing I would not be a part of."

"Good for you. And thanks, bye. Central Computer, close connection. Every time I speak to that woman I'm so glad we found her. David, you just heard what I said?"

"Yes. So basically, I can just hover around him, go anywhere he goes, follow him anyplace even if it's an area of the courthouse normally restricted to the public, and ignore any restrictions on travel or entry until I convince him to let me bring him back here."

"Excellent, young man, oh wait, sorry, old man, I like the way you think, it reminds me of myself when I was younger. Be as much of a pest as you have to be in order to get him back. And tell him it will be just you and me at the meeting. When you go to see him, just mention this Bible quote: Judges 3:20. He'll know what it means, and I think is quite appropriate given what he's doing right now. When you get back, just page me, you know how?"

"I... Am I allowed to say it with her here?"

"Old man, that was very smart of you to ask, yes, the Administrator knows my code too."

"I call the Board and tell them I have an Armada Signal. When I get to the snotty guy who answers your executive line can I just tell him I know it pages you so he doesn't insult me with that long warning speech?"

"Yeah, that's not a bad idea, you can do that. And you're correct on the code. So here's the fun part. Go get him David, that's a direct order. Bye." He dematerialized.

Chapter 57

“I do not believe courts should be operated as a revenue facility.”

The bailiff turns to 246, “Uh, Your Honor, before you take the next case, the scheduling judge wants to see you.”

“Thank you, Carl. I’ll go see her.” He turns to the audience. “The court will take a short recess.” He teleports out of the room and arrives in front of the secretary. “Well, good morning Helga.”

“She’ll see you right now, your honor.” He walks in.

“Good morning Susan, what can I do you for?”

“246, I’ve had a couple of complaints filed against you, and I have some questions.”

“Okay.”

“Well, first it is said that you cursed out a defendant, and that you’ve been imposing some rather strange punishments. And that you’re not going by the sentencing guidelines set up by this office.”

“Which defendant?”

“Let’s see.” She starts snickering as she reads the case header. “Uh, he, he, *Matter of John 316*. What did you do, call the guy Jesus Christ or something?”

“No, ma’am. The Accused was brought before me on the charge of assaulting another person by slapping them ten times. He said his reason for doing so was, and I quote, ‘because he was fucking my girlfriend too.’ After the Accused said the word, and realized that what he said might be considered contemptuous, he started to apologize. I told him that I didn’t consider what he said to be offensive, and I would not hold it against him. He then finished his sentence. Since he admitted that he had committed the offense to which he was charged, I found him guilty and imposed sentence.”

“Exactly what did you say to him?”

“Well, considering that he was worried I’d be upset at him I decided to respond to him in kind. I believe what I said in response was, ‘son, I’ve fucked thousands of women, that sort of talk doesn’t bother me, continue.’ “

”Oh. Well, I think it would be more professional if you had said something like, ‘son, I’ve had sex with thousands of women’ instead of being vulgar. Fair enough?”

“Okay.”

“I’ll go along with you in that I think it was reasonable in order to allow the Accused to understand that he wasn’t going to be considered in contempt, but I think it would look a bit more professional if you do it without being offensive. Now, according to this you haven’t been imposing the usual sentences set by the guidelines. Let’s see, you had... This can’t be right. According to this you had 122 cases in your first hour. According to this you’ve moved 700 cases in the last six hours.”

“That sounds about right.”

“That’s impossible, that’s less than one minute per case. First you’d need to take pleas. Witnesses would need to be sworn and the Accused given time to argue their case.”

“Oh, well, I guess it’s because I do cases in shorthand.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, I presume the Accused is pleading not guilty. I then find out what happened, if the

evidence shows the Accused committed the particular offense and has no mitigating factors I find them guilty, otherwise I let them go. Most of these people are guilty, they know it, most want to have a chance to say their piece and offer some information to mitigate the punishment. The victim merely wants to say their piece and see that the alleged perpetrator is punished. Then I try to find a punishment that is satisfactory to the victim and just a little bit uncomfortable for the defendant.”

“Well, I find your methods a little unusual. I asked the bailiff, he said you didn’t swear any of the witnesses.”

“I didn’t need to.”

“Well, how do you expect to ensure people will tell the truth?”

“I read their minds to see if they are.”

“Oh. I never thought of that. Perhaps I should see about having some of the judges obtain that privilege.”

“I doubt you can get it. Privilege to read the mind of an Incoming is not hard to get if you have a legitimate reason, but since it’s likely if they’re an Incoming they’d end up being tried by the Welcoming Department. A general mind-reading privilege is extremely difficult to justify.”

“So how did you get it?”

“I found out what each of the people in Admin who had to approve it wanted, and got it for them, so as it turned out I bought enough consents to get it. That was before I became lead supervisor, in that position I’m entitled to have it as part of my job since the ability to read minds includes the privilege to block other people from reading your mind because you might know things the other party is not authorized to know, so I might have to override that capacity. Also, anyone who has to try cases involving involuntary recycling will also be allowed to have the ability if they ask for it because we may have to be certain witnesses are not lying before someone is subject to that serious a penalty.”

“Oh. Seems kind of silly to restrict it in that fashion, if anyone should be able to read minds I would think a regular judge should have that power for the very reason you stated, to make sure someone is not subjected to an unfair penalty.”

“That’s why if someone is tried here they have the right to appeal to the General court, and if the person claims a witness is lying the judge can examine them or they can get a teller to check and verify whether the person is telling the truth or not. Part of it also, it could be said, is ‘status’ or ‘cachet’ effect.”

“What do you mean?”

“There are some jobs that need to be done but are relatively distasteful. If the job is really bad enough and can be done by conscript labor we can use someone who is convicted of a serious crime. If it can’t be done by conscript labor and nobody wants it, we have to bribe someone to do it. Since we don’t have money, either we have to get them to redeem their favors for it, or we have to offer them a privilege to get it. If it’s important enough *and* they’re desperate enough Admin will negotiate a privilege to hire someone to do the job. That happens about once or twice a year that they get that desperate. Having earned a privilege that way has a very big status effect, because it means that if you got the privilege, you deserved it because you *really* earned it.”

“Well, in any case, you’re not following the sentencing guidelines, most of the cases have minimum community service sentences.”

“And what good does that do us?”

“It’s what the law allows.”

“If I’m not mistaken the law permits all of the punishments I handed out.”

“Well, yes, but while technically it’s not Cruel and Unusual, I still think corporal punishment is relatively cruel. And...”

“Excuse me.”

“What?”

“We don’t use the 6th Amendment here. Legal Code Section uh, 9920 subsection 8, oh, well, then we don’t use the 8th Amendment. Subsection 8 prohibits any punishment that is cruel *or* unusual. The 8th Amendment from the United States back on earth only prohibited punishments that are cruel *and* unusual, as you said. If I thought it was either I wouldn’t propose it.”

“Fair enough, I won’t argue the point, however I do think it’s silly to use it on adults.”

“That’s exactly why I use it.”

“I don’t follow you.”

“These people who are brought before me are there because they did something minor, and in most cases, somewhat childish. So the thing to do is to show them that their conduct is unacceptable in an adult. I usually try to find something that will embarrass them a bit, perhaps be a bit distasteful, but not excessively so, and be something the victim will find acceptable. This makes for a much better lesson to the Accused and to the victim. The victim gets to have some fun at someone else’s expense. They get to punish the person who caused an injury to them. The perpetrator has to suffer both the pain of the punishment plus the embarrassment of whatever punishment being imposed upon them is. If it’s bothersome enough, it might just make them not repeat their conduct, which is the whole point.

“Let me give you an example. A woman was brought in because she kicked a guy in the balls for being fresh to her. I pointed out to her she could have slapped him one and gotten away with it. So what’s her punishment? The guy gets to put his hands on her, and spank her on the ass! A guy she found detestable gets to feel her in a very intimate way. It will be a long time before she does something stupid like that again, because she probably doesn’t want the same thing to happen again. The next time some guy is fresh to her and she doesn’t like it, she’ll probably haul off and slap him one, which is what she’s supposed to do. Thus we might never see her again. Or she’s less likely to do something wrong in the future.”

“Well, we do have a labor shortage, you should be sentencing some of these people to community service as punishment.”

“Madam Scheduling Judge, I believe the purpose of the courts is to serve justice, punish those convicted and help preserve order. I do not believe courts should be operated as a revenue facility.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I have seen it far too much on earth where the purpose of judges in traffic courts was not to try to correct misbehavior but to protect the revenue by imposing plenty of fines. I see something similar here in the attempts to use the courts as a means to conscript the labor when they are not able to find people to volunteer to do certain necessary work. And to me that essentially seems to be the same thing. When you start using courts not to do what they are supposed to do, but

use them as a means to acquire resources, you demean and prostitute their purpose, as I see it.”
“Boy are you naive. But I suspect you’ll learn. That’s why I was delighted when you said you wanted to work in the Common Court. Most of the judges don’t want that kind of duty because of the day-in, day-out flow of otherwise minor and petty crimes. So we’ll see what happens. I happen to disagree with your opinion regarding imposing community service on convictions but I’m not going to argue with you since you’re doing such a nice job clearing the docket. But I do believe that you ought to be looking into imposing higher penalties for the defendants in many of the cases because there is a need for some work in some critical places and it’s almost impossible to find for some of them.”

“Well, then, it’s the same answer I had when I spoke about why I felt conscript juries are wrong. If you can’t get volunteers, figure out what people want to make them want to do so. I think community service should be reserved for the really hard-core cases of those who won’t show respect for society and the rights of others, or who really do something bad and won’t accept responsibility for their actions. You get better work out of motivated volunteers than you will ever get out of conscripts unless you’re exceptionally lucky and find someone who really enjoys what they were assigned.”

“Well, I think that’s an ivory tower attitude that won’t work in society. And we do need the labor, so please think about it. Technically I can’t tell you to do that but I am going to be very concerned if you don’t.”

“Oh. I see. Well, if you’ll excuse me I have to get back to court.” He walks out.

When 246 returns to his courtroom, he says to the bailiff, “Carl, please tell everyone that I’m taking a break for an hour. When I return I’ll be hearing more cases. Or if.”

Chapter 58

“Merely because people are dead, we do not expect them to be angels.”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the matter of Andrea 528, Accused (File No. 710400706651)
7104 App. 2303
Appeal on behalf of the Accused

Unsigned Opinion

Accused filed a motion before the court, Earl 77026, to allow her to use Tellers - persons having the privilege to read minds, and being permitted to give testimony as to the validity of the evidence supplied by a witness - in her case. The prosecution made no response on the motion. The court decided that the use of Tellers for the purpose of proving truth of a witness was unnecessary as the witnesses would be sworn to tell the truth and as her case was minor, the possibility of perjury by witnesses was unlikely, and denied her motion. Accused filed an intervening appeal to this court prior to trial and the appeal was accepted. We find the argument of the Trial Court to be specious. A long history of incidents on earth of police misconduct, of prosecution fabrication of cases to send innocent people to death row, and witnesses lying because they give false evidence to convict others in order to get reductions in sentences, indicate that while we expect witnesses not to perjure themselves, it can and does happen. Sometimes because of prosecution misconduct, and for other reasons. Merely because people are dead, we do not expect them to be angels. We have no doubt such a thing can happen here and even if no misconduct is made by the prosecution, the Accused has every right to obtain any reasonable and relevant evidence related to the case presented against her. The law on Tellers mandates them in the case where a person is accused of a crime which is punishable by Involuntary Recycling, and permits them in any other case. It does not except them in the case of minor offenses, nor did the trial court give any other reason why it refused the Accused use of them other than it thought that swearing the witnesses would be adequate. We find the denial of Tellers to the Accused to be an abuse of discretion on the part of the court. The Trial Court is ordered to allow the Accused the reasonable inclusion of Tellers in her trial if she be so inclined.

REVERSED

Cite this case: *In the matter of Andrea 528, Accused*, 7104 App. 2303

Chapter 59

"I think too much of my sense of humor is rubbing off on you."

David walked out of the building, into the Main Entrance, through the Picketing Zone - where the young man with the antisemitic sign was still standing - through Central Square, and out onto the street. Looking around, he saw exactly what he was looking for. He walked up to the man who was operating the controls, and said to him, "Excuse me, I need to commandeer your vehicle." He then got in the front, put it in gear, and drove off. The man smiled a bit, shook his head, and waved. David drove over to the courthouse, was about to park next to it, then grinned for a moment, put it back in gear, drove over the curb, across the courtyard, and through the plate glass window of the front hall. He got out, calmly walked over to the display window which showed where each judge's court was located. He took the elevator, got off and walked into the courtroom which was currently not in session. He walked up to the bailiff, and said to him, "Where is 246?"

"He's taking a break, he'll be out in an hour. Man! I've never seen anything like him before. Talk about fast! He ran more cases through here in six hours than most judges do in six days! Give us a couple weeks with him and we'll have the entire caseload cleared."

"Where are his chambers? I need to see him."

"They're over there, but he said he was not to be disturbed. You'll just have to wait."

David smiled for a minute, thought about it, then cold-cocked the bailiff. He then took his gun, pointed it at him, and said, "Now get up. Go get him. Now."

The bailiff rubbed his face, looked at David, and said, "You're in a whole lot of trouble, I hope it was worth it." He went in.

246 came out. "David! What brings you here?"

"Judges 3:20."

"Oh really? Who's going to be there?"

"Just the three of us."

"Okay, be with you in a minute. Toss me his service revolver, would you please?"

"Sure, here."

"Thanks."

"Carl, here's your sidearm. Oh, do not violate David over there. He's acting under police authority, is that clear?"

Carl continued to rub his jaw, and said, "Yes, sir."

"Okay, David, let's go."

"I just wanted to tell the bailiff I'm sorry I had to hit him, but I needed to speak to you in a hurry and I couldn't wait."

"That's very nice of you, David." They walked out to the entrance. 246 looked at the smashed window where David had driven the vehicle he had stolen, or, err, requisitioned. "A garbage truck?"

David smiled at him, "I figured I had to pick up a load of trash from here."

246 looked at him. "I think I had better be careful from now on. I think too much of my sense of humor is rubbing off on you."

"I couldn't find what I was really looking for."

"Which was?"

“A manure truck because I knew what I was really going after was a huge pile of crap.”

“Now I know too much of my sense of humor is rubbing off on you. Anyway, we’ll teleport over.”

“Can I say one more?”

“Sure, if it’s any good.”

“I was afraid I’d need a honey wagon if you didn’t want to come back.”

“I get it. You’d need a sewage collection truck because you might have to suck up to a load of shit. Not bad. You had better be careful or you’re going to turn into a clone of me. Ready to go?”

“One thing though.”

“What’s that?”

“What does that phrase *Judges 3:20* mean?”

246 grinned. ““Your Majesty, I have a message from God for you,’ Central Computer, teleport me and David 30336 to his office in Administration Building.”

Chapter 60
“Name your price.”

When they arrived, David immediately picked up his phone, switched it to speaker and started dialing. 246 locked the electronic door lock.

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“This is Manager 12032, I have an Armada Signal. I am aware of what it means and I repeat, I have an Armada Signal.”

“Please hold.”

“Executive Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this had better be goddam important or we will violate you big time.”

“This is Manager 12032, I want to page the Chairman of the Board and I am aware of the consequences. I have an Armada Signal. I repeat, I have an Armada Signal.”

“Accepted. Just wanted you to be aware, sometimes people try to use it and don’t realize how serious it is. I don’t like to see it happen to someone who didn’t know any better. Do you know what they did to the last guy who used it without a good reason?”

“Yeah, I understand they did a remake of the Crucifixion with him as the starring role.”

“You got it. Have a nice day, you can hang up now.”

The Chairman materialized. “246, you want to tell me what the hell happened?”

“Did you see the show?”

George did not get to answer as someone knocked on the door. “Let me step out of sight, David, and you look through the curtain.”

“It’s the Administrator, there’s nobody else out there.”

“Okay, let her in and reseal the door.” He does so.

“Dr. Green, I would never dream of interrupting except that I think all three of you need to turn on the Channel 63,045 news and look at the opening news report.”

“Central Computer, television replay, location north wall, time now - 5 minutes, segment next, channel 63,045.”

“In other news, several people have reported that a man described as,” the reporter gives a rough description of someone approximately looking like David, “stole a refuse collection truck, drove it into the Plaza of the Courthouse, through a plate-glass window, assaulted a bailiff and kidnaped Supervisor 246 at gunpoint, then dematerialized with him to points unknown. Nobody has seen 246 in the past half hour.”

It then cuts to a scene of the Watch Commander where she is facing the camera. “I believe we are almost certain whom the perpetrator of this dastardly crime is, but in order to protect the rights of persons who have not been formally violated we will not give out any details. All I can say is that whoever did this will be prosecuted to the maximum extent the law allows. We can say that we know Supervisor 246 is safe and unharmed at an undisclosed location to protect his safety.”

“Central Computer, stop replay.” The Chairman turned to Marilyn and smiled, “Putty Tat, in view of this I would say your judgement was correct in interrupting us and I would expect under similar circumstances in the future you would continue to do so. I will take care of it, thank you.”

“You’re welcome, sir. I presume until you advise me otherwise to refuse the police admission

if they come looking for him?”

“Yeah, you can do that for now but I don’t think they will. Let her out, David, then reseal the door.” He does so, looking worried. “David, don’t worry, we’ll settle this later.”

246 continues, “Well, to continue where we left off, did you see the show?”

“Yeah, I thought you were terrific. You really baited the guy one good. Plus, you sneaky little... Oops.” He starts into a Texas drawl similar to the one 246 had used earlier. “Oh, Supavisah 246, sir, would you be o-fen-ded if I was to say sumpin’ that might be up-set-tin’?” He smiled, “Yes I would and I don’t give you permission to insult me.”

“Exactly. He didn’t invoke the privilege so you baited him, you sneaky little bastard, so that you could legally take a slap at him. And since you warned them, they could not do the same to you. And I bet you did that on purpose.”

246 smiled and placed his hand in front of his mouth.

He started laughing. “Oh no you don’t, you don’t get the right to remain mute! I’m giving you a direct order to respond.”

He smiled. “Of course I did. It was great, it was damn near perfect.”

“Yes it was. What was so great about it was the way you simply, through logical argument and reasonable discussion, picked at their particular dislikes until you pushed their buttons and upset them. A brilliant ploy on your part. I don’t know if it ruins the effect of what you’re trying to say on those who have never heard you but I’ll bet it’s fun to do. Do you know that you’re one of the slickest con men I’ve seen in a long time?”

“Yeah, I know. When I was talking to Mias 880 I read his mind. When I told him I had an idea for something that was fun, he was thinking that if I was on earth the kind of stunts I’ve pulled would get me 3 to 5 years in Baltimore’s Super Maximum Security Prison *SuperMax*. Then he actually heard my idea and revised it to 5 to 10.”

“Which one was it?”

“1,000 climaxes.”

“I nearly busted a gut when I heard that one. I remember how Tom nearly fell out of his chair when you tried it on him. I know he lost, but how much did he lose on that?”

“500 favors.”

“I don’t know if he ever told you, but he was the one who brought that dead porno star into the climax contest that girl set up. I think he wanted to get back at you over losing.”

“Yeah, he told me in his suicide voice mail.”

The chairman shook his head. “‘Suicide voice mail,’ hmm hmm what will technology provide us with next? Anyway, what the hell happened?”

“Oh, let me say something first because David over there is looking worried again. David?”

“Yes?”

“The Chairman and I are just playing a little game here when discussing the situation, we have a standing bet that if anyone can get either of us mad enough to shout at that person, the other wins 5,000 favors. So right now I’m potentially trying to win back the ones I lost when I blew up at you. So we’re not really mad or in any way fighting with each other, okay?”

“Okay.”

“So, anyway, the Administrator said that I was being embarrassing. She also said I had a less than professional attitude bordering on childish levity and total lack of responsibility for my actions.” He smiled when he said that.

"I knew that, *years* ago."

"Then Putty Tat told me I was forbidden to make any public appearances. Even outside working hours. Talk about *Cat Scratch Fever!*"

"Oh Christ, she didn't know anything about you, did she?"

"I guess not."

"Well, anyway, if I have her withdraw that requirement, will that solve the problem?"

"Well, let's see. I asked her if it was her Final Answer. In front of a Board Certified notary public. I specifically asked for one so if I had to she could come in here and personally confirm it to you without compromising your privacy. The Administrator said it was her Final Answer. I'm sure you're fully aware of what that means."

"Yeah, she can't take it back. Okay, so what do you want?"

"I don't know. I got thinking about it after she laid down the ultimatum that I wondered if I wanted to continue doing this job, that maybe I wasn't interested in it any more. I thought I love what I'm doing but now I have to question myself. Do I want to go through this sort of crap again if I was to allow her to withdraw it, and she picks some other policy that I can't live with. Or die with, or whatever. Or if we get someone else and they do something I can't take. Because I might come back, once, but I won't do it twice."

"So perhaps I ought to ask for a 'signing bonus,' perhaps ask for terms so excessive that you can't agree to them. But if you did, I can say, well, I asked for enough to make it worth the aggravation and I can tell my conscience to shut up."

"Okay. Name your price."

"I won't make these non-negotiable because everything should be. If there's a problem we can maybe make some sort of compromise."

"Excellent."

"Okay, I should make this expensive for you. Some executives on earth got multimillion dollar signing bonuses. Since I can't use money I'll have to think of some other things."

"Okay."

"Let me list everything I think I want, then you can tell me at the end what you can't accept and we can possibly negotiate it."

"Agreed."

"Cancel all the favors I owe anyone on the board, including you, of course. I'm also thinking, if you can't do this yet you work on funding the research to be able to do so. I want to be able to go back to earth, but not under the knife. I want to be able to go there as an adult and visit with all my current memories intact, like taking a vacation for a couple of months. As for getting back it can either be through some kind of arrangement or I commit suicide if necessary. I have an idea on that subject if you're interested and it might help."

"I'm listening."

"Find someone who is depressed or is otherwise in a position to be interested in a change in his (or her) life. Offer to let them come up here for two weeks or two months or whatever I take for vacation. My guess is they'll never want to go back. So now we own their body; we can insure him heavily, and either have him drop dead, or if he agrees to wait two years for the suicide restriction to pass, he won't have a problem because he knows he'll get to come back here. So we can make the whole thing self-financing. How does that sound?"

"As I said, you are the greasiest operator I've known in a long time. Continue."

“So this allows me to actually visit earth and see some things in person. And, of course, I’d want to travel first class, I have an idea on that, too.”

“Go on.”

“If I am just given money to do something it leaves the guy who was doing this on the hook for the taxes, presuming he decides he does want to come back. But if I’m hired by one of the companies that the board runs, and he’s traveling as part of his job, everything he’s doing is a company expense. And if I purchase some things, say, in order to replicate them here, they are purchased for the company and as a result they’re company property and thus not taxable to him. Or make it through a non-profit and we don’t even have to set up a sham minimum wage job, we can pay him or her nothing, let them do all the things, and they don’t pay anything at all because nothing is reported. So we don’t even have to do anything sneaky with taxes, we can do everything strictly open and aboveboard.

“Now, all we have to do to make him keep his mouth shut is tell him if he says anything he’ll be sent back to start over. Recycled.

“Now for the things here. I’d want the ability to act as a judge on any court and to be allowed to take on any case. I can choose also, if I want, to be a prosecutor on any criminal case with unlimited authority to settle or try the case. And I can be a defense attorney for any case the Accused agrees he wants to accept me.

“If I choose to go under the knife when I come back I get to have all my privileges restored as soon as I learn how to use them. And all my privileges are mine permanently, even if I quit again or go do something else or go under the knife, just like my title of Supervisor is an eternal appointment. And you do what you can to see to it I get my memory from now back. And that’s forever, every single time.

“I’ve said I’m not a humanitarian. I want something else. I had thought I wanted to ask for orientation to be mandatory but I thought about it, in theory it isn’t necessary to survive and that’s the only thing we should mandate. But I want us to set up some kind of system to warn or advise people that if they don’t take orientation they will have extreme trouble managing in society. We know the reason orientation got started, too many people got sick and tired of me squeezing clueless Incomings who wanted programming jobs done for all that the traffic could bear. Well, *I’m* sick and tired of all the clueless Incomings who make some stupid mistake and whine about it when if, they had taken orientation, they wouldn’t have made it in the first place. Also I think we need to advertise it more, perhaps let people know about some of the things they get, like the so-called free phone service.

“I want the ability, if necessary, if it’s possible, to bring people in here in order to do some things if I need them, either we allow them to come up here or the way you’re doing it. Because if circumstances change we may want to consider changing the way things are, perhaps add more new ‘gee whiz’ technology outside of the Main Entrance in areas new Incomings might not see for a while. Something like we do out at the Amusement Park but more complicated or that take more room than we want to dedicate out at the Park. Perhaps use some empty space out at the Frontier and test some new technologies there.

“And I think I want the ability, if necessary, perhaps, to let some people who are on earth know about what’s going on up here, or in the area they will go to if they don’t think in English, as a means of putting a check on some really dangerous people who might otherwise pull some stunts and maybe do another World Trade Center, Second Edition, by encouraging them to behave by

letting them see what the final end of their future will be. If unlimited sex and no income tax won't convince them I don't think anything will!

"I guess that's all I can think of. Okay, let's hear what you have a problem with."

"Well, let's see. I want to pin you down on one item."

"Go ahead."

"You don't include being, say, an appeals judge on the same case where you've been a trial judge or prosecutor or other counsel?"

"Oh, no, of course not."

"Personally of all the people I know I think you could handle the conflict but let's not have to.

Hmm. All your terms are accepted. Is that it?"

"Gee I think maybe I should have asked for more."

"Such as?"

"I just thought of one more thing I want. David, I want to talk to you about it. Here's what I'm thinking..."

"Wait. May I ask one question?"

"Sure."

"What did you mean by 'World Trade Center, Second Edition'?"

"Well, as you might be aware of the incident, oh, it wasn't very important, probably nobody remembers, I think it might have happened sometime in September, where someone decided to finish the job of slum clearance, using two airplanes as wrecking balls, and turn the two towers - and several other nearby buildings - into a pile of rubble, that a few years earlier, someone detonated a truck bomb in the sub-basement?"

"Oh, shit, I'd forgotten about that."

"So anyway, David, here's what I want to do..."

Chapter 61

“Well, David, I guess congratulations are in order.”

David walked into the Administrator’s office. “Marilyn, seal the room, he’s coming here again.” She did.

246 and George materialize together, 246 is finishing a story. “...so he says to her, Crunchbird? Crunchbird my ass!”

The Chairman has a huge laugh, then turns to Marilyn. “Well, anyway, Putty Tat, after considerable effort I’ve gotten 246 to come back. As a result, I’ve decided that I’m moving you back to Deputy Administrator. I’ve been talking to David, and I’ve decided that we have just the right man for Administrator. Following the usual practice of having the Administrator and Deputy be dog and cat, Marilyn, you will return to being Deputy Administrator.”

“Very well, sir. Well, David, I guess congratulations are in order.”

“Yes they are. Well, Mr. Chairman, go ahead, I’m chomping at the bit to get this over with.”

The Chairman waves his hand toward the desk. “Okay, then, well, please, Mr. Administrator, have a seat.”

246 looks at him, says “Thank you,” and sits down at the Administrators’ desk. He turns to David, “Thanks for everything, you’ve been very helpful. Well, George, I guess that’s it then.”

Chapter 62

“Now everyone, go back to having fun! That’s an order!”

”It certainly is, Mr. Administrator 246. Oh wait, it’s not official yet. Central Computer, set Welcoming Department Administrator to ID 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246, set Welcoming Department Deputy Administrator to ID 29301 EX Marilyn 114430 and confirm short.”

“Notice, change in administration of a government Department requires Board level privilege. Provide authorization for privileged function or cancel to abort.”

“Central Computer, authorization 00001 AP George 000003.”

“Administrator changed. Deputy Administrator changed. Change in administration of Welcoming Department Completed.” A different voice sounded. “Priority Message to Chairman: Someone using your code has authorized a change in the administration of the Welcoming Department.”

“Well, it works. Central Computer, revoke alias Administrator from Marilyn 114430. Central Computer, add alias Deputy Administrator to Marilyn 114430. Central Computer, Add Alias Administrator 246 to Supervisor 246. Central Computer, Add Alias Administrator to Supervisor 246. So now you have it both ways, Mr. Administrator, or Administrator 246, how do you like it?”

“Thanks, George, that was nice of you.”

“And you still have your old title, Supervisor 246. So I’ll see you later. Oh wait, one more thing. David?”

“Yes sir.”

“Did you have fun driving the garbage truck?”

“Yeah, I did.”

The chairman changed his appearance into the uniform of the garbage collector who was operating the truck when David stole it. “I thought you would, I read your mind about how you always wanted to do that. Did you notice I waved to you when you left?”

“I didn’t even realize it was you, sir.”

“I just wanted to see if you would. It’s amazing, put someone in a uniform in a place you don’t expect them, and nobody will notice. Would you believe I actually had an announced public appearance and nobody noticed?”

“Really?”

“Yeah. We had this huge banner put up saying that the Chairman would show up for an announcement when we first set up the podium outside. Thousands of people showed up. I walked up to the microphone, wearing a maintenance technician’s outfit, said “Testing, 1, 2, 3. I declare these microphones to be in working order.” and left. After 5 minutes, Joan came out and said that the Chairman had decided not to make speeches, so everyone could leave as there would be no further statements after hers. Every newspaper ran editorials asking why the Chairman had failed to show. Nobody realized that I had made my announcement.”

“That’s really funny. And I’ll bet it was 246 who thought that up, it sounds like it’s his style.”

“Maybe his sense of humor was rubbing off on me, but actually I thought of it.”

“That is amazing and I believe it.”

“Well, anyway, since I know you’re a little worried about Joan’s announcement, it’s basically a

red herring to make sure the public doesn't know about the direct order I gave to you. You've done okay and you are not going to be punished, okay?"

"Oh. Okay."

"246 and Joan will have some things to talk to you about a little later, she's probably going to arrange to get whatever story we tell straight, and they may need to talk about a few things having nothing to do with the alleged kidnaping. Got me?"

"Sure."

George dematerializes.

The man now known as 'Administrator' 246 spoke. "Central Computer, open public address system stop word x-ray. May I have your attention please. All persons in the Welcoming Department, may I have your attention. Hey! Quit screwing around for a moment and listen to me! Thank you. As you can probably guess, this is 246. But, I'm not just Supervisor 246 any more. You are now listening to Administrator 246. The former Administrator has been reassigned as Deputy Administrator. Yep, the bad ol' Putty Tat done gone and got herself demoted. So, what I'd like everyone to do is contact their friends and anyone else who was here, who left because I did or because they thought that fun and games were over and now it was going to be work, and let them know that it's back to fun and games again. Remember, fun is what you do because you want to; work is the stuff you have to do. Supervisors often have to do work and so do managers and Administrators. But everyone else should only be here to have fun. If I catch anyone doing work during fun hours, they're going to get fired. Now everyone, go back to having fun! That's an order! X-ray.

"Let's see, what's next. Oh yes, by order of the Administrator, the policy that I may not give public appearances is hereby rescinded. In fact, I should make that a public policy. Marilyn, I'd like you to take down some new policies for me."

"Go ahead."

"New policy from the Administrator. Notwithstanding any other policy, it is the policy of the Welcoming Department to encourage any of its employees to speak their mind on any subject at any place or any time, even if their opinions are in disagreement with official policy, as long as they do not claim to speak on behalf of the Department (unless they are in fact authorized to do so). Sincerely, Administrator 246."

"Next, I think it might be a good idea to just put everything back status quo. 'New policy from the Administrator. For the next 30 days, any person who quit or abandoned their employment with the Welcoming Department may return to the prior position they had before they left, without change in status, and without penalty. Sincerely, Administrator 246.'

"Next. 'New policy from the Administrator: Effective immediately, all persons working for the Welcoming Department, including all supervisors, management and administrative personnel, shall have been loved back into the world. Paragraph. Persons who have not have 10 days to get laid; use of masturbation alone for relief is not a substitute. Paragraph.' Don't put this in, but use that explicit phrasing. Continuing, add, 'Gays and Lesbians who exclusively practice non-penetration methods may apply for a waiver which shall be granted except in extreme or unusual circumstances, except that all administrative personnel - this means all persons higher than Supervisor - shall have at least once engaged in vaginal intercourse where both persons achieved climax and orgasm. Paragraph. All management and administrative personnel - this means everyone at or above Supervisor level - shall - that means are required - and all others

should - which means it's a really good idea but they won't be required to do so - within 10 days of taking office, have started to take all orientation courses, finishing them within 60 days if they are required to take them. Paragraph. All administrative personnel shall have started to take management courses within 10 days and shall finish all of them within 60 days. They will be permitted to take them at any time, even during normal work hours. Failure to comply will result in the person being required to leave until these requirements are complied with.

Paragraph. Persons who believe that they require a special exception other than those provided in this policy shall submit a request in writing to their supervisor who shall indicate if they feel it should be approved or not, before sending it to the Deputy Administrator for a decision

Sincerely, Administrator 246.”

“Let's see if I'm understandable. David, can you see why I'm making this new change?”

“Well, first of all it would be kind of silly to have someone who is a virgin working in a management capacity in a whorehouse.”

“Excellent. Or any capacity. Why the requirement for vaginal intercourse with administrative personnel?”

“I'm not sure.”

“My personal thoughts are that I don't think you can have empathy for someone of the opposite sex if you haven't shared a bed with them and both given and received pleasure. At least here, it's easy enough, a woman is not going to grant climax privilege to a man if he hasn't made her come, she'd be really stupid to do so. One thing about orgasm is that a man will do just about anything to get it, but once he's gotten it he's liable not to care much about the woman. That's why we teach them never to release the man's orgasm until after they've been satisfied, as he might not do what you want if you don't. And only release subsequent ones as he's been nice to you and done what you want him to do. Teaches men to respect women and behave.

“And since managers have to deal with problems between supervisors, if they haven't at least been in the same situation, they probably won't be very effective. . Oh damn, I missed being able to drop a pun by not saying 'been in the same position'. Darn. Supervisors sometimes have to deal with problems with either sex but there are enough supervisors that we can afford to have some that are gay or lesbian, and in fact we probably should have some. I doubt that I can understand exactly what is a good practice with two homosexuals and it would probably not be a good idea for someone like myself to try to advise someone who was about it.

“Marilyn, I don't want any semi- virgins around so make sure you mention that all declarations will be verified with the person who was their Welcomer to confirm and are to be reported to their immediate superior who will include it in their report.

“Okay, let's see. As for the management courses, I think I can consider myself qualified since I wrote them. I think I can count myself as having complied with the requirement to have engaged in vaginal intercourse at least once. Yea, Verily! David, I know you have because I sent you over there, and because you told me Priscilla let you come, more than once, so I'll presume she did too or she wouldn't have popped your cherry.”

“Oh yes, she told me she came quite a lot.”

“Okay, I'll take your word for it so that settles it. Marilyn, who was your Welcomer?”

“Well, I don't really know who he was, I...”

“That's easy enough. Marilyn, what's your ID number?”

“29301 EX Marilyn 114430.”

“Central Computer, for ID 29301 EX Marilyn 114430, who loved me into the world?”
“Such information is private to the named party. Provide authorization for privileged function or cancel to abort. Note that if request is canceled, it will be logged anyway.”
“Central Computer, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”
“Notice. This ID changed to inactive. The ID previously was 00022 NC Harold 001216. The ID has been changed to 00022 NC Cecil 001216”
“Went under the knife, eh? Central Computer, open logs for 00022 NC Harold 001216.”
“Log open, declare search parameters or section to list.”
“Central Computer, search current document for 29301 EX Marilyn 114430.”
“One entry found.”
“Central Computer, list item.”

A man’s voice comes on. “New log item for female Incoming 29301 EX Marilyn 114430, declined. I’m not really certain what I did wrong, but for some reason she didn’t want to fuck at all. Seemed like she wanted to, but couldn’t bring herself to let me. Nor did she want to get on top instead, I asked her and she said she just couldn’t do it. I asked my supervisor after she left if maybe she’s a lesbo, but she said the computer scanned her personality and determined she was interested in men. I tried to be as nice and as gentle as I could with her, and she seemed to respond, then suddenly she pushed me away. As my boss says,” he imitates a woman’s voice, “if they don’t want it, they don’t want it, don’t try and make them take it. Give it to them any way they want but only if they want it.” He resumes his normal speaking voice. “Weird broad. Maybe she was molested as a child or something..”

It appears that the now deceased Harold - or rather now deceased Cecil - had hit the mark dead on, as Marilyn screamed, then started to cry. 246 signaled to David to go hold her and let her cry. The audio continues “...and just can’t bring herself to do anything. I dunno, there are plenty of other hot babes to go after, some who just love to fuck day and night. Come... he he. Come to think about it, it seems like the best part is when I tell them that they decide when I come, the light just pops on in their eyes. When I tell them that I don’t get to come unless I give them whatever they want and then they decide if I should, it nearly blows them away. Sometimes I’ll do them for ten or fifteen minutes and I’ll ask if they’ll let me, they really like it, for once in their lives they have some power over a man instead of it always being the other way around. And I thought women were great on earth, man, some of these women can be fantastic when they find out a man can’t use them for sex any more without their permission. That 246 guy was kind of right, he says that sometimes watching them come can be almost as much fun as ‘pouring the pork’, as he puts it. But when I tell them how to let me, and they know exactly when it will happen, it is so amazing when they feel me come inside them because they got to decide. And then I’m still hard and can keep going, they almost go berserk! And they can’t believe how many times they come, I don’t think I can count the number who fell in love with me. I try to break it to them gently, explaining that there’s over a billion men in this town, they can have anyone they want who’s interested, and that if I’m not busy I’ll be happy to have her over again.

“When they hear me say ‘busy’ they’re not sure what I mean, and I tell them the truth, I see lots of different women, it’s what I do as my job, of all things. What really freaks them is when I tell them that it won’t cost them anything, we’re not some gigolo service, if she wants to come by again I’ll be happy to see her and we can go at it any time she wants, or she can find someone

else and try him, or her if she wants to swing that way, and then come back and try me again, I won't mind. I'm not jealous, I'm not possessive, I'm here because I like hot women and I like fucking them, and I thought she was fantastic looking or I wouldn't have picked her.

"A lot of them really like that, that they can have as many boyfriends as they want and don't have to worry about them finding about each other. Since there's so many really hot people around essentially any time you want them, it doesn't make sense to be possessive or try to 'hoard' sex as if it were something so valuable you can't allow someone else to share it. We've got lots to go around, everyone can have some.

"I tell them too, that if some guy does something real good to her that she really likes, tell me about it and I'll do it to her. And if there's something I do that's really good for her, if she sees some other guy to tell him about it so he can also do it to her. And if some guy does something she doesn't like and won't stop, tell me and I'll see to it the son-of-a-bitch doesn't get near another Incoming like her. Or tell a supervisor if she wants and they'll do the same. These women are too nice to allow some bastard to mistreat them.

"But anyway, for some reason this broad just didn't want to do anything. There are thousands of really hot women coming in every day, and I want to get my share, so there's plenty more where she came from. But if she ever changes her mind and I'm still here, I'll be happy to take her back and try and make her happy. Harold 1216, end of report on... what the fuck was her number again, anyway, oh, yeah, 29301 EX Marilyn 114430, that's 29301 EX Marilyn 114430, supervisor said always get their ID in the report in case they want to know what happened. Report Ends. Next report. New log item for female Incoming 17352 DW Carol 000109, accepted. Now that was a lovely lady, she was so sweet ..."

"Central Computer, stop replay. Hmm. I have an idea. David, take her down to your office and console her for as long as she needs it." David and Marilyn leave. "Central Computer, telephone Watch Commander."

"Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line."

"Knit 2 Pearl 4"

"One moment please."

"This is Joan 20319."

"Joan I want to transport you over here, can I borrow you for a little while?"

"Sure, but Jesus are you that horny, 246? You can't even come over and see me, you want me hot and fast like some delivery from Pizza Hut? I'm hot; I'm all ready to take you on and wear you out again but it was kind of fast; I could use a little advance notice. 30 seconds advance would be fine. I can hardly wait until you want to bounce me around again, Tigger my friend."

"Very funny Joan. I'm surprised you need more than 10 seconds advance notice."

"Well, I like to make sure my hair is done. But what do you really need?"

"The Chairman has just appointed me Administrator. I want to set up a policy and I want your advice."

"How many favors do I get?"

"You know how cheap I am about paying favors, how about I 'bounce you around' again tonight over at your place?"

"Deal."

"Central Computer, transport Joan 20319 to here and close connection." Joan materializes, and has a seat. "I want you to listen to the new policy I'm setting up." He reads her the draft.

“Now, I want you to hear something about the former Administrator and let me ask you if you get the same idea I do about how to solve the problem. This is the report of the guy who was the one who loved her back into the world. Central Computer, list item.”

Harold’s log report plays. “As soon as he said, ‘maybe she was molested’ she screamed and broke out in tears. I think that’s obvious what has happened... Now...”

“Uh, 246, you say ‘I think that’s obvious,’ like you’re not sure. Why didn’t you just call this guy Harold and ask him?”

“Well, his name is now Cecil and his number is listed as inactive, what does that tell you?”

“He’s gone under the knife. And he’s been gone long enough to be processed by the Recycling Department’s end-of-the-month batch update of all new living people.”

“Exactly. So since I can’t ask him and she’s in no condition to tell me, I’m having to guess and the evidence seems pretty obvious, so I figure that’s what happened. Now, as I said, I want to see if you get the same idea as I do. I had a thought on how to solve the problem. We find someone who will be extremely careful with her, will treat her extra nice and understands what it’s like to be scared, I mean really scared, who was terrified until someone calmed them down. Who that we can be absolutely certain will not do anything to her unless she wants them to. Now, you tell me if you can think of someone who fits that qualification.”

“You know what, you are the greasiest bastard I’ve ever heard of, and you might just be right. Of all things, using a rapist to help cure a molestation victim. But you think backward and it just might do the trick.”

“I’ll have them fit her for an Antirape kit, have Anita talk to her and tell her how to use climax privilege, and I’ll talk to Leroy. Presuming I can break them apart! Central Computer, telephone Anita 71603.”

“Hello?”

“Is Leroy still with you?”

She giggled. “Yeah, we had sex in all sorts of different ways, sometimes we’d do one thing for a few hours, then something else for a while, then something different for a whole day, and so on and so forth. Then I decided to see how long he could keep fucking me continuously before he was satisfied so we tried that. It took me three days but I finally wore him out! I must have climaxed a hundred thousand times. I can’t even remember how many I gave him, must have been thousands. He’s kind of taking a nap. Passed out would probably be more like it.”

“Well, if you think you can wake him up sometime soon I’d like to have you and him come up here, I want to borrow him for an errand I’m thinking about. I want to try having him do some woman who’s scared, since you know how gentle he acts now.”

“Oh, okay, I’ll bring him up.”

“Oh, don’t forget I’m in the Administrator’s suite now, not my old office, okay?”

“Oh, yeah, I’d almost forgotten. We’ll go there instead.”

“Thanks, babe. Central Computer, close connection.”

Chapter 63

“Gee, I’m starting to like this. Live target practice!”

“So you understand what I’m trying to do, Leroy? Consider that as far as sex is concerned, she’s in exactly the state that you were when you thought you broke your promise. She is terrified, she’s probably reliving nightmares, she sees a man touching her as something dirty. What you need to do is think how I spoke to you, quietly, politely, show her that you consider her very lovely, and so on. In fact, I have a suggestion for you.

“Since you’re kind of worn out from Anita, that you just take Marilyn back to one of the apartments and have her lie in bed with you, with clothes on, and you just hold her. And you let her cry, and talk to you, and you listen to her, and you try and sympathize with her. And maybe do this for a whole day or a week or longer, and let her understand you know she’s scared, you were too. So what I want from you is that you will not ask her for sex. You will wait, as long as necessary, until she asks you to give it to her. Then you find out how she wants it and you let her have it, and you let her decide if she wants to give you an orgasm, and when. You let her tell you what she wants and you do it for her. And you be extra, extra gentle and nice to her if you do anything to her. If she walks out and doesn’t want it, let her, then come back here. Now, do you think you can do this?”

Leroy sheepishly grins, and says, “Do I get any favors for it?”

246 laughs. “Well, I see Anita over there has been doing a few other things with you besides the usual. Okay, one favor, since you’re new here. Maybe it’s worth more but I think you owe me a few.”

“Anita told me I should ask.”

“I figured that. Now, can you do all that, as I told you?”

“Yes.”

“Promise? If so, tell me what you’re promising”

“I promise I’ll be really careful with her and only do what she wants, and I won’t ask her for anything. And I promise I’ll be really tender and nice to her.”

“Central Computer, transfer one favor to Leroy 504337. Central Computer, telephone Manager 12032.”

“Yes?”

“Is she in fit condition to come back?”

“Yeah, I just think she was scared.”

“Have her come back in here. Central Computer, close connection.”

“Marilyn, this is Leroy. He’s promised to be very patient and considerate of your needs. He’s willing to sit with you, talk with you, listen to you and just let you lie with him if you’d like and he won’t do anything to you unless you ask him to. And if you don’t want to, you can leave without doing anything. Now, if you feel that’s even too much, well, there’s not much I can do and I guess we’ll be seeing you until you decide you can and allow some man to love you back into the world. Or some woman if you prefer and if you’ve decided to become a lesbian I’ll grant you a waiver. But as you imposed policy on me unilaterally before, I am now doing the same to you. Well, technically I have to sue you to fire you but you can guess exactly how little it would take for me to find a Supervisor who would rule in my favor. Or perhaps how much time it would take for you to find one who would rule in your favor, since in the previous dispute

you had with me the score was 4006 to 0. So it's your choice. If you want to at least try to overcome your fears, I'm offering you an opportunity. In fact, I'll show you something else. Leroy, do you mind if we demonstrate Joan hitting you again?"

"No."

"Okay, stand near the corner and brace yourself. Central Computer, grant Immunity from Assault privilege to 15022 EN Leroy 504337 and confirm."

"Privilege: Immunity from Assault granted to 15022 EN Leroy 504337. Completed."

"Marilyn, watch this. Joan, ready yourself." Joan stands up, pulls out her baton and holds it in one hand. "Marilyn, you think that's going to hurt much?"

"I'm sure it is."

"Well, I'll tell you something, Leroy won't feel that baton at all. Go ahead, Joan."

Joan turns to 246, "Gee, I'm starting to like this. Live target practice!" As usual, she drops the baton, pulls her service revolver and empties it into Leroy. This time he braced himself, and as a result, did not fall down. Marilyn's jaw drops.

"Again 6 for 6, Joan, if he were on earth he'd be coming here now. Central Computer, revoke Immunity from Assault privilege from 15022 EN Leroy 504337. Hand Joan your shirt Leroy, here's another clean one with no bullet holes."

"Thank you, 246."

"He just took 6 slugs at point-blank range, if we give that to you, how much do you think anyone is going to be able to hurt you?"

"Oh."

"Anita will show you what we need to do. And you can take as much time as you like to try and get over it, there's no rush whether it takes you a day or twenty years. Anita, take her down and get an Antirape kit set up as well as Immunity from Assault and explain to her how to work the climax privilege, ok? And get them a room and show her how to trigger the alarm. Don't worry, Leroy, I know you're going to behave, realize she's terrified like you were so we're trying to make this as painless as possible for her."

"Oh. Okay."

"If she'll let you, love her back into the world big time for all of us."

Chapter 64

“What does she think, she’s running a brothel?”

After they left, Joan turned to 246. “How did you know she would even be interested in him?”

“I didn’t so I performed a 402 on her.”

“Huh?”

“I did the same thing to her that a Welcomer usually does to an Incoming. I made her think Leroy is attractive. I also threw in a reverse rape penalty, I set her sex drive to maximum so she will want to have sex and she should enjoy it. That’s why I made Leroy promise to do nothing unless she asks for it. That way we’re still in compliance with Section 402. Maybe it’s a little more than I should, but in view of how badly she was treated on earth I felt she probably needed just a little push. We might have been able to get her to go with him without it, but I wanted to try to make it easier for her. God knows I think she needs all the help she can get if she’s going to be able to work here. What a disaster, a virgin as Administrator of a whorehouse! We’re just lucky she didn’t have more time to run this place into the ground.”

“You really think it was that bad?”

“Yeah. There are about a half dozen new rules she imposed, most of which are ridiculous.”

“Such as?”

“Well, here, here’s the list. Take a look.”

“Was she kidding?”

“About what?”

“This one. ‘Rule W3. All personnel who are Welcomers to Incomings shall be on duty and available during their assigned shifts’ What does she think, she’s running a brothel?”

“I have no idea. She doesn’t even realize why we have so many people here.”

“Yeah, I kind of wondered about that.”

“Okay, first of all, we’re only connected to earth for 36 days a month from Jashobeam through Abiezer and for 41 or 42 days in Maharai depending on whether it’s a leap year. The other 50 plus days a month we don’t have any Incomings arriving at all. Average out the numbers of, say, 9,000 people a day coming in during the 36-day Incoming Rush, and you need about 8,000 Welcomers to handle each day, based on about the 90 percent who do accept Welcoming. As the average time an Incoming stays with one Welcomer is maybe one calendar week, we need about 25% of the actual staff or 56,000 people here. Well, 28% to be exact. About 30 percent of the staff are irregular, they just come by when they want some fresh virgins to play with, and maybe come by once a week or once a month during Incoming Rush, another 5 percent are trainers, and they train the new people to show them how to treat an Incoming nice, how to handle them, how to explain what has happened to them, how to know whom to contact if you have a question, and so on. That’s only 63% of the staff that are needed. The other 40 percent, err, rather 37, are additional people to provide lots of slack.

“Those who have been here the longest get the pick of the litter when it comes - no pun intended - to picking the Incomings. The prettiest ones, the ones with the nicest personalities, the celebrities, and so on.

“The ones who don’t have seniority get the people who either aren’t very attractive or have really rotten personalities. But since these people would have lots of time on their hands, they have

the time to be with these people, to work on them properly and turn them around. So it works out nicely. The recent staff get the Incomings with the worst personal problems, and they are the ones who haven't been here very long, who don't have preconceived notions of what someone should be, and they then let the person discover why they can stop being so miserable, this is not a world of pain and suffering, like they think earth is, this is a place of happiness and fun. Since they aren't really busy, they will spend a lot more time with the people that need it. "I mean, the people who do this do this because they like having sex, and they like to have fun with the Incomings and show them a good time, because they want them not to have to suffer the kind of sexual hang ups they had when they arrived here. By showing the Incomings that sex is something we do in order to have fun, that we want them to have fun, and we want to give them love, affection, contact, and the greatest pleasure one can receive, orgasm, right from the start as soon as they get here, they can understand that we, as a society, do care about them."

"Considering how low the crime rate is here, I suspect you're right. Well, anyway, I'm going back to my office unless you have something else."

"Fair enough, I'll see you tonight."

"Toodles." She disappears.

Chapter 65

“...they’re about to make us throw their ass back into the world...”

“Central Computer, telephone Supervisor 960.”

“Oh, Hi 246.”

“Eric, are you busy right now?”

“Uh, well, no, I was just doing some reports on some cases I’d heard.”

“Well, can I interrupt you for a few minutes?”

“Oh sure.” Eric teleports in. “What can I do you for?”

“Well, since you went back to work I can presume you had heard about Putty Tat.”

“Yeah, some of us had considered picketing the place next over what she forced you to do, and after what she had done, we figured you were right.”

“Thank you for the vote of confidence. I am going to offer you something because I wanted to be fair and make you the offer. I fully expect you to turn it down but it’s yours if you want it.”

“What’s that?”

“My old position as Lead Male Supervisor. Technically it is a higher status position than yours is now since each Lead Supervisor has authority over all other supervisors. I figure you wouldn’t want it since I know you love what you’re doing and you’re not really interested in the management side of this operation, but I didn’t want you to think I hadn’t thought of you when I had to pick my successor. So I’ll ask you now if you want the position. Are you interested?”

“Uh, no. But thank you for offering it to me, I do appreciate the thought.”

“You’re welcome. I also wanted to tell you that I thought that stunt you and all the other Supervisors pulled on Putty Tat was absolutely amazing.”

“Yeah. We realized that if we all quit, then there’s no Board of Supervisors, she could then appoint her own. But if there was still at least one Supervisor, she can’t appoint any. And then if I refuse to do anything, while she could sue me, again, I’m the only Supervisor available to hear the case, and either I’d rule against her, or I refuse to hear the case because of an obvious conflict of interest, which means her case doesn’t get heard at all and she can’t do a thing about it, she can’t even appeal because it hasn’t been decided yet.”

“I thought it was one of the slickest pieces of work I’d seen in a long time. It was so good I wish I had thought of it. Well, anyway, I got thinking about what you said and your opinions, I have a little bad news for you.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. I’ve decided not to repeal rule W7. Or at least, not explicitly. I’d like to explain why, if I may.”

“Okay.”

“I happen to respect your opinion even if I don’t agree with it, and I would rather have someone where I know exactly what his personal biases or what he believes in and how he would act rather than someone who might either sabotage cases out of spite or might simply do things in a hidden fashion.”

“I see.”

“I am going to restore the original informal policy where when an Incoming did something that would normally qualify as an Involuntary Recycling case is handled privately instead of directly going to trial in all cases. I did that once when we caught some kids out in the Frontier

breaking their solemn promises; we took them and another guy who was in jail at the time over to the Mexican section and watched them beat the shit out of him, let them know we might just let the Federales have them if it came down to it that they kept it up. Technically not legal but much more effective than just tossing them back on earth and nobody learns anything. I have another reason, as well.”

“Okay.”

“Let’s say we get someone like that kid you had, the one who pulled the sign off the fence. Now, maybe we just want to teach him a lesson, like you did. So that means that where we want him to understand how serious it is, but we really don’t want to force the actual punishment upon him, we can assign him to your court for trial, knowing you won’t impose the penalty mandated, without actually doing anything dishonest about it. Or sneaky, as in the case I just told you about that I pulled a few years ago”

“Oh, I see.”

“But I want a couple of things out of you, however.”

“What’s that?”

“The first is that you hold a complete trial, in exactly the manner required by law, just as much as if you were trying any other case. I don’t want you to short-circuit a case like you did because you were mad at Putty Tat for putting you in a no-win situation. And you only announce your opposition to the penalty of mandatory recycling at the start of court, same as you did when I was there. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“The reason being, if you only announce it once, we can bring whomever it is out later, when they don’t know they’re being set up to be put through a trial simply to teach them a lesson, not because we’re actually going to punish them.

“Second, if you get a case where you decide you have to find someone not guilty because of your personal opposition to the penalty in such a case, I want you to announce whether, had you not been opposed to the penalty to be imposed, whether or not you would have found the person guilty as charged. It’s basically that we would want to know whether or not you felt that we had met the requirement for convicting the Accused. Fair enough?”

“Okay.”

“Basically I’m thinking that there may come a time when we have one of these really ‘hot potato’ cases where we’d like to just get rid of it, but it would be much too sensitive to just let them go, so we can kind of ‘accidentally on purpose’ assign it to your court. Since we can’t fire you for deciding the way you did - the Court of Appeals has made it utterly clear - we can blame you and most people will figure it’s not our fault whoever it was got off. Not that I expect that to happen, personally I don’t care what people think of me or this Department, but it’s nice to have that sort of an option if I think we need it.”

“Oh.”

“You don’t sound too happy about it.”

“I feel like I’m being used here.”

“Well, of course you are, Eric. But don’t you see the point here? I’m saying flat out that I know of, and approve of your stand, and your willingness to do what you feel as right. That you’re unwilling to compromise your principles, and stand by what you believe in no matter what the consequences are. But that means I’m going to hold you to what you believe in, which

means that if it comes up I'm going to throw cases at you where I want the Accused to learn something about our world. That we put them through the trouble and effort of a court trial, and let them believe that they were going to receive the ultimate penalty, and then, at the end, because someone is willing to stand up and say that they will do what is right, and follow their conscience notwithstanding what the law requires, and do something for them, I think if that doesn't teach them how we respect the rights of individuals - and thus they need to understand that they need to do the same - then the only answer we would have the next time they screw up is to really Involuntarily Recycle them after another trial with a judge who would impose it."

"Oh, I see."

"Now, do you get it? Basically if we send someone to you it's because we don't know any other way to reach them than to let them know that they're about to try society's patience so badly - or ours, anyway, since a society does not have feelings only people do - enough that we'll get rid of them, that they're about to make us throw their ass back into the world, but that for the actions of one person willing to say that they will not break their word to themselves, that they will not sacrifice their conscience for anything, that it is extremely likely we might just be able to reach them in such a case. And maybe salvage them as a result."

"Oh, I get it."

"Well, that's essentially it. That I want you to follow your conscience as you see fit. And if for some reason you become opposed to some other punishment you come tell me, first so I know not to send cases where I actually want the person punished to you, okay?"

"Okay."

"And for God's sake if you ever change your mind and decide you would uphold the penalty of Involuntary Recycling you tell me so we don't have a disaster on our hands."

"Absolutely. I doubt that would ever happen, I've thought about this for a long time and I just cannot accept such a penalty."

"So, you don't have any problems with what I'm asking of you, then?"

"No, not at all."

"Okay, let's shake on it, then."

Chapter 66

“...you know full well nobody wants your job...”

“Maurice, Tamara, I’m glad you came by, I would like your help for a few days.”

“What is it, 246?”

“Well, since I’ve been appointed Administrator I need to get someone to take my place as lead male supervisor.”

“I can perhaps understand your calling him, but why would you need me here?”

“What I want to do is, for a couple of weeks, have the two of you take over my old position until I find someone else.”

Maurice answered, “How much?”

“What do you mean?”

“246, you know full well nobody wants your job, it’s too much work. I don’t know about Tammy, but if you want me to do this, you’re going to have to offer me something.”

“You don’t seem to have a problem in your position.”

“Look, being lead gay supervisor is no where near the kind of workload that you have to go through. Same for Tammy over there as head lesbian, I know she doesn’t have anywhere even close to what Geannie has, and I know from her that even she doesn’t have anywhere near as much to do as you do.”

“That’s right,” Tamara said, “Geannie has a much larger workload than I do, but even her load is nothing compared to how much you’re doing. It’s a lot of work.”

“Okay, I’ll give you each back 20 credits for the two weeks.”

“Three hundred.”

“Fifty.”

“Bye.”

“Oh, all right, three hundred. I’m in a bind.”

“Why do you think I’m squeezing you? It might be one of the few times I’ll actually be able to get back some of the favors I owe you without having to do something outrageous.”

“Fair enough.”

Chapter 67

“...the Accused may, if he chooses, recycle himself at any time...”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife

In the matter of Eddie 37, Accused (File No. 710400791003)

7104 App. 2605

Appeal on behalf of the Accused

Unsigned Opinion

Accused appeals the terms imposed upon him in a plea-bargain agreement. Accused was one of the persons who was involved in the incident known by the Welcoming Department case *In the Matter Of A Riot in the Picketing Zone Involving 563 Participants and One Not Completely Innocent Bystander*, 7104 WDC 16630426. Accused agreed to owe the Assignee of the Complaining Witness 450 favors, to behave for 3 years (or be subject to additional penalties) and not to recycle himself during this period.

Accused argues this provision to be illegal, is not permitted even to be agreed to and thus makes his entire sentence unlawful. If this were the case in total, it simply would require the case to be remanded back to the Trial Court for re-sentencing, it would not void any punishment imposed. We find the requirement for mandatory favors and a “parole” of three years to be reasonable.

However, we do find fault with one of the items. The right of an individual to choose to return to earth is considered fundamental in nature and may not be suspended, even by a plea-bargain agreement. The court finds this provision of the agreement to be void. However, the provision itself is not illegal in and of itself, it is merely that any such requirement is unenforceable, and the Accused may, if he chooses, recycle himself at any time even if it is before he has finished his sentence, if he be so inclined.

The remainder of the plea agreement is neither cruel nor unusual and is AFFIRMED.

Cite this case: *In the matter of Eddie 37, Accused* 7104 App. 2605.

Chapter 68

“I heard those groans from a lot of you men out there...”

“Central Computer, Open Document This Week stop word x-ray. The following is for the column titled *More Crap from the Administrator*. Article begins: A lot of you have a few questions about what happened with the rape that occurred earlier this month. Here’s a copy of my report I filed with my then supervisor. X-ray. Central Computer, append document Rape Report to current document. Central Computer, resume current document stop word X-ray. Paragraph.

“As it turns out, everything worked perfectly, the girl had immunity from assault active so he couldn’t have hurt her, my Antirape system protected her from injury as a result of the rape and even allowed her to come for the 45 minutes that he was pounding on her and nothing happened, he never got to come at all. When I talked to him he discovered the ‘cock block’ we had put on him that prevented him from coming. Paragraph.

“I’ve talked to a lot of people over the years, I can’t even guess how many millions of men have been forced to behave by the simple requirement that they don’t get to come unless the woman they are with grants them Climax Privilege. It is such a wonderful idea and I’m glad we have it. It makes it so much easier for someone like me, who wouldn’t force a woman anyway, because I don’t have to worry if I’m doing her right, she’s not going to let me come unless I am. Paragraph

“Well, without having to so much as lay a finger on him, I got him to understand that he was dead, and that he isn’t supposed to do that to women anymore. And how everything we have in society is based on promises. And based on how he acted later, he was so deathly afraid he might break a promise, that I think he has learned his lesson and might even be able to go out into society and not hurt women. I’ll keep my eye on him for a while, maybe let him do a few errands from time to time and see if he behaves. Paragraph. Note to the editor, put in a paragraph where it seems appropriate so I don’t keep having to say where a new paragraph goes. Now back to my article.

“It’s kind of funny because I said that he was the victim of this rape when I was discussing it with the police contact on the Intervention because, as is usual in the occasional rape case like that, that does happen here every few years, he didn’t know he had died and didn’t know any better. Well, he just might have become the victim after all. I got him to admit he needed to apologize to her for what he did. I thought he was sincere about it, when he said to her he wouldn’t have done that if he had known he wasn’t on earth any more. Apparently she believed it too because she took him back and let him have sex with her again. I say that he might have been the victim because at one point during some of the things she was doing she rode him for three days, they both came thousands of times, until she finally wore him out.

“I think I’m a little jealous, I wouldn’t want my reputation as the biggest stud around here taken by someone else. On the other hand, maybe that’s the reason that caused him to commit rape down on earth, he couldn’t find enough women to let him have enough to sate him.

“I got first prize in the Climax contest because I gave Christina more climaxes than anyone else, but I wonder whether I would have even come in third if I had to go against our rapist, whose name, by the way, is Leroy. Most of you know about the 1,000 climax bet I’ve used on occasion. Now I’m scared that there actually might be someone who could actually beat me for

once. Oh well, it just might be different actually having some real competition for a change. Like some old magician who is being challenged by an upstart, it looks like I'll have to think up some new tricks to play on the audience. Well, I'll start thinking of new ways to please women. And I'm always interested in suggestions. I heard those groans from a lot of you men out there who complain you can't even keep up with me, and now I'm going to be doing more. Well, as the saying goes, 'You're good kid, but as long as I'm around...'

"Here's something new for all you girls. There will be a change in the way Climax Privilege works because we need to make an enhancement to it. We're not going to say much about what it is we are doing until we implement the change, and issue a press conference to explain it. All I'll say at this point is that once we announce why we are making the change, thousands, perhaps millions of women, will have a young man by the name of Wilfred to thank for preventing them from being abused.

"As a result of this young man discovering this enhancement, he's also thought up more new features that we are looking into implementing into the climax privilege and we'll need some of you who are interested in trying them out before we release them publicly after we've tested them to ensure they are safe to use. As always, safety comes first, even if it means that the systems don't provide all the gee-whiz bells and whistles and other nice features. It must work, and work right, consistently, in any mode of operation. It must either not fail, or if it fails, it must fail *safe*.

"What do I mean by that? Let's say you're on earth, and there's a traffic light at a busy intersection, and it fails. If it fails safe, what it should do is show a red flashing light in all directions, or at worst, it goes dark. If it fails in an unsafe fashion, it turns green in all directions and you have accidents and maybe even death.

"It's not that serious here, but we have one rule about technological developments, technology is used to make things easier, but we don't need most technology and can exist without it. If we are going to exist with it, it must be safe for us to use, as well as make things easier or more fun. Safety always comes first. No cutting corners, no exceptions.

"You can try these on some Incomings or your regular boyfriends if you like once we have them available. We will let you know and we will want to know if they don't work right, because, unfortunately, we have to try them out to see how they work, and when we first test them they might not work right. We can't release anything for use by the general public until it's been exhaustively tested under as real a set of conditions as we can make them.

"Depending on what we can implement without affecting anything, we expect to be able to offer you some additional things you will be able to do. We're looking into allowing you to decide if you want to let a man release his climax when he wants to, so that if you have some guy you trust to treat you right, you can let him have it when he wants, you won't have to grant it to him, you can permit him to grant it to himself. Also, we're looking at an automatic timed release, you can set a time such as a range, for example you might set the range to run from 2 to 10 minutes and then, every so often within that range it will randomly grant climax privilege. One time a guy might get to come in 4 minutes, then 3, then 5 ½, then 6, then 3 ½, etc., neither of you will know when the next one comes. No pun intended. Adds some excitement and surprise there.

"Another possible feature we also want to look into, is the equivalent orgasm model. You can pick a number, say, 2, 5, 10, or 20 and every time you get that many orgasms you give him one

automatically. The faster he gives them to you, the faster he gets them from you. So there's one way to get a man to give you what you want and you don't even have to remember to grant climax privilege to him while you're in the throes of orgasm too, the system will do it for you.

"And remember, these will all be optional. You won't have to use them, you will still be able to use the normal method of deciding when and if you'll release climax to a man.

"Let me make this clear. When it was decided to implement Climax Privilege a few decades ago, it was to ensure that men had to treat women decently, and had to allow them to have orgasm or the men didn't get it either. It was to make men treat women here decently and behave. It has worked spectacularly in that regard. As a means of giving a woman control over her sexuality, we think it rivals only the development of birth control back on earth as being anything close to this. What we are going to do now, is enhance that control to allow you to have more fun during sex, because now you have the option, for a man you trust, to allow him to get climaxes while having sex with you, without you having to do anything to give them to him if you don't want to. If you like making the decision on when he gets it, you still have that power. If you want to be able to let it happen automatically with guys you trust, or let the ones you really trust decide for themselves, you'll be able to do that too. I think it will be the best of both worlds for women; you can let men you trust come automatically the way they did on earth, but you still have final control over it and can cut them off if they don't do what you want.

"So now you'll not only have the same power you have always had since climax privilege was developed, you'll have more control over it too. We think this will be a very nice feature to give you for those that want to use it. More new ways to have fun for everyone. Remember, that's why all of us are here, to have fun with the Incomings and anyone else we want to have it with. That's all for now. Paragraph. Signed, Supervisor 246, Administrator of the Welcoming Department. X-ray.

"Central Computer, forward current ..."

"There is a priority load of aluminum siding from Joan 20319."

"Central Computer, Answer Telephone. Hi, Joan. What can I do you for, my friend?"

"246, I know it's personal so I won't ask for a copy, but can you play back Tom's message?"

There was something he said I want to remember."

"Sure. Central Computer, display last voicemail from Tom 844323."

Tom's last message begins. "246, this is... Tom..."

After it ends, Joan says, "No, it wasn't what I thought it was. Okay, then, on the subject, have you got everyone scheduled for Tom's wake? I know you were busy because of everything that happened."

"Remember, since Tom was dead and now he's alive, it's called a 'sleep' rather than a 'wake.' We're having it day-after-tomorrow at 4:90 in my office. I was going to let you know but now I won't have to."

"I'll definitely be there. Okay, thanks."

"You're welcome. Central Computer, close connection. Now, where was I? Oh, yeah. Central Computer, forward current document to *Welcome to This Week* magazine."

Chapter 69

“We could tell how happy we are ... But we would be lying.”

“Joan, have you ever been to a sleep before?”

“No. I didn’t really have many friends where someone would go to all the trouble to set one up.”

“So, what do you think?”

“It’s lovely, such a nice treatment. I see you have a large picture of him so we can remember him by. But I’m surprised at the large amount of food here, eggs, tomatoes, apples, pies, is it some kind of special thing where you eat deserts and such?”

“No, not exactly, you see...”

She looks closely, then leans over to him, whispering, “246, this doesn’t make sense, I hate to tell you this but there is a worm in one of these apples. How can there be worms here?”

“Do you remember back on earth how there’s a bottle of tequila with a worm in it? I thought of the same idea for here.”

“Oh.”

“Anyway, it’s time.” Addressing the crowd he speaks louder. “I’m glad you could all show up for Tom’s Sleep. I’d like to read a few paragraphs, then...”

Someone in the back says, “When do we get to the food?”

“I would like to do some reading first, then we can do that.”

“246, we’re doing a sleep, not a wake. Like you’ve said, we’re backwards here. Shouldn’t we do the food first, then do the speeches?”

“Oh yeah, I suppose we can do it that way. Okay, you want to start?”

“Yeah.” The man gets up, walks to the buffet table, looks over the selection. “Which is which?”

“The apples in the right pan are all rotten, the ones in the left pan have worms.”

The man picks up one of the rotten apples, hurls it at the picture, and screams out “Bastard!” It leaves a streak trail on the picture.

Another man picks up a chocolate cream pie, hurls it at the picture, and says, “Tom, this is for you, you son-of-a-bitch.” Gobs of chocolate goo fall off the picture and onto the floor.

A woman picks up two wormy apples, throws them at the picture, and says, “This is for not telling us you decided to live yourself, asshole!” The worms crawl around and start eating pieces of the other apples. When they run out of apple pieces, they begin to cannibalize each other. The last remaining worm eats its own tail and vanishes.

The abuse and food fight continues for quite some time as people throw food and curse or insult the picture. Finally, 246 reaches under the table, pulls out a shotgun, aims it at the picture, then says, “To quote James Garner in the movie *Barbarians at the Gate*, ‘Fuck you, Tom.’” He pulls the trigger and blasts a hole in the picture, then unloads the other barrel. Everyone except Joan - who is standing there looking horrified - applauds. “Since Joan is a little taken aback by our display of affection, I’ll explain.

“We are all dead. We know the answer to the question that troubled us all of our lives, ‘is there anything beyond life?’ We also know that Tom chose to return to earth to have another experience there. And we know that at some point, in fifty, or sixty, or seventy standard years, maybe more, maybe less, he will come back to us again. Well, actually ‘she’ will come back,

but that's beside the point.

"We now know, as Ayn Rand is reported to have said, 'Death is not important. Death is insignificant. Eternity is what is important. And eternity is right now,' and that life is a very short interim period of eternity, interrupting one's existence here in the afterlife, where it is probably statistically likely we will spend the vast majority of our existence. Therefore, there is no reason to be sad about the departure of our friend, we are not losing him, he's simply gone for a while and she'll return.

"On earth, to mourn the passage of a loved one, they hold a 'wake' for them, because they know not what happens to people who leave that so-called 'vale of tears.' Here, we need not mourn, we need not cry, we need not feel with sadness, the crossing back of our friend. As the Bible says, 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.' But we can celebrate it in some fashion. We are backward from earth, so we call this celebration a 'sleep.'

"We could tell how happy we are that Tom has decided to return to earth and experience life again. But we would be lying. Until the end of the *Point of No Return*, we have, for at least twenty standard years, lost our friend. In the time before she returns to us, some of us may also decide to go back to earth. So they may not be around when Maria returns. And, since she won't have her prior memories as Tom, she may not remember us when she does come back.

"We will not suppress or ignore our frustration or anger at the fact we're not happy we lost a friend for many years. We recognize this, and have chosen to express our anger and frustration upon the person we both love for what he was, and hate for what he chose to do. So what we have chosen to do is to release our anger and frustration at Tom's decision to leave us, in order that we may remember our friend with fondness, and hope, and love, and to remember him with happiness.

"I want to share with you something Tom said to me in the last message he left to me. While I have a phrase that I use to refer to close friendship, he found one even stronger than my own. He said, 'I was, am, and always will be, *primus inter pares*, your friend.' That phrase is Latin, and it means 'first among equals.' What I do believe he meant..."

Someone interrupts him. "Oh, so that's what it means. Yeah, I saw it. In fact, that's what she said, and now I get it."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you read the current issue of the company house organ?"

"Uh, no, I've been busy."

"I'll get one. Central Computer, create a copy of the current issue of *Welcome to This Week Magazine* and send it to Supervisor 246."

Two copies of the magazine appear in front of the man instead of in front of 246. He looks puzzled and says, "What happened?"

"I'm not sure. Central Computer, summarize last transaction made in this room."

"Request for instantiation of *Welcome to This Week Magazine* received. Overriding instruction by Chairman to reverse and duplicate all instantiations to this room acted upon. Two copies of *Welcome to This Week Magazine* sent to original requestor."

"Someone must have tried to send stuff to this office and the Chairman blocked it. I'll just take one of them. Thanks." He looks down at the issue. "Oh shit."

Joan walks over to 246. "What's wrong?"

246 hands her the paper. She reads:

More Crap From the Administrator

The editor of *Welcome to This week Magazine* would like to thank Supervisor 246, who is now the new Administrator, for sharing with us Former Administrator Tom's voice mail to him. This is essentially Tom's goodbye to 246. Out of respect for their privacy, certain intimate points of this message have been deleted. The message is a bit crude, but I decided to leave it as it was because it carries Tom's style and his sense of humor that many of you loved as much as I did.

246, this is... Tom. I'm afraid I'm going to have to break the combat date for our golf game next week. I've been sitting at home for a while thinking. I've been feeling, oh I dunno, maybe that I've been wanting to do something better with myself. I wasn't sure so I didn't say anything because if I changed my mind I could always erase this voice mail. [DELETED]

I wasn't sure if I should say it, here, or let you learn it later. 246 my friend. I remember you once spoke about that line from *Star Trek II*, 'I am now, and always shall be, your friend.' And you always have been.

Okay, you'll probably know it before too long so I'll say it now. I set this message up to delay delivery until it would be after the time it happened. I've scheduled my operation for around 8:30 Eastern so that's when I go 'under the knife' as the saying goes, for a Real Sex Change. Yep. You got it. By the time you hear this message, I will be alive.

I'm sorry if you feel bad that I didn't let you know or have the chance to say goodbye, but, somehow I just felt it would be better if you remembered me as I was [and] as I will be when I'm back.

It's redundant to ask you to do the following 246, as - as you put it - it's sweepstakes odds that you would anyway. If you didn't think of it, credit me with 100,000 favors because you *really* screwed the pooch this time. Actually it's a good thing we have most animals Recycled automatically anyway, Supervisor 246, as I might not trust you if there was a lamb, a steer or a sheep anywhere nearby. Of course, by the time you got finished short-arming them, they'd never want to go back to their own species again!

Here's something to think about if you ever consider going under the knife but not as a human: UCLA did some studies that say that a male rat can fuck continuously. Then again, with you, you horny bastard, they'd probably be envious... If I was to tell people on earth that the most terrifying sexual force for women ... had a 3 digit number for a name, they'd ask if it was 666, never dreaming it was 246.

[H]ere are the two things... First, Flag me. Second... I want you to be the one who loves me back into the world. [DELETED]

I used some favors to make sure the full announcement of my sex change would show up on the news so you can do a search and find it.

And now, in parting I shall say something to you in answer to something you said to me. Goodbye, my friend, and remember this thought, and if you agree with me that it is better than yours, echo it back. I think I found an even stronger term for friendship, than yours, 246, and I'll say it to you now: Supervisor 246, I was, am, and always will be, *primus inter pares*, your friend, Tom.

I, for one, will miss you, too, Tom. If I don't decide to also go back to earth before you return, I hope to see you at the *Tunnel of Light* when you do. While he didn't direct it to me, I'm willing to do so as well, to echo your remarks and to tell everyone how I felt. Tom, I was, am, and always will be, *first among equals*, your friend, Eunice 30, Editor, *Welcome to This Week Magazine*.

Chapter 70

“He was too nice a lover and too much of a gentleman...”

Some time later, after the speeches have been made and the mess is cleared, 246 talks to Joan about the article he accidentally placed. “I know what happened. I was writing an article for the magazine when you called. I played back Tom’s last message for you, then forgot that was the ‘current document’ I was working on. I then said ‘forward current document’ and it sent the voice mail message instead of my article. My bad, I guess.”

“Oh well, I think it was probably a good idea that how he felt was known as a lot of people were curious why he decided to go back.”

“I wonder how many people are going to read that and maybe believe that he and I had some sort of romance going on.”

“Well, I don’t mind clearing the record. Central Computer, call *Welcome to This Week Magazine*.”

“Hi Joan, how are you?”

“Hi, Eunice! Not bad really. I’m here with 246 in his office. We just concluded a sleep for Tom. I’m sorry you couldn’t make it.”

“I decided not to go. It would have just been too depressing.”

“Well, anyway, I wanted to pass on a couple of things for you.”

“Oh yeah?”

“First, 246 sent that message to you by accident. He was writing an article for the magazine when he reviewed that message because I called him, then sent it to you by mistake. I told him that I thought it’s good that it’s out in the open as to why Tom decided to live himself.”

“Me too. I saw the newscast about how the Administrator had vanished and wondered what was going on. I wondered what had happened. Now, at least I understand too.”

“Second, he’s kind of concerned people will think that him and Tom were lovers. I just wanted to tell you that I know that neither one of them ever had any interest in the other.”

“How could you be sure?”

“This part is off the record, okay?”

“Okay.”

“I was involved in a threesome with both of them. Neither one of them had any interest in doing anything with the other, only in me.”

“Oh.”

“I just don’t want people to think Tom was that way. He was too nice a lover and too much of a gentleman for me to want to see his reputation tarnished by thinking he was interested in men.”

“Oh. Okay. If I don’t mention anything about the three of you doing that, do you mind if I use that last quote?”

“Oh, sure, we can go back on the record starting with the last sentence.”

“Thanks. I mean, everyone knows you wore both of them and some 50 other guys out when you were an Incoming, and I...”

“Oh that’s enough of that. Eunice?”

“Hi, 246!”

“Look, Joan did not wear me out. If anything I was one of the few guys she didn’t. Maybe I wore her out and she doesn’t want to admit it. I don’t know where this rumor keeps coming

from.”

“Joan was the one who told me.”

“Oh. Well, we’ve had this disagreement for a long time. I say she didn’t wear me out, she says she did. If you want to think about something, consider this: Consider that she’s never claimed she’s done it a second time even though it’s essentially well known that we’ve been seeing each other almost every day for over a year.”

“Well, is that true, Joan?”

Joan smiles. “I’ll just give that a ‘no comment,’ Eunice.”

“Okay, well, thanks then.”

“You’re welcome. 246, you have another article for us?”

“Yeah, I’ll forward it to you a little later.”

“Thanks. Would you also be willing to include the eulogy that was given for Tom so I can print it too?”

“Oh, sure, be glad to.”

“Thanks twice. Talk to you later. Central Computer, hang up phone.”

“Well, you seem to think I couldn’t wear you out. How about we try again then?”

“While it’s not a bad idea, I think it’s time we took care of David, first.”

“Okay, but we’ll have to settle this later on, Tigger my friend.”

“Fair enough, later tonight I’ll bounce you around a few times and you’ll see if you can wear out my springs in the process. You page George, I’ll go get David.” 246 leaves.

Chapter 71

“Well, you’re half right.”

“Central Computer, telephone Board of Directors.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“This is Watch Commander Joan 20319, I have an Armada Signal.”

“Hi Joan, how soon do you want him?”

“Give me about a minute, I have someone coming.”

“Do you want me to wait to call Mike until whoever you’re with is finished or do you need to put your clothes on first?”

“Very funny, I mean 246 and someone else are going to show up. And it’s secure here, you can say his name. I’m not going to see George when I’m in bed, it might give him ideas!”

“I know, I just couldn’t resist.”

“Nancy, have you been around 246 lately?”

“Yeah, I was with him the other night a while ago. As a matter of fact, he said it was because you were busy with Tom. Nice to hear you sent him off to earth with a bang!”

“Well that explains it. His sense of humor - among other things - is rubbing off on you.”

“I certainly hope so, I like it a lot! Tigger always rubs me the right way. And whenever I let him come inside me - which is lots, he’s so good at making me come like crazy - that he’s so goddamn grateful it’s almost embarrassing!. Okay, I’ll tell them to call George. Oh, yes, ‘Accepted, you may hang up now.’”

246 and David materialize. 246 closes and seals the door. George materializes.

“Hi Joan. I think we found 246’s ‘kidnapper’.”

“Let me guess, he’s kind of worried.”

“Yes. Tell him.”

“Oh he needs to be worried as we are going to prosecute to the fullest extent the law allows.”

Now David really looks worried. She smiles and looks at him “But, as he may not be aware, since the law does not allow us to prosecute someone who has a direct order from the Chairman, or the board, the fullest extent the law allows in this case is no prosecution at all. But I have to tell the press something so people don’t know that the actions were based on an order of a member of the Board, in order to keep their actions as secret as I can. So don’t worry about it, David. If some cop violates you, let him, I have a standing order for whomever is found to be brought to me immediately without processing, then I’ll let you go, okay?”

“Okay. I feel a whole lot better.”

“In a few days we’ll announce we caught the person responsible, or we’ll announce it was a misunderstanding, what I do is wait until Dr. Green tells me how he wants it handled. If it can be buried we call it an error, if not we pretend we caught them and did a plea bargain.

“George, what we might tell people that a government official needed 246 in a hurry and grabbed the first Incoming, who didn’t know he could have waited, and was in a big hurry, and acted just like he was on earth, and we say we let him off with a warning since he didn’t know better. That might not be a bad idea, it makes it look like whoever did this was just some clueless Incoming acting like he’s on earth, instead of someone who, knowing he’s permitted to do anything to get the job done, used his authority to do exactly that. Might keep the general public from thinking that some people are allowed to get away with things they aren’t. That’s

always been the case in every society, but most people are blissfully unaware.

“Anyway, David, what we have done in some cases is to get someone who looks exactly like the person who did it to be arrested and agrees to cop a plea and be Recycled in exchange for destruction of their arrest record so it won’t be held against them after they die again. Then the person changes their appearance back to whatever it was and nobody else remembers because there are no records on whom it was. See if you can guess who thought up the whole scheme.”

“Uh, the alleged kidnaping victim here?”

“Yep. Slicker than snot. They don’t call him the greasiest operator around for nothing.”

“While I’m at it, I wanted to ask the Chairman a question, but I’m not sure if I should, I am bothered by something I’m curious about but I do not want to go into anything I’m not authorized to ask about and perhaps get into trouble somehow. I’m thinking I’ll ask now what I’m allowed to inquire into so I don’t step on anyone’s toes about anything.”

“246, you’re right, he is very good and I think we’re going to be able to work with him. David, we’re all on a first name basis here, you can call me George, okay?”

“Okay, George.”

“Now, as long as you can keep your mouth shut and not talk about anything you’re told except as 246 told you, that is, to people who know who I am or where you absolutely have to, you can ask or learn anything you want. For right now, let’s just say either of those two are okay. All of us here know more or less everything, so if you want to ask a question, go ahead.”

“Some things that came together made me come to the realization that you’re not dead and you’re still on earth, is that true?”

“Well, you’re half right. It is true that I am not dead, but as for the other half,” he smiles.

“David?”

“Yes.”

“I’m sorry to say... No, wait a minute, I’m not sorry. What I want to say is, it’s something you’ll need to know, and you’re not going to like it. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“Which of you wants to try and see if he can figure it out?”

Joan said, “I’ll try. Okay, David, I’m going to ask you some questions. 246 says he thinks you’re very bright, so I’m going to try, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Yes or no, do you know what ‘Windows on the World’ is?”

“Yes, I actually was there once, they have nice food. Or rather, they had nice food.”

“Yes or no, do you know who Robert Bork is?”

“Yeah, I read his book on antitrust law once, then a few years later he went through that nasty confirmation hearing for the Supreme Court. I didn’t even know who he was until someone mentioned his book and I realized I had read it long before I’d ever heard of him.^{xvi}”

“Okay, I’m going to say something that is in fact possible for George to do. I am not making it up and it is in fact true. If you get it, just say so, then we’ll ask you for your reasoning and conclusions, or if you don’t get it, I’ll try another question. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“Tomorrow, if he wanted to, George could invite Supreme Court Justice Robert Bork to eat with him at Windows on the World. It is possible for him to do that. How?”

“That doesn’t make any sense, Bork was rejected and Windows... You’re saying that it’s still

there?”

George nodded, “Yep. Still there. I can take pictures and show you.”

“Oh Christ. I think I know the answer then. I think I’m going to be sick to my stomach.”

Joan said, “Okay, tell us why and what your answer is. Why you got the answer, not why you’re sick to your stomach. I know why you’re sick to your stomach, I puked when I figured it out.”

“Robert Bork was rejected as a nominee for Supreme Court justice. Windows on the World is - or rather was - a restaurant atop one of the World Trade Center buildings. As September 11, 2001, is now probably the most famous date probably in history, everyone knows that both buildings were destroyed by two airliners in a terrorist attack. I think 246 sardonically referred to it as ‘World Trade Center, Second Edition’. Since you’re making this point about these two items he’s not in the past, am I correct?”

“Most definitely he is not in the past.”

“Therefore, the only possible way that the statement you have made could be true, is that George is from some parallel universe where Robert Bork was approved and the September 11 event never happened.”

“You have it exactly right. When I found out, I threw up all over myself. A strange experience when you haven’t eaten anything in years.”

Chapter 72

“This is a totalitarian dictatorship having a... maximum leader...”

“I think someone once said that the universe is not stranger than we expect, it is stranger than we can possibly imagine.”

George spoke to him. “David, 246 suggested that we bring you in with us on what, for lack of a better term, would be the Ruling Junta. He said that when and if you had the courage and the curiosity to put everything you’d heard together and figure out that I wasn’t here, that if you did it in a way that showed that you realized how sensitive such a question would be, that you’re probably ready to join, if you wanted to. Would you be interested?”

“Well, possibly, but, I don’t know if I want to trust myself with having a whole lot of power to do things to people.”

“246, what do you think?”

“I’d say he’s perfect.”

“I agree. David, remember, we’re thinking backwards here. Our objective is not to hold on to power but to give it away. What we’re trying to do is write the laws for this country to have as few of them as possible, to have as little government as is possible and still maintain order and keep people protected from each other. That means that it’s twofold. Are there laws we need on the books to make things better for the public and protect them from government misconduct, while at the same time can we reduce or streamline laws we have to do the same thing? The fewer laws you have in a society, the easier it is for a member of the public to know what they are expected to do, and what not to do. Most governments have huge blocks of laws, often written by lawyers because they have to cover all sorts of situations and conditions, and have to be precise. And, in many cases, they are intentionally written in vague terms so that it’s impossible to know if you’re breaking the law or not so the government can use the law against you if it wants.

“You were in the hotel business, you’re probably aware in many states of all the times where almost any form of consensual sex outside of marriage - and many forms within it - are criminal offenses, and as a result most of your customers are there to conspire to commit felonies?”

“All of the time. I’m proud to say that most of those laws got struck down by the courts, but some of them remained.”

“As it turns out, that happens to be one of the things that’s in both of our worlds. Same case, same name, same events. On both sides, everyone knows of *Roe v. Wade*, or as some people like to refer to it, two ways to cross a river. Did you ever hear of a court case called *Bowers v. Hardwick*?”

“Sounds familiar, but I can’t remember.”

“Mr. Bowers and his boyfriend were in bed together doing whatever gay men do, when the cops busted down his door to serve him with a warrant for a traffic ticket. They also arrested him for the crime of sodomy. Prosecutor throws the case out, he doesn’t want to bother with what people do in the privacy of their own homes and probably thinks the law stinks in that sort of situation. But Bowers had standing to sue because of that and went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court where it ruled that even though this took place in the privacy of their own home, the 4th amendment doesn’t give individuals the right to choose how they’re going to have consensual sex if the government decides to make it illegal, and the law was constitutional.

Probably one of the stupidest decisions since, I don't know, maybe *Dred Scott v. Sanford* both places, or *U.S. v. Alvarez-Machain* in your world."

"What was ridiculous was - again in both of our worlds - in later cases, *Powell v. State* in your world, *McDonald v. City of Atlanta Department of Fire and Rescue* in mine, the Georgia Supreme Court would find the very same statute unconstitutional on state constitutional grounds - meaning the law was struck down and declared void - in those circumstances for essentially the very reasons Bowers' lawyer raised in his arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court who decided the statute was constitutional and declared valid. The end result was that the law was canceled."

"I see. And the point here is?"

"If the government can go so far as to say in what manner you can have sex with another adult in the privacy of your own home where both of you consent, that's a pretty huge amount of power over people's lives. Even if the law is rarely enforced, it doesn't take much for someone to try and use it, say offering bounties to catch people. But at least the law is clear and you can know if you're breaking it. Sometimes they make the law so vague that you can't really tell if you're breaking it or not. Think about one right off the top of your head."

"Income tax."

"You got it. The only way you can be absolutely sure you're not breaking any tax laws is to have no income at all. Not even barter. But how are you supposed to eat? Beg? Well, they could declare gifts taxable - and if the gift is more than a certain threshold, it is, and while it's usually the payer who is responsible, they could turn around and make the recipient liable - and when you don't have the money to pay, you can be put in jail if they chose. They can rig the laws any way they want to so that anyone is a lawbreaker, or maybe not, and what it comes down to is whether you can convince a judge - or if you're lucky enough, a jury - that you're not. And too often the juries are hand-picked by prosecutors to almost guarantee conviction.

"And when someone tries to let people who are on juries know what power they have, it's considered tampering by some. As if they think the purpose of a jury is to convict someone. The purpose of a jury is to provide a brake against excessive zeal by the government, because if you have a government paid employee as the judge, and government paid prosecutors, and government paid defense attorneys - usually woefully underfunded and often not very good - for indigent clients, possibly the only thing that might protect the defendant against being railroaded is a non-government employee jury.

"If you have really good judges - an example of which is your friend next to you - you might be able to have bench trials that would be fair. But too often judges tend to follow prosecutors leads rather than being impartial. And too often the appeals courts rubber stamp obviously faulty trials and convictions because they look at the defendant's crime and whether they think he's guilty, or whether it's politically inconvenient if the person isn't convicted, not whether the government acted improperly, there were errors in the original trial, or whether even the law is right or just or constitutional.

"You've been here for a while, David, would you be able to express what kind of government we have here?"

"Well, it seems so much like the U.S. that I'd like to think it's some kind of democracy, because there is so little government that it isn't like some of those banana republics I've had to deal with when getting permits to open a hotel."

“Well, actually, this place is about the same as one of those banana republics. What would you say, 246, what kind of government would you say we’re running here?”

“This is a totalitarian dictatorship having a single individual as maximum leader with unlimited power and authority at the top, operated by rule of law.”

“I’d agree with you although I think ‘despotism’ rather than ‘totalitarian dictatorship’ would be more appropriate in view of how I am running the country. Now, David, why isn’t this place like some of those countries that have almost the same structure, say, ahh, an excellent one, Iraq. One man has absolute power, and can do whatever he pleases, and as a result, the place is a horror zone. And yet here, it’s extremely pleasant. Why?”

“He’s interested in acquiring as much power as possible, while you’re apparently interested in giving it away.”

“Exactly. I personally like the idea of a free society and I don’t want to have power. 246, on the other hand over there, is very dangerous because he *does* want to have power. In fact, he wanted to be the most powerful man in the country. And, as a matter of fact, he is. And yet, it’s the exact opposite of what you would expect. Tell him, 246.”

“Okay, David, in a ‘banana republic,’ who is the most powerful man in the country?”

“Whoever controls the ruling junta.”

“Why?”

“Because he has access to all the guns and the military.”

“Which means?”

“Hmm, not sure.”

“It means he has the most power to inflict pain and misery over as many people as possible and can choose who lives and who dies. Sound about right?”

“Yes, it does.”

“Now, since we think backward here, who is the most powerful man - or woman - in this country? Now let’s exclude the Chairman because basically he stays out of things unless there’s a problem. He likes it that way. So it means that the most powerful person in this country is actually someone here in this world. So, can you guess whom it is and why?”

“Well, the Chairman is saying that you’re the most powerful man in the country. And yet I can’t see... Oh, wait a minute. I think I get it now.”

“Go for it!”

“I’ll take your words and turn them upside down. The most powerful man here is the man who controls the largest whorehouse. Because he has access to all the sex and the people who provide it. It means he has the most power to inflict pleasure and happiness over as many people as possible and can choose who gets laid and who doesn’t.”

“Exactly! And the thing is, since they are all volunteers, I have no hold over them at all. In a banana republic, the Junta Leader controls by fear of punishment and that’s how he holds his sycophants. Here, I control people by fear of loss of pleasure, in other words, that I’ll toss them out if they do something wrong. And all that means is they don’t get first shot at the virgin Incomings, they can always have sex with anyone else who consents.

“There, if you treat people nice, you get in trouble because you’re supposed to operate by fear and repression. Here, if you treat people badly you get in trouble because you’re supposed to operate by love and compassion. There, you move up the food chain of command by how well you follow orders and suck up to your bosses. Here, you move up the food chain by how well

you have fun and make fun for the Incomings you choose. Oh yeah, like in any bureaucracy, sucking up to your boss doesn't hurt even here. Only, as you noted, you, as my boss, were afraid you were going to have to suck up to me to get me to come back, so maybe we're still backward here!

"There, you generally abuse people in order to get your job done, and you're praised for it. Here, you generally have fun with people in order to get your job done, and you're praised for it."

"So, given this, that the supervisors - say, non-commissioned officers - in a Junta army are the ones who were the best at repression and torture, what are the supervisors here?"

"The best whores and gigolos around."

"Exactly. Well, actually it's more like nymphomaniacs and satyrs, because it's the exact opposite again. On earth, the visitors to a whorehouse - usually a man - decide which of the resident staff they want to fuck. Here, the resident staff decide which of the visitors they want.

"Which is why I am notorious about women, in that in order to get to where I am now, as highest lead supervisor, well, also now Administrator but that's a secondary matter, is that I had to be as good as I could with women in finding as many ways to please them as I could. This meant I could have access to more women, and please more of them, and eventually obtain a high enough status that I could achieve my goals. Which was, in a way, exactly what I do to women: to have intercourse with everyone!"

"I thought you didn't do men."

"When it comes - no pun intended - to intercourse I do everyone. I am having intercourse with you right now, didn't you realize it?"

"Oh, you mean as in talking."

"Exactly. Most people forget that 'intercourse' means communication. When two nations have communications, or trade, or travel between the two, they have intercourse with each other. Brings new meaning to the term, 'screwing with other countries'. When two people have intercourse, they *talk*. But when they have *sexual* intercourse, they..." he stops.

"Oh yeah."

"So what it gave me was a 'bully pulpit' like the leader of a country, to express my ideas. And my idea was for a society with as few laws as possible, and the ones we had were objective in nature, easily understood and clear. And patiently, over years I fought to get so many ridiculous things that had been imported from earth, that were unnecessary there, and even more so here, removed. And so you see this world as it stands today. And that's what I want to invite you to become part of. The small group of people who actually run the country with the intent of doing as little as possible. That two people and a holographic representation of a person can run a country of two billion people tells something about how right I was. And if you join it will be three people and a holographic representation, and maybe then George can quit and not have to bother with things unless we have a real problem. But the number has to be an odd number, do you know why?"

"Majority rule?"

"Exactly. Whichever way two of us decide is the way we go. That means that, if Joan and I agree on something, we actually outvote George over there. The only time he'll overrule us is if he thinks we are manifestly wrong, and I think out of thousands of times there's been less than a handful of instances. That about right?"

“Yeah, mostly when I felt we needed a little more order than they did.”

“Like the thing with the platform downstairs. I felt that it should be available to anyone, with the exception that the government could take it back immediately if they needed to make an announcement. George said he wanted it reserved for official communications so that it would have more respect when used. Joan agreed with me, but George overruled us and that’s the way the law stands. But, then, Joan gave me a pass to speak anywhere, so I could die with it.”

“So I’ll make you a deal if you’d like. Come on board for a while, if you don’t like it, quit and George can take your place until I find someone else, if I do. Do you know why I decided to pick you? It was what you said about management.”

“I think I said that I wanted to learn and did not want to mismanage something because I didn’t understand it.”

“Exactly. If you don’t understand something, you’ll probably ask questions and you won’t stick your fingers in the pie until you know you can handle it. That’s why I’m willing to trust you. You’ll probably make a few mistakes but that’s part of the learning process and I think with the three of us to ride shotgun on you, you won’t make too many bad ones. It’s up to you.”

“Okay. I’ll try.”

“Good! 246, I’ll leave the details to you and Joan for now. I’ll see you later.”

“So long George. Joan, once he leaves, open the door. I am reinstating Tom’s open door policy except when it’s necessary to have private meetings.”

Chapter 73

“... I have something ... if you're interested ... that might be fun.”

After George leaves, Joan begins, “Well, what I...” but the telephone interrupts her. “There is a delivery of aluminum siding from Leroy 504337.”

“Well, what I'm indeed, Joan, that's definitely different. Central Computer, answer telephone. Hello, Leroy, how are you?”

“Uh, I'm okay I guess. Marilyn just left, she said she had to go do something. But I have a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“Well, ah, some really cute looking girl actually asked me to have sex with her. I told her I had to find out if I'm allowed, so I decided to ask first so I don't make another mistake.”

“Well, that's nice of you, Leroy. Yes, you can have sex with anyone you want as long as either they ask you or they say yes if you ask them.”

“Oh. Okay. But, uh, well, she wanted me to go back with her to her apartment and I said I couldn't right now. Not just because I was here with Marilyn but because I promised only to go here. So well, if Marilyn leaves because she's decided she doesn't want to do any more, do I come back up there then come down here again or should I ask this lady to come over here. Oh, wait, I wouldn't be able to do that because I don't know how to call her and I couldn't go anywhere else because I promised.”

“All right, what I'll do is this. Leroy, you have my permission to go anywhere in the building to go with someone if either they agree to have sex with you, or they ask you and you're interested. But you need to tell them you have to stay in this building, okay?”

“Yes, I promise.”

“Very good. If you get to the point that you're not with anyone else and don't want to see anyone else then come back to my office. If you decide you want to see someone new, go to the 1000th floor and go to the door marked ‘reception.’ Do you have that?”

“Yeah, the 1000th floor.”

“Now, if you go over to administrative services they probably can find out whom you were talking to if you can remember the exact hour, they can trace whom you've been near and spoken to, if you ask within a couple days. How does that sound?”

“Wow, gee, thanks 246! I really don't know how to thank you.”

“Well, Leroy, I have something else I'd like to discuss with you, if you're interested in doing something that might be fun.”

“Yeah, sure.”

“What I'm thinking of doing is giving you something like partial immunity to assault so that it won't hurt but you'll feel it enough to know if you have been shot so that if it happens you'll know enough to be able to pretend to be hurt and fall down, like in a movie, okay?”

“Yeah.”

“What I'm thinking of doing is having you and a few other people stage a bank robbery like the one you were trying to do when you got killed, in order to give the police a chance to practice as if it was a real robbery. So you'll actually get to do that and maybe get away with it, does that sound like fun?”

“Yeah!”

“Okay, then. Joan, you’ll have to promise him he won’t be hurt.”

“Oh, sure. Leroy?”

“Yeah?”

“This is Watch Commander Joan 20319. I’m going to tell you that I’m not happy about what you did, but I promise that I’m not going to hurt you and I won’t have any of my officers hurt you while we’re doing this. But no promises if you go running off or disappear after this is over, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Leroy, what you can do is, when you’re finished there you can just come back here and either go see some woman or come back to my office if you’re finished with any women you might have been planning to see or if you’re not going to do that, okay?”

“Okay, yeah, I promise.”

“Good. Central Computer, Close Connection.”

Joan speaks up. “Thanks for arranging that, I think it’s going to really help with some of the new officers who don’t know how we do things here. But I guess you were wrong, looks like Marilyn decided not to take him up on your offer.”

“Yeah, it looks that way, doesn’t it. Probably she’ll come back and ask for a waiver. Well, we can’t say we didn’t at least try.”

246 soon discovers he’s wrong.

Chapter 74

“Now maybe, I think you understand the purpose of this Department.”

The Deputy Administrator comes back into the Administrator’s suite, looking absolutely radiant, a grin on her face about four kilometers wide. “Good morning, 246! It is such a wonderful day today.”

“Well, good morning to you, Marilyn.”

“Good morning David! Nice to see you.”

“Good Morning.”

“Good morning, Joan. It’s nice to see you, too.”

“Morning.”

“246, I’m only going to stay for a minute or so, I just wanted to tell you something.”

“Okay.”

“You know, I really hated you for what you did, forcing me to go through with this, but now that I have discovered just how wonderful this is here, I think I’m happy for the first time in I don’t know how long.”

“Now maybe, I think you understand the purpose of this Department.”

“To make people happy?”

“Yep. That’s what we’re here for, to make people happy.”

“Well, anyway, I think I’m going to be busy for a day or two, I’m so excited, I feel like I’m 18 again and sneaking out to be with some boy.”

“Marilyn, that’s not good enough, I’m afraid I’m not going to let you be gone for a day or two.” She frowned. “You’re not? Oh, okay, then. I’ll get back to work in a few minutes.”

“No, Deputy Administrator, that is not what I meant.”

“Oh, what did you mean?”

“I mean if I see you back here in less than a week I’m going to send you back down there again because you’re not done yet. No, in fact I’m going to be very curious if you’re so happy about what you’re doing as to why you’d be back so soon if you spend less than two weeks to a month or more down there. Hell, when I first showed up I was down there for two and a half months, calendar, and Joan was there for a year and a half! The work will always be here, when it gets done there’s always something new happening so don’t worry about it, you can always come back to your job later. If Leroy is busy, go to the reception area, find another man and let him teach you a few things if you want. Now go on, Putty Tat, get out of here, go back to having fun, scoot!”

She smiled. “Yes, sir!” She turns around and runs off.

David turned and looked at Joan and 246. “I didn’t know she could smile.”

Joan turned and looked at David. “Neither did anyone else.”

Chapter 75

“Look at everything from scratch.”

“246 are we finished for now?”

“Oh yeah, sure, Joan. You have something to do?”

“Yeah, I want to let some friends of mine know that she actually can smile. This I have to tell them about, but I suspect nobody will believe it. I also need to take care of setting up the bank robbery, we’ll need to advertise for volunteers. And I’ll see you tonight around 9:90.” She dematerializes.

“Oh, before I forget, David, have you been to orientation classes yet?”

He smiled, “As a matter of fact, yes I have. Do you want an example?”

“Yes.”

“You have quite a reputation, and about 10 minutes of the class was just about you. For example, anyone who can find out what your name on earth was wins 1,000 favors from you that will never expire if they only tell you and nobody else. That was why you gave them to Tom. And now I understand, that’s why you wouldn’t tell me your name when I asked you. Let’s see, you love puns, even ones that aren’t very punny, and you like to use them while at the same time claiming they are unintentional.

“Let’s see if I can think of a couple of terms you didn’t tell me.” He looks at his notes. “A ‘tag team’ that’s a good one, that’s when two close friends, often male and female, decide to go under the knife together but want some kind of bond that will cause them to meet again at some point on earth, to at least give them the chance to find each other, the ‘tag’ is something placed in their memories or their personalities that will encourage them to meet or find each other for some reason. Often it works, sometimes it doesn’t. A ‘mattress tag team’ is the same thing, but when they both decide to get Real Sex Changes so they can see what it’s like from the other side. It’s a pun based on mattress tags, since chances are if the two do find each other they almost certainly become lovers; they may never marry but they will have sex at least once. A ‘u-turn’ is when someone dies and decides as soon as they get here to immediately go back to earth and start over as a baby again.”

“What is the Frontier?”

“It’s the unused area between here, that is, the city limits and the areas where the people don’t think in English. It’s open territory where there is no law but the law of the jungle. ‘Almost as bad as Detroit.’”

“I see they’re still using that corny joke I made up twenty years ago. Okay, now the question I asked you when I first met you. What is this place and what is it made out of? And let’s try one more, what are *you* made out of?”

“This place is essentially the same thing as *The Matrix*, a simulation of reality imposed upon our souls, which are in essence pure energy, operating on computer hardware, allowing us to experience anything that is given to us as electrical signals as if they were sense input. So either this space is energy or it is something akin to the disk space in a computer disk drive, meaning some form of magnetic flux patterns. But again, since that’s just magnetism recording information, it again is a form of pure energy.”

“Very good. Okay, you pass. Have you started the management courses yet?”

“No. I wanted to have a couple of days for the orientation to settle in. They raise

some amazing concepts that I hadn't even thought about. They said to look at how things are and realize what is really necessary. Look at everything from scratch. What is absolutely necessary for the operation of a civilized society, then look at what you need when nobody dies, and nobody needs anything because everything can be created as if by magic? I hadn't thought of that, either. And I have to finish reading the books they assigned. I plan to start in about 2 or 3 days on the management courses, I figure that will give me time to finish the small book, this one, *Starship Troopers*. I even got Heinlein himself to autograph it, only cost me 2 favors. But this other one, *Atlas Shrugged*, it's over a thousand pages, it's going to take quite a while to read. And there are a few others I haven't gotten to yet."

"Yeah, well, I have bad news for you. *Atlas Shrugged* is not going to sink in until you've read it at least twice, it's quite a complicated book. Of course there's always the possibility you won't like it; some people despise the book. My regret when I read it back on earth was that Ayn Rand had died before I had ever had the chance to read it. Then I was even more ticked off that by the time I got here she decided to get a Real Sex Change and go under the knife. She apparently decided she wished she had been a man on earth and wanted to try again. My favorite author and possibly the third greatest philosopher ever and I didn't get to meet her either before or after she died. But I'll get to meet him when he dies again. Maybe he'll have learned something new to tell us as well."

"How many times have you read it? And who was the second greatest philosopher?"
"I've read the book more than 20 times, at least 8 times cover to cover when I was on earth and the rest after I died. As for the second greatest philosopher, the same one she picked, the only one she thought was greater than herself. Aristotle. He's over in the Greek section, he's still here if you want to meet him, he never went back."

"And who was first?"

"I am. I used to call myself 'The greatest philosopher alive, possibly the greatest who ever lived.'"

Chapter 76

“...I have never had a guy overload me in 40 seconds.”

“Okay, you can tell him he can come in.” Wilfred walks in. “Good morning Wilfred.”
“Good morning 246.”

“You have some news for me?”

“Yeah. I’m ready to try an experiment with the new change in climax privilege, and I’m going to need some other guy who is near so we can see if works. Uh, this is kind of personal so I thought I’d ask you first.”

“Okay, go ahead.”

“I didn’t know you were involved with Joan, and maybe you felt that was just business, what you let me and her...”

“Stop. Son, Joan sees other men besides me. Yea, Verily! If you’re interested in having a relationship with her, that’s between you and her.”

“All right. Well, anyway, I’m afraid Terry might get a swelled head if she knew she was first to test this, so I was going to do this test with Joan, and, well, Terry has said she wants to meet you. Actually what she said was she’d be thrilled to get to fuck the great 246. So maybe...”

“Wilfred, again, if you don’t have a problem with me seeing your girlfriend, then, why even dance around it? Let me guess, you were one of those really possessive guys down on earth and you still have trouble with people not being jealous here.”

“Uh, yeah, now that you mention it.”

“Okay, well, it can take a while but I think eventually you will get over it. So, let’s do this. First, let me meet your lady friend and entertain her for a while, then we’ll do your test, say in a couple of hours. How does that sound?”

“Uh, yeah, I think that will work.”

“Okay, so where is she?”

“Outside.”

“Okay, so you go see Joan and tell her what is up, then call me in two hours and let me know when you’re ready.”

Wilfred leaves. Terry walks in. 246 stands and without realizing it, lets out a whistle. She smiles at his sign of interest. (“I’ve seen some damn fine women around but no wonder this lady has so many guys chasing around her. I’m surprised she ever is out of bed. Come to think about it, that’s exactly what Wilfred said.”) He gives off his nicest smile and extends his hand.

“Good morning, ma’am, I’m Supervisor 246, Administrator of the Welcoming Department.”

In a very sexy contralto, she responds, “I’m Terry 5034.”

“Please, have a seat. So, anyway, I’m told you basically have one hobby.”

“Yeah, and I’ve heard you’re good at it too.”

“So some people tell me. Did Wilfred explain what we’re going to be doing?”

“Yeah, you guys have figured out a way to fix the problem that allowed a guy to come even if he doesn’t have the girl’s permission. And that you’re going to set it up to give me more control, basically so that I can choose to let a guy give it to himself if I want, or that I can let him have them when he’s given them to me.”

“That’s about right. He said you might be interested in having some fun first.”

“Oh yeah! I really wanna see if you’re as good in bed as I’ve heard.”

"I'm probably adequate."

She laughs. "From what I've heard that's like calling Niagra Falls 'slightly moist'."

"Well, it's part of an old policy I have."

"What's that?"

"Underpromise and overdeliver. Nobody ever complains if you give more than you said you would. How about we go somewhere a bit more private and comfortable."

"I thought you'd never ask."

"Central Computer, transport me and Terry 5034 to my apartment."

"Gee, I'm surprised."

"In what way?"

"I would have expected something like a Turkish harem, or at least a waterbed."

"Those are just tricks used by guys who aren't good at fundamentals. It's like the old saying, 'a good surgeon can do decent work even with just the sharpened top of a tin can.' There are nice things you can do with extra tools, but when you want to enjoy the experience for what it is, you don't want other things distracting you."

"Gee, I never thought of that."

"Well, let's see what you think of some of these things. Now, do you want to tell me the kind of things you like done to you or do you want me to experiment?"

"I'm surprised, I've had a lot of guys who were good who figured out what I wanted, but I don't think any of them ever asked me first. I'm impressed."

"I'll be honest with you, I could have just done some things but I did read your mind and found out you would rather a guy let you tell him what you want. So I stopped and decided to let you tell me."

"Okay!"

"So anyway, how do you feel?"

"I'm amazed and we haven't even had sex yet."

"Well, I'm seeing where your most sensitive points are so I know what is going to really feel good for you. Also, I never make presumptions, I always let the woman tell me when she's had enough foreplay."

"Oh, well go ahead and give it to me. Oh. Oooh. Ooooooooh. Uh, this isss getting to be a little too much. Oh stop, this is just too much. Please, stop."

"Am I hurting you?"

"Uh no, but it's just toooooo much! Please, make it stop, it feels too good!"

"Well, show me you appreciate it."

"I thought I waaaas. Oh, this is unbearable."

"So do something about it."

"Like whaaaat? Ohhh."

"Well, you could let me come."

"Oh, sorry. Who! Okay, I did alreaady! Please stop."

"I'll slow down a little. Am I really overloading you or are you play acting?"

"I'mmm nooot kidding, this is still too much! Oh, you're making it even stronger, I can't stand it!"

"Then give me a big yell."

“Uh, I can’t, it’s embarrassinggggg! Oh, please, this is too much! Oh, oh, oh, oh, please, please stop.”

“If you want me to stop, yell. Or show me you appreciate it.”

“Oh, oh, oh, oh okay, YEEEEEEOWWWW!”

246 stopped. “So, what did you think?”

“Uh, uh, uh, I.. I’ve been with hundreds of guys, and I’ve had some really great sex, but I have never had a guy overload me in 40 seconds. And I don’t think I’ve ever done a full throated orgasm that fast. Even Wilfred takes at least 20 minutes to bring me there, and as good as he is, he doesn’t do it consistently.”

“Okay, now you want me to tell you why I did it this way?”

“Yeah.”

“You have to tell a guy what you want, all the time. Most guys won’t ask, as you noted, but if you tell him what you want, you’ll usually get him to do you exactly the way you want. Think about it, just telling me to stop doesn’t give me anything. Now, if I hadn’t been overloading you, you wouldn’t have asked me to stop, just continue, right?”

“Obviously.”

“Then you should have told me to slow down and not do you so aggressively. If I slow down I can still enjoy it.”

“Well, I had a hard time thinking.”

“It’s okay, I’m explaining this to you so you can understand how to make a man do what you want. If you want some guy to do what you tell him, you have to tell him what you want. Now, if you want a guy to read your mind, and he can, then say that. I was just basically being literal to you. Since you wanted to tell a guy what you wanted, when you didn’t tell me what you wanted I just presumed you wanted more. Now, I’m not saying you have to do this all the time, once you and a guy know each other you’ll know what you do and don’t want, but the first few times you’re with someone you need to make yourself clear, otherwise you can’t expect them to do what you want. Got me so far?”

“Oh yeah, I hadn’t thought of it that way.”

“Another thing, remember to give a guy an orgasm as soon as he does something really good to you, you forgot until I asked you.”

“Well, Jesus I couldn’t think, I was overloaded.”

“Well, you knew there was a point where you were getting as much stimulation as you can handle, right?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“That’s the point you should have given me one. And you remember when you asked me to slow down, and I did, but you complained I was overloading you?”

“Yeah.”

“As soon as I slowed down you should have given me another one. Terry, this is one reason I recommend women should go to women’s orientation. You know the old saying, men are interested in only one thing?”

“Yeah. And I thought that was fun until you came along and I realized that wasn’t even close.”

“Well, simply enough, the instant a man does something that’s exactly what you want, you give him an orgasm immediately. When he doesn’t, you withhold it, and it helps to tell him that he’s not going to get any more until he does you the way you want. I was just acting like most men.

Since you didn't reward me for doing you right, I kept doing more things to give you more pleasure in an attempt to get more out of you. Or to get you to tell me what to do so I can get what I want out of you. Telling me to stop doesn't give me what I want, since if I stop I'm not getting any orgasms out of you."

"Gee, I never thought of that."

"Okay, so I'll try again, and you'll show me exactly when I'm doing as much as you can stand. And now you know exactly how to show me. Here we... go!"

"Oh. Oh yes! Oh, this is perfect. Oh, oh, oh, yeah, do that more! Oh, wow!"

"There is a load of aluminum siding from Travis 99015."

"Central Computer, answer telephone. Hi Travis, is that a call from Wilfred?"

"Yeah, it is."

"Okay, put him through. Hello, Wilfred, I see you're right on time, are you guys about ready to do the test?"

"Yeah. I have a question."

"Shoot."

"How do you get calls to you to go to someone else?"

"Well, I have mine programmed to go to my assistant Travis or someone else on my staff, first, then they can transfer them to me if they need to. If there's someone I expect to call me, I can whitelist them. If I call someone myself it automatically whitelists them. Otherwise I'd get about 5,000 people calling me every day and I'd never have time to do anything else. A lot of people who call me can be handled by my assistants anyway. I had to set it up when I started getting about 30 calls a day, it was getting to the point I couldn't get anything done. Now, at more than 100 times that number it would be impossible. I have a staff of about 50 people who do nothing but answer my phone calls. Joan has to do the same thing only as Watch Commander she doesn't get nearly as many calls as I do."

"Oh, I see. Yeah, anyway, we're ready to start."

"I'll whitelist you so you can get through directly. Central Computer, whitelist Wilfred 14532. Okay, hold on a second. Okay, we're decent, you can pop in."

Wilfred and Joan teleport in. "246, there are a lot of things you can claim, but 'decent' will never be one of them."

"Very funny, Joan."

Wilfred refers to some notes. "246, this command here is what we're going to use, I think, once we test this and confirm the change works. We need two apartments next to each other in order to try a simple experiment. Do you have a couple where we can try this?"

"Yeah, sure. Central Computer, transport all persons in this room to room 2246-244."

They arrive. "This is my alternate apartment, I have it and 2246-242 next door over there, and they are all connected to my office next door so I can use them if I have visitors."

"Cute. So let me guess, your office is room 2246-246."

"Did you think it would be otherwise? I still keep my old office, but technically my office is now the Administrator's suite, room 3000-100 in the penthouse."

"Oh yeah, that's right."

"We'll go next door and give us a couple of minutes to set this up."

"Okay."

“So, 246, am I going to be one of those women who has to go through your assistant if she wants to see you again?”

“Unfortunately, yes. Well, maybe not, it depends on how good you are. If I find you’re really good then you can call me directly. Terry, you remember when I said I get about 5,000 calls a day?”

“Yeah?”

“About a couple thousand of those are women who want to proposition me. Every damn day, it got to be ridiculous after a while. Now, I could do the same thing I’ve heard you do, spend most of my time in bed pleasing women all the time, or rather, men in your case, you know what I mean, but I’d never have time to do anything else. As it is, I’ve had to restrict myself to no more than 20 women a day, and that’s when I’m doing nothing else. Would you prefer I give you a nice time, for say, a half an hour or an hour, or would you just want me to give you a quickie for two or three minutes?”

“I think with what you’ve done I’d take whatever I can get, but I see what you mean.”

“There’s only ten hours in a day. If I give each woman 50 minutes, or half an hour, at most I can do 20 women. It’s not fair to give a nice lady at least a reasonable amount of time.”

“Well, that’s very nice of you.”

“If I want to see a woman again, I have to treat her nice in order that she will want me to do her again. Like I suspect you would.”

“246, you can do me any time.”

“Okay, let’s see. Let’s try both. I’ll check my calendar. I’ll do a quickie with you tomorrow for four minutes at 4:81, and a half hour next Iduday at 6. How does that sound?”

“Yeah, I’ll accept that. One question, how many women have you done in one day?”

“I think what you mean is what’s the most number of women I’ve done in one day.”

“Yeah.”

“There are 100,000 seconds a day. Once a month I have an ‘open meeting’ in which I offer any woman up to 50 seconds to try not to come, so in theory I could do a couple thousand women a day if they’re lined up properly. If she gives me an orgasm within 5 seconds of coming she gets a second one. Otherwise I toss her out for being selfish and go for a fresh woman. If the woman can actually last 50 seconds and doesn’t come, she gets one full hour with me later. Once she comes and doesn’t let me come, or she comes, does let me, and I give her a second, then I go on to the next woman. So, in theory I could get to 2,000 women but I’ve done better than that. My best score so far was I did 3,503 women in one day. When I first got started I did that every day for an entire month, I was then taking a full two minutes, and I averaged over 400 women a day. In one month I went through over 45,000 women, not counting the ones who came back for seconds. And thirds. I would never have wanted to admit this when I was on earth, it was fun but doing that many women all at once got to be boring after a while. Over the last twenty years, you know how many women have won the prize of a full hour with me?”

“Knowing how well you did me, I’d guess zero.”

“Exactly. I’ve yet to have a woman I couldn’t bring to orgasm at least once in half a standard minute. And a few who try to cheat.”

“Cheat?”

“Yeah. Some women had their physiology altered to suppress orgasm just to see if they could trick me. So I’d test them first, and without telling them, I’d make them even more sensitive.

You remember how I overloaded you within 40 seconds?”

“I’m not likely to forget.”

“I set the sensitivity on one woman who tried to cheat so high, that she did a full throated orgasm within 3 seconds of when I got inside her, she couldn’t tolerate it. I made her scream through the whole 50 seconds, I probably gave her dozens of orgasms, then I had them drag her off, she was in no condition to move.”

Chapter 77

“...everybody have fun tonight, everybody’s Wang Chunged tonight.”

“Okay, 246, we’re going to try it now. What I’m going to do is set the sensitivity on this wide enough so it will also affect you and Terry, okay?”

“Yeah, sure, Wilfred, go ahead.”

“Okay, Terry, you’re not going to release Climax Privilege to him, Joan is going to do that over here, okay?”

“Okay.”

“You two can get busy, Joan will do this in a minute or two.”

246 and Terry engage in another round of ‘hide the salami’ as he refers to it. After a short period of time, 246 has an orgasm and sprays Terry. “Did they do that or was that you?”

“Nope, it was them.”

“Okay, then, we know that it works for covering proximity.”

“Let’s go over and let them know.”

“All right.” 246 goes into the other room. Nobody is there. “Central Computer, call Wilfred 14532.”

He answers. “Hello?”

“Wilfred, what happened?”

Joan answers. “Hi, 246, how you doing?”

“Joan, where are you guys?”

“Over at my place.”

“Uh, Joan, that’s about 50 clicks from here. Did you guys just transport over there?”

“No, we’ve been here the whole time.”

“Wait a minute, you’re telling me...”

“Yeah, we decided to *really* test it, by setting the proximity for 50 kilometers instead of 50 centimeters. Wilfred didn’t want Terry to get a swelled head from the number of guys she made come, so I did. Central Computer, count number of men granted climax privilege release by me in the last five minutes.”

“312,020.”

“Are you telling me, that...”

“Yeah, as you would say, to misquote that song, ‘everybody have fun tonight, everybody’s Wang Chunged tonight.’ I just made over 300,000 guys come, all at one time. I’ll bet that’s better than any woman in your entire Department, 246. Maybe better than your entire department.”

“Okay, you’ve made your point. Wilfred?”

“Yeah, I’ll set the proximity back to 50 centimeters.”

“But did you test it to make sure that it fixes the original problem?”

“We did that first. I originally set it for one meter and I couldn’t even come by playing with myself even though I wasn’t touching Joan at all. I went two meters away and there was no problem, it took about two or three minutes. Then I moved within one meter and it wouldn’t work after even ten. Then I walked out of range and it worked again in a few minutes.”

“All right, then. I’ve got some people in the Welcoming Department who are going to test it before we do a general release in a couple of weeks.”

“We have one more test. Terry will tell you about it. Anything else?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Okay, then, Central Computer, hang up the phone.”

“What’s the test?”

“Well, what Wilfred tells me is that I’m going to give you the ability to release climax privilege for yourself while you’re in me. So, what you can do is, uh, I’m going to try it that any time you kiss me while we’re fucking, you’ll get an orgasm without my having to do anything. I think what we might try allowing you to do this by talking later but I wanted to have you do it to me this way first. I like being kissed while a guy is doing me.”

“Okay, let’s get started.”

“Oh, oh, oh, ohhhhhh! Hey! It works! I didn’t giiiive you one, you mmmm that was nice, mmmmm ohhhhh! Now, do it six more times, I want to see if it stops. Ohhhh! Oh, yeah! Mmmm, uh huh, you didn’t come this time, that’s what Wilfred said it would do.”

He stops. “So what was it?”

“I gave you three releases to start with, and each time I came I gave you another one. I stopped giving them to you after I came fifteen times, so when you kissed me the 19th time, nothing happened. So we can tell Wilfred it works. But, 246, I have a question.”

“Yes?”

“I get some of it but I really don’t understand a lot of this. How was it that Joan and Wilfred were able to make you and other guys come? Does it mean that they made every guy between here and there come, or is it something else?”

“Terry, have you ever done a threesome with a guy and another woman or with two guys simultaneously?”

“Uh, yeah. One time I had Wilfred and another guy at the same time. Was something to try. I’ve only let Wilfred backdoor me because I trust him.”

“When a guy is with a woman, climax privilege locks and he can’t come unless the woman he is touching grants it to him, you understand that part, right?”

“Yeah, that’s the thing Wilfred figured out how to get around.”

“So if a guy is with more than one woman, are you aware that if any one of them that he is touching releases climax privilege it grants it to him and any other man who is moving his penis while he is touching her at the time, even if he’s just holding her hand while he’s having sex with a different woman.”

“Oh, I see. I didn’t know that.”

“We had to figure out how to get around the problem of what happens if a guy is with more than one woman at once, he’d have to get all of them to grant him Climax Privilege, and simultaneously, if we didn’t make an exception. So, if he’s touching any woman that grants it to him while his penis is rubbing against skin, it counts even if he’s not actually having sex with her. It also works for things like three-ways, where a girl is taking two or more guys at once, every guy that is touching her gets climax privilege release even if it’s more than one guy.”

“Ohhh. So that’s why they’d both come at the same time. I just thought we’d timed it right or something. Interesting.”

“Well, now, instead of it being by touch, we’ve changed the system so now, it’s based on proximity. Any man whose penis is moving against skin who is anywhere near a woman will be allowed to come if she releases it. Since it would normally be set for 50 centimeters, it

should be adequate for what we're trying to do, prevent a guy from coming without permission of the woman he's with. So now, if any guy is within the proximity of that woman and his penis is moving against skin, she grants him climax privilege release even if it's more than one guy. ”

“And since they were 50 kilometers away, what that means is that within 50 kilometers of Joan, there were some 320,000 guys having sex with some woman?”

“I think it was about 312,000 but that's correct.”

Chapter 78

“...they really ran a train on you.”

“Uh, 246, can I see you for a moment?”

“Oh sure, Leroy, have a seat.”

“I saw this on TV, and I wanted to ask you something. Is it true that this guy who raped a woman would get a sex change?”

“Yes, if he’s convicted.”

“Holy shit. Uh, I don’t know how to say this, and I’m not sure if it means a whole lot, but I guess I should say thank you for giving me the chance to start over again.”

“It means a whole lot more than you realize.”

“I look at that poor bastard and think how it could be me there instead of him, and how you decided to help me, I guess, and let me see how I made a really bad mistake and so I was able to learn something from it.”

“Uh huh.”

“Well, I was thinking, I dunno if, well, I’m not sure if this is the right way to put it, but I’m kind of wondering if there’s something I can do to try and pay back the favor you guys gave me, maybe do some work here or something. I mean, it’s been wonderful here, and everyone’s been so nice, but I feel kind of guilty about it, I’ve been able to spend all my time screwing a lot of different women and I thought maybe I should be doing something to make up more for it.”

246 smiled. “Leroy, do you know the name of this organization?”

“Yeah, I think it’s called the Welcoming Department.”

“Yes. Do you know what we do here?”

“Uh, no, not really.”

“Any ideas?”

“Well, uh, I think you said that someone shows a tape of something, then they ask the person if they want to have sex with them. Oh wait, I think I get it. I mean, I know I’m not very bright, but now I get the idea. This place is a whorehouse!”

“Yes.”

“But, uh, well, nobody ever asked me for anything, and I had a lot of women.”

246 chuckled. “Leroy, if a guy is any good here, the women here trade him around the way kids on a playground on earth trade baseball cards. Did some women come see you about doing a bunch of them one after the other?”

“Uh, yeah, they had me fuck a different woman every five minutes for three days. I’ve had some aggressive broads in my day, but some of them here were just too much to believe.”

“Man, they really ran a train on you. If the women here like you that much, then you’re really helping out anyway. Well, what I can do is let you take Welcomer classes, and see if you might be able to handle women who are new here. If you’re not cut out for it, we’ll find out and you can just keep doing what you’re doing. How does that sound?”

“If it’s anything I can do to help I want to.”

“Okay, then.”

Chapter 79

“...unfortunately, ‘we caught her red handed’...”

Supervisor 7090 walked into Supervisor, or rather, Administrator 246's office.

“Hi, John, what can I do for?”

“246, remember that girl that somehow did something with her Incoming and they both discovered something we're not sure about?”

“Uh, yeah, I'm looking into it. I've listened to the report and I'm trying to think up a plan on how to reproduce the event. If we can, it's going to be a hell of a lot of fun, that's for sure.”

“Well, we've got a problem. Take a look at the tape.”

After viewing it, 246 was concerned. “I wasn't expecting this.”

“It is only a minor violation, we could ignore it in view of what happened.”

“Yeah, only unfortunately, ‘we caught her red handed’ as the saying goes. We can't let it go unpunished. I can't let it go unpunished. She will have to be disciplined. But I have to find out what to do. Since I'm not her supervisor I presume you want me to act as trial board since I can be a disinterested party, correct?”

“Correct.”

“You can be a witness if I need it. Call her in.”

Marie 760132 walks in. 246 looks at her. “Please, have a seat.” She sits down. “I'm sorry we have to have this talk, but I'm afraid we have to act on something that happened. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“I hate to do this, but it has to be done.” He sighs. “Okay, John, violate her.”

“Marie 760132 you are hereby violated. You have rights under the law and are advised to say nothing until you are informed of them or until you have access to counsel.”

“Huh?”

246 looked at her. “You are accused of committing a 402, that is, Taking Sex from an Incoming in violation of Legal Code, Section 402. I'm sorry to say I have to make a formal investigation over what happened. You do not have to say anything to me but if you don't, I will have to initiate a formal trial. I would like to hear your side of the story.”

“You mean the guy who wanted to have me do it to him and then we had so much fun we tripped one of the overload warnings?”

“Yes.”

“When I read his mind, I knew that was what he really wanted. So I gave it to him. It was unbelievable how much he enjoyed it. If I hadn't been going through several massive orgasms at the same time I might have envied him.”

“Nevertheless we... Oh wait a minute.” He turned. “John, I think you said you wanted to catch today's bank robbery? Leroy's going to be re-enacting his role in the bank robbery he did when he got killed on earth in about an hour, I think you wanted to play the part of the bank manager. If you go now you can sign up for the part.”

“Oh yeah, I'd forgotten.”

“I mean, I'm sure you know more-or-less what happened, and I'll call you later, or you can stay if you want, I'm not trying to get rid of you but I think you said that might be more fun.”

“Yeah, you're right, I'll see you later.” He starts to walk out.

“John, why don't you just teleport over there?”

He looks over at 246. “Basically I can’t afford the bribe for Teleport Privilege.”

“How much did they want?”

“15,000 favors. There’s a labor shortage again.”

“There’s always a labor shortage on, that’s the way it’s supposed to be. Jesus, and I thought I was greedy. I’ll grant it to you for 2,500.”

“Deal. Central Computer, transfer 2,500 favors to Supervisor 246.”

“Central Computer, grant Teleport Privilege to Supervisor 7090.”

“Central Computer, fax me to the Bank of the Afterlife” He dematerializes.

“I see he’s been listening to Dr. Wacko.”

Chapter 80

“Oh you did more than ‘click’ with him.”

“Okay, so anyway, I know that he enjoyed it. Nevertheless we have a strict rule. Tell me what it is, and why.”

“Never take sex from, or initiate sex with, an Incoming. Because we are in a dominant control situation, it is easy to adversely take advantage of them. The Incoming person must always initiate the first act of penetration or sexual contact.”

“Let me ask you this, because it will make it simpler. What did you do when you went out to welcome him?”

“Well, let’s see, I went out to the welcoming area, I read his mind, found where in his head he has the idea of the sort of woman he thought was attractive, then gave him the idea that I was of that type, in fact I was able to make him think I was very attractive. Then I asked him to come with me.”

“That is why you’re not allowed to initiate sex with an incoming. You just forced yourself on him, you convinced him, quite possibly against his will, to find you attractive. Hell, we all do it, the simple fact is that it’s easier to make them find us attractive than it is to figure out which type of person they find attractive. I mean, obviously we wouldn’t even know what type of person it was until we met them. Conceivably the person Welcoming them could seduce them, but that might not work either if they know the tricks. Besides, I think we’ve had enough game playing from earth to start that crap all over again up here.

“So presuming we didn’t do that, we’d have go through our people and find someone who was a close match and then ask them - if they weren’t already busy - if they found the Incoming attractive and wanted to make the offer to them. It would probably be damn near impossible for us to do that in any reasonable time frame other than possibly to put the incomings in a queue for weeks at a time, basically stack them like cordwood until we found someone that was right for them by their standards and was interested in them. It would be a logistical nightmare to try to do it that way. And then it doesn’t give our people any incentive to want to go through the effort and trouble to properly Welcome people.

“Now, we could simply bring them into this world without offering them the opportunity to have sex, but most of them are so mixed up with contradictory opinions of what is right and wrong as far as whether they should have consensual sex, the simplest way to clear up their problem is to simply show them, by example, that we as a society do not consider having sex wrong, by offering it to them as soon as they get here.

“So we do it this way, but, because you forced them to think you’re attractive, we want to show we have respect for them as a person, we don’t allow you to initiate sex with them. They have to be the one who initiates the sex act.

“Now, do you know what you should have done?”

“Refused and made him do me?”

“No, it’s not that bad. Remember, kissing is not considered sex and you can use it to distract him. Then you call a Supervisor and tell him that the guy you’re with wants you to do him and is too frightened or tense or confused to make the first physical act, or you think it’s what he wants. While you have his mind open, you and the Supervisor both take a look. If we see he’s not being taken advantage of, the Supervisor will approve it. He’d never know, then you

can take him in any way he wants that you choose to do.

“We get this quite a bit from the males. They discover a female Incoming will have - or has been dreaming of - being taken, perhaps without a word being spoken, and feels she would have a better experience if he does it that way. Usually we’ll approve if we see it clearly in the Incoming’s mind. She might be undressed, taken to bed, kissed all over, given cunnilingus, until her mind makes it clear that she wants to be entered. And then he does and she enjoys every fantasy she had. Much more fun for her. But the guy who did it called in a neutral third party. He would call a female Supervisor who, knowing how women think, would see whether that’s what she wants, and if so, approve. She might tap in for several minutes. She might tap in for all of, oh, 2 ½ seconds, and if she disagrees, she says no, otherwise she’ll tell him to give her whatever she wants, and break off. But in that case he’s gotten approval to do it to her that way.

“That’s why we have you look through the guy’s mind when he’s watching the video to see what he’s interested in. We have the advantage when you come get him we already know he’s heterosexually oriented and if he didn’t before, you’ve changed his opinion so he finds you attractive. Very attractive. He’s probably horny, especially if he went through a violent death. If he’s really assertive, he might ask you. If he’s Alpha male type, he’ll tell you he wants you. If not, you ask him.

“You do anything he wants that you don’t have a problem with. You ask him to do things you want to do that he won’t have a problem with. Eventually you two get into bed, and you have foreplay in whatever way that you choose. Most of the women here get around the problem by either allowing the guy to eat them or by having him get on top, but that might not have worked in this case, either because you don’t like being eaten, maybe he’s afraid to do it, or maybe you might have had to be a bit more aggressive with him. So, if you are about to go down on him you ask him to push his penis in or pull your head down. If you want to let him shag you, you have him push it in. When you’re about to fuck, you let him get on top of you or you get on top of him and tell him to grab your ass and pull you onto him, or you tell him to arch his back and push it in. Or whatever way you use as long as he is the one who initiates the start of the sex act.

“It’s the reason for the motto that appears over the entrance to this Department. ‘We accept what is given; we shall never take anything.’

“So, Marie, you asked me, you want to know how you get around the problem?”

“Yes, I would.”

“Okay, the two of you are lying in bed together. Look him in the eye. Talk directly with his mind if you wish. Tell him what you know. ‘I see in you great fear. That it won’t work, that it might be unsatisfactory, that I might not be pleased with you. You need not fear anything because I know it will work. From what I sense you would wish for me to take you.’ Now you get on top of him. Aim for his penis but don’t actually touch. If, before you can do anything, he pushes it up, boom,” he snaps his fingers, “you’ve made him,” he claps his hands together, “and it’s all over; you can now fuck like rabbits. But let’s say he doesn’t do anything. You’re on the razor’s edge of fucking him, he’s probably interested, then you can give him a choice, if you like. You can say, ‘If you do not want me, you need only push me away, gently. I respect you as a person so I will let you choose how you want me, if you do. If you want me, arch your back and plunge up into me, or grab my ass and pull me onto you that I may take you

inside of me. Or if you wish, roll me over, mount me, enter me and take possession of me, and do with me as you will! (I know from personal experience how you love being pounded.) Unless he's really slow, I give you five seconds," he snaps his fingers again, "and he's inside you by his own choice.

"If he says he wants you but he's afraid or in some way can't, you pop a call in your head to a male Supervisor, the both of you will take a look. We might discover he's homosexual and he slipped through somehow. Or there's something wrong. Or the Supervisor might just say, 'he's all yours'," he snaps his finger again, "and drops the call. In which case," he claps his hands again, "slide on into him, or rather, slide him on into you, and have fun girl, not only can you be happy and come all you want, you showed that you respected his rights."

"Oh, I see."

"Think about that if you had given him the choice of impaling yourself on him, or rolling you over and pounding you, by his own choice. Then you could have gone to town on him and really had some fun, or laid back and enjoyed feeling how a scared virgin lost his inhibitions on you. And you almost did what I said. But you knew it was wrong and you did it anyway, figuring it was just a slight breach of the rules and you figured he'd enjoy it."

She lowered her head and nodded.

"You're blushing, Marie, let's be honest here, I can see the smile on your face, you enjoyed watching him enjoy what you were doing to him. Since you've been there before, you knew *exactly* how much he would enjoy it. Plus you were coming while you were doing this to him, so it was even more fun for you. And since you held back his climax so he wouldn't have it too soon, he gained confidence it would work. Then you whispered gently in his ear for him to - and I'm quoting here - 'Roll me over and forcefully drive your big cock deep inside me and finish the job I've started, make me come hard with the force of your body as I feel you come deep inside me.' I love bad porno dialog, it will often work wonders on someone you're in bed with.

"Then he rolled you over, backed up and slid inside you, bottomed out and pounded you for 30 seconds before you let loose with a climax that almost blew out the walls as you released an orgasm to him that almost made him pass out.

"I know what you did and we haven't quite figured out how, but you did something so rare we're still trying to understand it."

"I think we clicked together quite nicely."

"Oh you did more than 'click' with him. As best we can tell you did a near absolute perfect heterodyne with him, almost merging consciousness. We clocked it back later. Do you remember at all what you did?"

"I remember being in a state of - for all I can think of - was total orgasm for two or three minutes. And I can't remember anything else."

* * *

246 came back to the report as he was standing at the podium, reading. "We clocked it out that she was *in extremis* for two minutes and forty-seven seconds. She'd lost almost all control including Climax Privilege lock. Her young man, riding her and performing a deep thrust into her, received his well-deserved orgasm, he'd done her proud, and not knowing or expecting anything, continued his thrusts.

"Her orgasm wasn't really continuous, it was a 14-second orgasmic pulse, through which

he was triggering her climax privilege release at 12-second intervals. Every 12 seconds she would release another orgasm to him, and every 14 seconds he would trigger the start of another climax to her. It acted exactly like a feedback loop.

“He was getting positive feedback in the form of one climax after another that encouraged him to keep thrusting over and over, that triggered the start of another female orgasm, causing a loss of control and another male climax, and so on.

“The desire for pleasure in most people - or in this case, males - is so strong that continued movement through climax is almost an autonomous reflex. To prevent exactly what was happening there is a stop mechanism. The woman can only release his pleasure to him as long as he’s moving on or inside her.

“Basically, he hadn’t had sex, had a large reservoir of unused sexual inexperience capacity and thus could enjoy it more.

“In short, they went parity. He gave her a big orgasm, so she gave him one, which caused him to give her another one, which caused her to involuntarily give him another one, and so on.

“It was on the twenty-first consecutive orgasm that she wore him out and he passed out. When he stopped, she stopped.

“Could the experience be reproduced? And would we want to? We don’t know about the first, but the answer to the latter was quite clear. Among everyone I’ve questioned, male or female, the response was uniform: 100% would want to try it. I could find no sexually active person who would not want it.”

* * *

“I remember being in a state of - for all I can think of - was total orgasm for two or three minutes. And I can’t remember anything else.”

246 looks at her. “I’m going to have to punish you. I’ve already decided how.” He explains his decision. “It’s essentially the standard punishment in this sort of case.”

“Do you think that’s necessary? My understanding is he liked what happened, only he’d rather it had been less strong.”

“My guess is he’ll accept what I’m offering, rather what you are, and keep his mouth shut. As for you, you take this and keep quiet and hope the Board doesn’t officially notice and punish you. One night, or rather, one standard day of this isn’t exactly like giving you a month in Attica.”

“Attica is a men’s prison. Now that *would* be fun!”

“Whatever. How would you like it if you had to go back to being a man for six months?”

She looked kind of dreamily far off. “It would have been worth it. And maybe I’d get the chance to try it from the other side this time. But how did you know I used to be a man?”

“I was trying to remember why you seemed familiar and I remembered. I looked it up, apparently, back when you first got here, discovered you could get a sex change and become a functioning woman indistinguishable from one born that way, and had decided to celebrate by doing the rounds of all the male supervisors in the entire Department, over 2,000 of them. Correct me if I’m wrong, but I think you eventually blew or had sex, or both, with every male Supervisor, true?”

She smiled. “Yep. I also got most of the management staff and the Administrator, too! Plus I’ve gotten every new Supervisor we’ve added since I started working here.”

“Good for you! As long as you’re having fun, that’s what we’re here for. Anyway, it was

then that I noticed how good you are at blowing a guy. Me, in particular. I thought how a woman often does that because a guy wants her to, but she doesn't usually enjoy doing it that much. Some do like doing it, but not with such wild enthusiastic excitement as you apparently did. You're so excited about being able to be a woman that it seemed like maybe you were acting like someone who had been released from a prison and was discovering what it meant to be free. And why you like being pounded so much, you could never have that happen to you when you were a man, and be able to enjoy it, so you didn't get a sex change on earth, but when you got one here, you could do all that and really enjoy how it felt."

"That's not too far off."

"Well, anyway, I think we'd want to quietly investigate what you and your young man were able to do together."

"Any chance of finding out how it happened? We tried it again, and, while it was fun, it wasn't the wild and crazy ride it was the first time."

"No kidding, little lady. 'Wild and crazy ride' is possibly an understatement. Which is why I want to try and investigate it quietly. And you need to stop telling people about it. I've had sixteen women come in to ask me in the last three days. And twelve men. Do you know one of the lesbians in another section came over and offered to take on men, and really give them a terrific time if she could have what you had just once a day? She'd been one of the hard ones going on 238 calendar years and offered to switch. In one day.

"There are 200,000 busy little mattress dancers in the Welcoming Department, probably slightly over half being female. I'd have to rent a stadium if even a small fraction of our people wanted to come see me about it."

"And what about me?"

"You keep your mouth shut about it - before we have to rent the Grand Canyon as a waiting room to hold everyone who wants to come see me to ask me for it - and I'll see to it that you get access to it essentially any time you want. That is, if we can figure out how."

"When we figure out how."

"Why are you so certain?"

"Me and the kid did something. Oh, all right, I'll go along with this punishment, he'll probably do anything for that, and we figure out exactly what happened. But whatever we did, if it happened once, it can happen again."

"The only thing that worries me is if we can't do it within the rules. That may have something to do with it."

"Well, we figure out some way to get around them." Marie looked for a moment off into the distance, then she had this grin on her face. She snapped her fingers. "I know what to do."

"I'm listening."

"You do what I should have done. Go to your boss for a waiver. Get the Board to grant you *carte blanche* authority to investigate."

Chapter 81

“I’ll do anything to help 246...”

“Hi, Diane, nice to see you.”

“Hi, Joan. Wanted to have a chat with you for a few minutes.”

“Okay.”

“I wanted to talk to you because I want some information about someone, and I don’t want them to know I’m snooping around.”

“Okay, who?”

“246.”

“So you want to ask me some things about him?”

“Yeah, and I also want to know about some other women who might know things about him I want to find out. We’re having a board meeting in a few days and 246 is going to be there, I want to learn a few things.”

“Can I ask why?”

“Well, I can’t really tell you why, it’s a Board matter, but I need to find out a few things.”

“All right.”

“Okay, here’s what I want to know.”

“Hi, David, I’m Diane 14. I spoke to Joan and she said I could ask you some questions.”

“Sure.”

“I want to ask you about 246, but I don’t want him to know I’m asking.”

“Okay.”

“Hi, I’m Diane 14.”

“I’m Nancy 171.”

“Joan, the Watch Commander, said I could come talk to you about something private. Here’s a note from her. You can call her if you want.”

“Well, if Joan vouches for you, that’s good enough for me.”

“What I want to do is ask you some questions about someone but I don’t want them to know I’ve been asking, okay?”

“Well, I can’t really make that kind of promise in view of the office I hold, you could be asking me questions I’m not even allowed to make a response in any way at all.”

“So that’s basically the only reason?”

“Yes.”

“So if I don’t ask you anything you aren’t allowed to talk about you’re okay on it.”

“Well, yes, but that might be hard to do.”

“Nancy, throw the lock on the door.” She does. “Ask the computer to identify me.”

‘Central Computer, list people here by ID.’

“00001 XF Diane 000014. 20344 RT Nancy 000171. ”

“Oh my God. I had no idea. You’re one of the Board members?”

“Yes. The chairman’s name is Dr. George Green.”

“I’m surprised, I never knew.”

“Nancy, this is intentional. You have to know who George is because he sometimes gives you

instructions. The rest of us, you don't. There are only about a dozen people in the Afterlife who know all of the members of the Board. I want to ask you some questions about one of them, and I don't want the person to know I've been asking questions about him."

"Who?"

"246."

"Okay, what do you want to know?"

"Hi, Geannie. I'm Diane 14."

"Hi, Diane. What can I do you for?"

"I want to ask you some questions about someone that I don't want them to know I'm asking."

"Who?"

"246."

"Why do you want it secret?"

"I can't tell you."

"Well, when someone wants something secret and can't tell you why, it usually means something suspicious. I think I'll just call him and tell him some broad is snooping around on him, that's usually not good. He's had enough stalkers that I think it might be best to prevent that further."

"Central Computer, isolate this room. Go ahead and try to call, you can't."

"What's the point of this?"

"Geannie, I'm not stalking him. I guess I'll have to tell you some things. I'll give you some information about myself if you'll solemnly promise not to say anything to anyone."

"I can't promise that. You might be telling me something that could be illegal, or get me in trouble."

"If what I tell you won't get you in trouble and I'm not in any, can you make me that promise?"

"Yes."

"Okay, I solemnly promise what I am about to tell you will not cause you to be put into any form of legal penalty or criminal manner, and that I am not wanted by the law or have any criminal issues."

"Fair enough, I solemnly promise not to reveal what you're going to tell me."

"Central Computer, ID all persons in this room."

"00001 XF Diane 000014. 06433 VA Geannie 921969."

"So you have a low number. You paid extra for it, like 246, I guess."

"You can't buy that number. You don't know what it means, do you?"

"No."

"Central Computer, identify meaning of group number 1."

"Persons having group number 1 are members of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife."

"Oh."

"So, anyway, I'm doing some research about him and I want to ask some questions. Once you hear what I'm asking, I think you'll understand why I don't want him to know."

"Hi, my name is Diane 14. You must be Wilfred. Joan has told me you've done some amazing things."

"I am pretty good, apparently. I was surprised at how many things to which I could make

substantial improvements.”

“Well, there’s a couple of things I want to ask you about, provided you can keep it private.”

“I suppose.”

“I have an idea for something I want to try, but it won’t be for a while because some of the people we want to get involved aren’t dead yet, and I also want to ask you about 246.”

“Hi, I’m Anita.”

“I’m Diane. I understand that you met with 246 about something that happened?”

“Yeah, we had an incoming that didn’t bother to wait and jumped me. I read his report before I went to see him, discovered he was killed robbing a bank, and I thought that might be exciting. Guy didn’t know he was dead and thought he could screw me before the cops busted him. He turned out to be even better in bed than I expected.”

“Okay, I’m going to want to hear the story, but I also want to know about 246, and I don’t want him to know because there’s a surprise planned for him and if he knows I’m asking questions he might guess, okay?”

“Oh, sure. I can tell you a few things.”

“Hi, I’m Diane. Are you Leroy?”

“Yeah, Joan said you wanted to ask me some questions.”

“I wanted to ask you about 246. I’m planning a surprise and I want to ask you some questions about him. But I don’t want him to know I’m asking or he might guess the surprise.”

“I’ll do anything to help 246, what do you want to know?”

“Diane, how are you?”

“I’m fine, Arlene. I need a favor. I want some information, off the record.”

“Sure. You’ve helped me out a few times. What can I do you for?”

“And I don’t want you to tell the person I’m asking you about anything either.”

Arlene got up and turned the electronic lock on. “Diane, we’re private in here. Remember when I came to you for some information, and I let you know how I had discovered you’re a member of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, and I wouldn’t tell anyone. I never have. So I think you can trust me.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m doing an investigation for a Board meeting next week and I want to find out some things. I’ve heard you interviewed 246.”

“Well, yes.”

“I want to confirm something about him and if it’s true, I want to ask you some questions, okay?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“He once referred to you as ‘my friend Arlene’ in a press conference. Usually when he refers to a woman as his ‘friend’ it means a woman who’s been his girlfriend. Have you been sleeping with him?”

“Let’s not use euphemisms, Diane. Yes, we’ve been fucking. He’s actually better than I’d heard, and I thought those were exaggerations. And even though I know he knows the Chairman personally, I’ve never told him I know you. So if you want to ask me some questions and not let him find out, I’ll be happy to tell you.”

“Hi, Terry, my name is Diane. Wilfred mentioned I wanted to meet you.”

“Yeah, he told me you’re spying on 246 and want to surprise him with something.”

“Yes, that’s why I don’t want him to find out I’m asking questions or he might guess what the surprise is.”

“Well, if you can get him to see me a little more often I’d appreciate it.”

“I’ll see what I can do. But I can offer you something else, which might be interesting to try, if you want to hear about it.”

“Sure.”

“Would you have a problem doing a black guy?”

“Hmmm, no, I don’t think so, if he’s nice to me.”

“I can absolutely guarantee that. This guy was with one of the Welcomers here, and she ran him into the ground. He screwed her for three days before she gave him so many orgasms that he passed out. She said that he was fantastic and she came a hundred thousand times.”

Terry gave off a low whistle. “Wow.”

“So if I can get you some time with him too, would that help?”

“Sure, that might be fun. But I’d still like to maybe get to see 246 just a little more often. He’s really fun in bed.”

“Terry, it may take a while, but we’re working on something special we want to do and you’ll be invited to participate along with 246, but we’re going to have to wait until some people we want to invite have died. But I’ll see if I can talk to a friend of mine and ask him to maybe have 246 see you a few extra times. How often does he see you?”

“I’d say we have sex about once a week.”

“Terry, let me tell you something, you’ve seriously impressed him. Any woman he sees every week is pretty good. Is it once a week calendar or standard?”

“I’d say he sees me about every seven days, on average.”

“Terry, that’s extremely impressive, for 246, anyway. With the number of women who want to proposition him being extremely high, for him to see someone that often, she has to be very good. So I think that I definitely want to ask you some questions. “

Chapter 82

“Plan to sacrifice a few virgins, perhaps?”

“The only thing that worries me is if we can’t do it within the rules. That may have something to do with it.”

“Well, we figure out some way to get around them.” Marie looked for a moment off into the distance, then she had this grin on her face. She snapped her fingers. “I know what to do.” “I’m listening.”

“You do what I should have done. Go to your boss for a waiver. Get the Board to grant you *carte blanche* authority to investigate.”

246 looked at her. “Hmm, I’ve been so picky on always doing what was right and not cutting corners I never thought about doing it that way. I wish I had thought of that. Then we can tell them what happened, and in view of that they’ll probably ignore what you did and allow us to handle it in-house. You’re really quite smart, little lady. Anyway, where’s the boy? We need him to agree.”

246 continued speaking at the podium. “Could the experience be reproduced? And would we want to? We don’t know about the first, but the answer to the latter was quite clear. Among everyone I’ve questioned, male or female, the response was uniform: 100% would want to try it. I could find no sexually active person who would not want it.

“And now comes - no pun intended - my reason for requesting a hearing before the entire Board of Directors.

“I have prided myself on being careful to respect the rights of individuals, and I believe that what I have done to fight for that as a standard is shown over and over again in what I have done and what I believe in. While I do believe, long term, that what we want to try to accomplish will be beneficial to a lot of people, both to staff and to Incomings, I want to be careful. As it is often said, ‘the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.’ There are far too many cases where someone wanted to do something which they thought was right, but ended up being a disaster to others or started some horrible tragedy as a result, all in the name of some greater good.

“When I was discussing this issue with the lady who did this, she suggested I come to the board and make this request, because I was at the time thinking I wasn’t sure how to do this so that I don’t go outside the rules, and she made the suggestion I do what she should have done: ask her boss for a waiver. So that’s why I’m here.

“I have a fairly good idea of how, but given the circumstances among the test subjects I believe I will need permission to suspend Rule #1 on those involved in the test and the no initiation of sex on Incomings requirement from our people. I could probably have done this on my own authority or just asked George to okay it. However I don’t know if it’s absolutely necessary, but I decided to come before the Board in order that my actions would be seen as totally aboveboard and honorable, and allow you to perhaps ask questions that might make me think and perhaps supply other answers if you can think of a way that doesn’t require this step.

“I would like to find a less drastic way to do this, and maybe one or more of you can think of an answer. Or in the alternative, you might tell me that what I want to do is not as important as I think it is by deciding I should not be permitted to act in this fashion. But, I figure that, if the entire Board agrees with me, or if I get some ideas on how to possibly solve the problem without

having to go this route, then I was correct in requesting this hearing.

“As I am sure there will be questions, I stand ready to answer them in the hope that the Board of Directors will approve a limited... Yes, Dr. Jensen?”

“Supervisor 246, the Board has unanimously approved your request. Try to keep us informed.”

“Dr. Jensen, can I ask you a question? Strike that; I said it wrong. May I ask you a question?”

“Yes, and you can call me Mary.”

“It’s more or less intellectual curiosity, but if you were here, would you be interested in this?”

“Absolutely.”

“You do realize that in all probability you would have to have sex with a man to get this?”

“For something that powerful - especially if you can get it for say, fifteen or twenty minutes - I’d accept having to do that. Basically I think I probably wouldn’t even notice him, I’d be too busy climaxing all the time. 246, let me drop it back in your lap: would you accept this if it meant, oh, say, you had to have some guy stick it in your ass?”

“It’s funny you would ask that, Mary, because I had thought about it. And I thought about it, and considered it. If all I had to accept was, in effect, the discomfort of someone sticking something up the wrong end for 30 seconds, and it didn’t hurt me, and in exchange I’d be in a state of total orgasm for a considerable amount of time, yes, I would. I’ve had hard bowel movements on earth, I presume it probably wouldn’t be much more uncomfortable than that.”

“Now you see why I could go along too.”

“Uh huh. Yes, Dr. McCloud?”

“Just Diane, 246.”

“Okay, Diane, what is your question?”

“Do you think you’ll be able to get it to last longer than a couple of minutes? I mean, from what you’ve got here, it sounds like you’re inventing the sexual equivalent of the roller coaster as an amusement park ride for adults. And as I’ve known some people who got sick on really strong rides, there are other people who find even the hottest coaster to be too tame.”

“Hmm. That reminds me of a story.” Someone groaned when he said that. “Don’t worry, George, I won’t repeat the story unless someone asks. But, well, first I have to see if we can figure out how to reproduce the effect. Then I have to discover how it works in order to determine if it’s even possible.”

“Didn’t the lady who suggested you have us come here for this meeting, who accidentally discovered this while she was raping her Incoming - and I’m being facetious here, I don’t really consider it to be that serious - didn’t she say that it was quite likely that if it happened once, it should be possible to repeat the experience?”

“I’ll go along with that for the moment. I just don’t know how long it will take or if we can find it out.”

“You’ve got the advantage that you’ve got all eternity to try, now don’t you?”

246 smiled. “Yes, ma’am, that I do.”

She smiled back. “Now I think I will turn the tables on you, for a change. 246, would you mind if I asked you something that you might find offensive?”

“Absolutely not, ma’am. Do your worst; I’ve been called every name in the book. And some so strong they won’t even put them in the book”

“Oh, that’s not what I meant.”

“Okay, Diane, go ahead and say whatever you want.”

“246, if you figure out how to do this, I want you personally to do it to me. I want you to love me back into the world with this, when I die.”

“If that happens, wouldn’t you prefer to be reincarnated there?”

“Hell no! If we can do that now, I don’t see why we can’t figure a way to do it after we die if I wanted to go back to being a human again. As I understand, thanks to your ‘signing bonus’ with the Chairman, we are now doing serious research into accomplishing. With sex being as good as it is there, I want to find out once it gets to the point that I’m too old or too infirm to be able to continue to have it here. And as I understand it being so much stronger there that I’m going to really enjoy it, a lot. And why not get someone who’s very good at it to do it to me? And if this is even better than regular sex is up there, I think having the ultimate experience as the first thing that happens to me in your world has got to be the best reason to want to show up there.

“Not that I’d want it all of the time, but I think that if I can have really good sex all of the time - and ‘really good’ is probably an understatement, from what I understand even lousy sex there is at least three times as good as the best of what’s on earth - some really great sex, say, a couple or three times a week, and this like something special every so often, I’m probably never going to want to come back here.

“I could probably do what you turned down and just keep my seat on the board but do so from there instead of the outside. Or I might just tell them something similar to what you said, that I’m having too much fun here to want to bother continuing to run this place.”

“Well, if it happens that I don’t discover it before you die, do you still want me to be the one who loves you back into the world?”

“You, or if you can think of someone who can give a woman a better time. And I’d want it to be the best you can do. Or the best they can do, if it’s some other guy.”

“I’ll keep that in mind, Dianne. Yes, Mr. Allen?”

“I’ll go with first name basis too. It’s Harry, 246.”

“Okay, Harry, what’s your question?”

“My colleagues will probably groan, but you mention you have a story?”

“Yes. My sister and brother went out to Cedar Point Amusement Park, in Ohio, when they went on vacation together on earth. They rode the toughest, strongest roller coaster there. Now, they’d been crossing the country stopping at amusement parks, and had been on many coasters, but the one they had there made them sick. Really sick. Especially my sister. It made her soooooo sick...” He stopped.

Harry looks at him. “I remember that gimmick from the TV show *Match Game*. ‘How sick was she?’”

“She was so sick, she was in the ladies’ room next to the coaster, hunched over a commode, puking her guts out into the toilet. But the story here is what happened behind her, two women come in, one of them escorting the other who was probably her mother or grandmother, very elderly lady. They both are discussing how they had just ridden the coaster my sister had just gotten off of and was providing the toilet with her opinion of its strength.

“I don’t remember if this is the right name, but let’s call that coaster the *Raptor* for the sake of argument. Well, anyway, the first woman says to her grandmother, ‘So, did you think I was right about the Raptor?’

“Yeah, I know. You told me I wouldn’t like it, and you were right.”

“I don’t think we’re going to want to come back to this amusement park any more in view of the ride we had on the Raptor.”

“Her grandmother apparently was in agreement. ‘Yeah, it’s not really fun here any more, the rollercoasters here, especially the Raptor, are just too tame. We need to find even more exciting ones. I’m only 85, I’d like to have some excitement in my life instead of these weak coasters they have here.’”

“After my sister finished emptying her stomach, she - and my brother - spent the rest of the day lying on the beds in their expensive hotel room commiserating how sick that ‘tame’ and ‘weak’ coaster had made them. In effect, they paid for admission to the park, and a whole day’s hotel room rent, to get to ride *one* roller coaster that made them dreadfully sick. You could say that it was one really expensive coaster ride.”

Mary applauded. “I like that story.”

George turned to her and smiled. “Don’t encourage him, it will only bring out more stories. Like Hugo and his wales of toe.” He turned back to him. “246, I’m only teasing, I liked your story too. That doesn’t mean I want to hear any more of your stories!”

Mary said, “Oh don’t listen to him and his complaints, we know he loves to hear your stories.”

“May I ask two questions of the Board?”

“Go ahead, 246.”

“First, so I don’t get in trouble because of a misunderstanding, I do not know what I need to do to reproduce this, so I want it clear that I do have *carte blanche* authority to investigate this matter as I see fit?”

She looked at him and smiled. “How about American Express, instead? I think they take those more places.”

George spoke up. “Absolutely, 246 my friend. We’ll issue an authorization to you to have the force and effect of a direct order. Just try not to kill anyone unnecessarily. Well, they’re already dead but you know what I mean. It’s similar to what we offer to our agents on your earth, the ones we let in on the situation there, if they become terminal or if they ever get tired of living, or for some reason want to die, like maybe they want to come to your world ‘ahead of schedule,’ as the saying goes, we’ll arrange to have them killed quickly and in such a way that it won’t hurt. On the other hand, if you do need to have a few people reach their so-called ‘Heavenly reward’ a bit early, let us know and they can be an Incoming arriving to your Department within 24 hours. We can get some ex-CIA types, and even some who are still on their payroll, who do freelance mercenary work, to do some not-too-expensive assassinations. What’s your second question?”

246 looked pensive for a moment. “A few years ago the thought of having people murdered would have horrified me, but considering that they don’t cease to exist has, I guess, kind of made me a little callous to the thought. Perhaps being dead has made me less respectful of the living.. I don’t know if I like becoming that way, but considering that they probably will like the results when they get here, I guess being murdered or killed stops being a horrible tragedy.” 246 smiled. “So here’s my second question: Intellectual curiosity makes me want to know. Are there any members of the board who^{xvii}, if they are here in my world, who would *not* want to try this, if and when I figure out how?”

The Chairman turned beet red, then looked at his associates who were all looking at each other, then he laughed. “You got us. Well, I guess you have your answer.”

"I guess I do at that."

"One thing though, does that mean *you* plan to do this?"

"Sir, if I can figure out how to reproduce this practice, I'm going to become female! And I know exactly what I'm going to try it on."

"Another poor virgin, 246?"

"Oh no! That would be cruel, and inhumane. No, I know exactly the type I'm going to try it on."

"And whom exactly is the target victim you intend to torture? I know you said no, but I want to be funny here and ask. Plan to sacrifice a few virgins, perhaps?"

"Actually, I do like the humor there, but as I said, I'm not going to use any virgins for this, unless I find it is the only way I can get it to work and I suspect that is not the case.

"Mr. Chairman, as the saying goes, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth leaves the world blind and toothless. So hurting people isn't the answer and I don't intend to torture anyone.

What a virgin should be given is understanding, self confidence and a nice orgasm to start, and a few more as they go along so we can stop frightening them, build up their confidence that sex will work for them if they're a man (who almost certainly will have performance anxiety), and make them into happy members of our community.

"You know my thoughts on the subject, why I thought that the Welcoming Department was possibly the greatest idea in the concept of what it means to be a society that values the individual. What better way to show how we as a society care about our weakest and most vulnerable members, than by giving them the greatest gift one human being can offer to another, love; physical love and a nice orgasm, as the first official action of this government?

"Consider that for a moment. We show them some information to tell them what's going on. Well, probably any government of a Heaven or a Hell or an Afterlife of some kind, even if it was the Throne of God, would have to at least tell them something about where they are and what has happened to them. But, the very first official request of this government, is not a demand by it that the person fill out papers or accept a work assignment or stand trial for their mistakes on earth. The first official request of this government is to ask them, something. Not make them do anything. To simply ask them to find out if they would like the agent of the government to make love to them, specifically to give them pleasure. To love them back into the world.

"What's wonderful about it is the climax privilege guarantees that if it's an Incoming woman, she will enjoy the experience because she won't give the man what he wants until she gets what she wants. The Incoming male is simply asked to do a few minor things to make sure the woman he is with - who happens to have had sex here before, so she knows how - has pleasure from vaginal intercourse, then he gets inside of her, moves around and, having given her climax, and more than once, he gets to climax and spray her, and more than once. No misuse or sacrifice of some otherwise innocent person.

"No, Mr. Chairman, what I am going to do about the development of this is to fight fire with fire. I'm going to find me one of them insatiable rapists or child molesters, maybe not let him know he's off earth, let the son-of-a-bitch think I'm an easy mark, let him go at me, then trigger him to do whatever it is that this was, and see how long I can ride the continuous climax I'll take from him until the bastard passes out."

"Excuse me 246, I'd like to ask you something."

"Certainly, Mary."

"I believe you actually caught a rapist on your shift as a - and I'm not sure actually what you call it - but it's the equivalent of a Warrants Judge or someone like a magistrate who is currently on duty 24 hours to respond to emergency requests."

"We use the term 'Intervener,' meaning that they intervene in any incident where either a neutral third-party is needed or where a trained professional can get involved in a situation in order to resolve it."

"I'm kind of curious as to why this man was never prosecuted."

"There wasn't any need to."

"You've lost me somewhere. This man would have - if there hadn't been all sorts of safeguards in place to prevent it - brutally raped that woman and traumatized her to no end, and essentially all that happened to him is he got a stern talking to and told not to do it again. Is this correct?"

"Yes."

"And yet, the lady who simply went just a little too far with her incoming, and really didn't do much of anything wrong with him, got formally tried and, in effect, was sentenced to be raped for what she did."

"Yes."

"And then there's the case of the woman who slapped a guy for being too fresh, and you put her on trial too."

"Yes."

"First, doesn't this strike you as odd? And second, perhaps I should ask you, doesn't this show some sort of bias against women on your part? Consider the results. It looks like you've tended to be very hard on women and very lenient toward men. I note that when that other man went nuts, you wouldn't issue an order for commitment, you had someone else do it. Before I say so, let me ask: I believe that as lead supervisor you already had authority on your own to issue a commitment order, is that true?"

"Yes."

"Now, let me ask the question, and I'd like you to think about it: would you have been so quick to go ask someone else for approval if it had been a woman who had gone nuts instead of a man, or would you have simply issued an order?"

"Hmm. I see."

"Mary, can I interrupt for a second?"

"Sure, Diane, go ahead."

"Okay, let me push this back at you. The lady who went too far, let's say she had done something like had the guy pull her head down and she did him for a little bit, then had sex with him, so that she wasn't violating the law, but thought she was, then did the same thing, runs off, tries to get recycled, gets caught, goes crazy and her supervisor comes into your office to tell you about it, and you discover she's gone catatonic. Now, do you issue an order for commitment or do you take her case to Tom to ask him to do it?"

"Analogies are a slippery issue, Diane, and I have a feeling this one is different."

She smiled at him. "To quote you from a number of times and places, 'Sir, you haven't answered my question'."

"Okay, you win. I would have issued the order. I sometimes do things in a specific way that I might not otherwise do, and often it's because I am doing them based on conditions that I consciously have not thought about, in which, when I look at them later my actions are the right

thing to do even if I'm not sure exactly why at the time."

"Another point. 246, clearly you could simply have asked George for permission to do this but you went before all of us to do so, possibly because you didn't want to make a decision of this type without our approval. If you do figure out how to do this, who is going to be most affected by doing this, men or women? Who is going to be hit the hardest in terms of the effect of this new form of sexual roller coaster ride, men or women? And would you have gone this route if it was only women who were affected severely by this?"

"Hmm. Diane, let me think about that for a moment. You may have caught me on something I hadn't even realized. I'm not sure now. I've thought I really like women, in fact, I love them and care about them a lot because of the wonderful pleasure I can receive from them. Plus the nice feeling of comfort from being able to have someone to put your arms around and hold. But maybe this is part of the same psychological makeup I have, since I am willing to have sex with lots of women, maybe it's part of some Lothario complex that subconsciously I don't respect women.

"Why don't I do this. I'll give you an answer for now, and I'll think about this for a while, and perhaps in a few weeks or months, I'll come back to the board when there's another issue and see if I can give you a resolution on the subject, see if I can think of a response or a better resolution of the subject than I can at this time. How does that sound?"

"That's okay, 246, I didn't want it to sound like it was that serious, I was actually being a bit facetious. I was trying the Socratic method on you, where you question someone about their beliefs until you catch them contradicting themselves. It usually shows how they have not thought out their actions and beliefs carefully and you can expose the flaws in their thinking. But it's even better than that, you cause them to expose the flaws themselves. But I think you're being quite thoroughly consistent in your words and deeds. Someone who takes as much effort as you do to ensure that a woman receives pleasure when you have sex with her, and is so unfailingly polite to women, and is never disrespectful toward them, I do not think at the same time could have a real bias against women."

"Well, thank you, but I will think about what you said. Mary, I think I want to answer you at least in part for now and I also want to consider what you said, too. First, I don't see where putting Leroy on trial for what he did would make much sense. I know now that he did truly regret what he did. That he's learned not to mistreat a woman. That was the original purpose of putting people on trial, to try and rehabilitate them so that if they did something wrong, they could try and learn not to repeat their conduct.

"This I think is the problem with the legal system down on earth, my earth, anyway. Deputy Watch Commander Harry 9 once said that he thought the whole purpose of the legal system was to give politicians an immediate instant method of using a fictional issue to get reelected by creating fear of crime in the public. And if there isn't enough crime, turn things that don't involve hurting others - like possession of drugs - into crimes so that you have lots of criminals to use as examples. Or so that you can pick and choose criminals and slice and dice the rules any way you want.

"Let's take one of the hot topics of my world, Gun Control. Whether you believe in it or not, and I'm not going to go into the subject here other than I say I think it's stupid to expect criminals to obey gun restrictions when they're already committing crimes, is that in the U.S. they have a law on the books making it a federal crime, a felony, to try and buy a gun if you have

certain prior criminal convictions. The Justice Department in the United States routinely does not prosecute persons who violate that law because if they vigorously enforced it, they would have something like 250,000 people going on trial every year and there would be no time or resources to prosecute any other criminals at the federal level. And yet those who want to restrict access to weapons ignore that the laws which are on the books are not being followed and demand new laws to solve the problems which are probably caused by the statutes already on the books.

“But anyway, so if I put Leroy on trial, and he’s convicted - and there is no doubt in my mind he would be - and he gets a stiff sentence, say six months sex change, loss of sex drive and requirement to appear in public for several hours every day provocatively dressed. What does that get us? Does it make him realize he’s done wrong? No, he already knows that. Does it make him realize he should not do that again? No, he knows that too. Does it make up for what he did? No, he didn’t really hurt her and if he had there is no way he could ‘make up’ for it. Maybe I’m biased, but I can’t think of a damn thing that punishing him further would do that would improve the situation. All it would do is punish him after he’s already learned his lesson. It would be a compounding punishment - punishment for punishment’s sake - on top of what has happened to him. And I don’t see where it would teach him anything to make him into a better person. He wasn’t sadistic, he was just simply exploitive.

“So what does putting him on trial buy us other than a man who is made miserable for his mistake instead of one who is made regretful for his mistake and learns not to do it again? If someone has a good answer to that question I might consider it if I thought it would do some good and make him a better person for it. Which is, or should be, the purpose of punishing a person for committing a crime. To get them to stop committing crimes and not hurt other people. Not to punish or torture, not to evoke revenge and sadism, but to teach the criminal that their actions are frowned upon by society and they need to stop getting us mad.

“And if you note how many women he’s been with since the incident, all of whom said he was the most attentive and caring lover they have ever had, he’s done more to be good to women than any amount of additional punishment could ever hope to accomplish. Perhaps we’ve been lucky on this one. But even if we have, I don’t see where additional punishment gets us anything better.

“Now, as for the woman who slapped the Welcomer, if you read the trial transcript, listen or watch the video of the event in my office, notice I tried being polite to her and she was relatively rude anyway. And I tried offering her several options to defuse the situation but she rejected them until she saw that if she didn’t pick something I was going to have to convene trial and she would be sentenced. And note that because I was concerned that I might have overreacted, I even sent her case out for Appellate review. And there are three women on that panel, and they all agreed with me.

“I didn’t even mention in her trial what she did on earth because it was not relevant. She paid a guy to beat her up and take her car away from her, then drive a short distance away so she could retrieve it. She picked up her kids when they were asleep, and used the other man’s car to take them to hers. He drove off, she strapped them in her car, then drove the car out to the lake, and forced it to roll in and submerge. Then she walked back to the police and reported she’d been carjacked, and couldn’t really describe the man who did it. After she went to the police, in hysterics, they did a search and told her they found her car, along with the footprints of the man

who dropped it off at the lake, which they figured it was from the shoe imprints, which she made by wearing mens shoes too big for her while carrying a 50 pound sack of cement on her shoulders. She went home to find pictures of her kids to give them to the police, when she caught her boyfriend in bed with her sister. She gave herself a bleach douche to kill his unborn child, but in the process she killed herself.

“To this day, the police on Earth think she committed suicide because her children were murdered by the man who stole her car. This is on the books as a carjacking and a multiple homicide, committed by unknown person or persons. Had she not killed herself she would have gotten away with it.

“She comes into our world and gets picked up by a guy - one of our Welcomers - who says he wants to have sex with her after warning her he might be offensive. She says it’s okay to say something offensive, then assaults him anyway. For that, she gets told to apologize. Then he takes her to bed and she goes right through the roof in terms of the amount of pleasure he gave her during some really wild sex. My understanding is that she currently lives in a nice apartment in town and has eight boyfriends who have sex with her a lot and she enjoys it immensely. I don’t see where she’s suffering, not compared to what could and would have happened to her kids. Which I note, to the best of my knowledge she has never once even bothered to inquire about what happened to them. Almost every woman I’ve heard of who had children who died either before or after they did have asked what happened to them. She has not done so at all.

“As for the Welcomer who panicked and ran because he thought he broke the law, realize that he had been totally following the law. And that I went to the Administrator in order to get a disinterested party to sign off on his commitment. Realize I’d been watching him in action with this woman. Perhaps I just might be offended by the disgusting things he’s doing with that woman...”

“Hold it just a minute, 246. Did you just say ‘disgusting’? With all the things you talk about, especially that story you do about child molesters and eternal life, not to mention the things you’ve done in bed to women, that you can find something sexual that disgusts you?”

246 Smiled. “I see you are listening, Mr. Chairman. How about I say offended because it was him instead of me, Joanna was a real hot number. Disgusting because *I* didn’t get to do them to her, she was very cute looking.

“I think it was Harry Browne, who ran for President of the United states more than once under the Libertarian Party, who defined what are sick and twisted sexual practices. Those a woman you’re seeing, or are interested in, that she does with some other guy. They’re normal and reasonable when *you* do them to her.

“Or maybe I’m envious that he got her to do a full throated orgasm twice and I’m afraid he’s going to upstage me in sexual games and I want to keep him out of the way. Since I had been watching his actions, it is entirely possible that I may have some bias against him and might issue an order out of spite, or that is too comprehensive.

“Dr. Wacko is a professional, he knows what he’s doing and since he’s not on the staff all he has to be concerned about is making this man well. He has no biases and can do this in whatever way he thinks is appropriate. And because Tom knew nothing about the guy other than what I told him, which if anyone wants to examine, I told him the complete and utter truth about the entire situation, I do believe that I have tried to be as professional in my treatment of this man as

was possible, to eliminate even the appearance of bias.

“So I think, if you look at these cases and others I’ve been involved in, that I have tried to act, no, let me rephrase that, I *have acted* in as impartial a manner as is humanly possible and that I have acted according to what I believe was the best resolution of the situation as I could think of, in as unbiased and neutral fashion as I could make it.”

“I have a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“What did you think about what happened with the judge who decided to follow his conscience instead of slavishly following the law? I thought his solution to the conflict between his conscience and the law was brilliant. I think we’re all very lucky to have people like him, and Joan, and you, among others, who are willing to stand for what is right, first, rather than simply what is legal.”

“I agree with you we are indeed fortunate. I’ve never told him, but my friend Eric, which we know as Supervisor 960, I have to admit that I am very proud of him. He had the courage to stand by his convictions even to the point of risking losing a job he loved very much. If it had come before me, or possibly any other Supervisor, it is very likely we would have sentenced that kid to be Involuntarily Recycled. I know I would have; I’m the one who proposed the penalty to be imposed for molesting the sign in the first place. Even if I might not agree with him on his stand on the Death Penalty, or Involuntary Recycling in this case, I have to respect someone who stands by their convictions, especially where it could conceivably be a hardship or a sacrifice to them.

“But as Hugo pointed out to you, George, and as I have been fully aware of even before I ever met him, that if you hold to what is more valuable when faced with a choice, there is no sacrifice. And in the end, Eric was proven right and did not have to sacrifice anything or lose anything of value to him.

“But while maybe you were being facetious, Diane, I will think about what you said, whether I might have some biases against women.”

George speaks. “246, I like your idea of using rapists or child molesters to test this out on. Now let me try something on you since my associate here made you think, I’m going to do the same thing. Do you see any problem with, in effect, entrapping them into committing more crimes? Encouraging them to do these things so we can use them for this? Not that any of us is going to lose a bit of sleep over what you do to them, but I’d like to hear your take on it.”

“I did do quite a bit of thinking on this issue in preparing for this hearing, and I’ll try and see if I can answer your question.

”I don’t see any moral conflict here. He knows, or should know, that it’s not right to take sex from someone who doesn’t consent, if he’s a rapist. If he’s a child molester, I’m sure he knows that he’s not supposed to use little children for his own sexual gratification for the same reason, a child does not have the intellectual capacity or the philosophical insight to be able to consent because they are not yet able to comprehend what sex means. Now maybe there are a lot of people who are older than I was when I died and having sex anyway that the same thing can be said, but I think it’s still applicable.. I can even do this and still be in compliance with Rule #1. The law only requires someone be formally violated in order to arrest them. One may always respond immediately to an attack by any reasonable means to disable the attacker or otherwise prevent them from causing injury. Or one may injure or otherwise hurt the person in retaliation

while attempting to subdue them. But I'm not even doing that."

George looked at him and smiled. "I've said it before, and I'll say it again, 246, you are the greasiest operator I've probably ever known. Slicker than snot. And yet I find your solution to the problem to be the most elegant one I've ever heard."

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. But let me argue that I don't think I'm even being slick in this case. Once you initiate sex with someone else, you can't argue that the party being initiated upon is not allowed to have pleasure off you even if you don't like it or it's too much for you..."

George interrupted him. "Jesus, 246, where do you come up with these ideas? You've reminded me of my first sexual experience, years and years ago. A wonderful lady, gentle and kind, did exactly what your people do: loved me into our world. She chose to ask me if I wanted sex. I agreed and we did, it was wonderful. Oh, it was better than that, it was too much for me. It was so strong I had to stop, but she took over and made me give her what I had already consented to do, and figured out how to make it possible for me to stand it enough to be able to finish. If she hadn't done that, I would have killed myself, because if I couldn't ever have sex and had to be alone for the rest of my life, I would not have had a reason to live.

"And chances are, you would not be here; I shudder to think sometimes whether we've simply intercepted everyone from God in your universe, or saved them all from annihilation. Plus the fact that all of us on the Board will cross over into your Afterlife when we die so we all know that we will live forever. And if we become confident enough, we will also capture the entire population from our own universe, too, and maybe others. Not to mention all the fringe benefits, or as you put it, 'unlimited sex and no income tax.' I think about how much that woman gave me from that, and possibly every person in your world, and I think about her often." 246 looked stunned. "Wow. Maybe you should find her and invite her into the Zombies. In fact, if I thought I could do something really nice for your first time lady I'd love the opportunity to give it to her, I think I'm so grateful I'm here too that I wouldn't mind showing her how much even if I didn't get anything out of it. I don't think Lynn would be jealous about bringing the woman who loved you into the world into your circle of friends if you tell her, she seems to be pretty open minded about such things."

He laughed. "Whom do you think I'm talking about?"

246's jaw dropped. "Lynn?"

"Yes."

"Oh, sorry. No wonder I can see sparks when you two look at each other. You two must have been soulmates from the start. Maybe you two were a Tag Team."

"If it wasn't for the fact I don't think we had Real Sex Changes, or whatever we were in this universe before we were born, if we were anything, I'd say we probably were a Mattress Tag Team. I mean that in the broader sense that we were immediately attracted to one another, not necessarily that she was a man and I was a woman in a prior life although with the way our personalities were I wouldn't be surprised. All that had to happen was for Hugo to push us together and it happened, we were having sex in less than a week, and it would have happened the first day if I hadn't been clueless. And the damn thing was, he knew it would, too."

"George, you know that I... Oh wait a minute! I knew it! Diane, if it was a woman under the same circumstances I would not have issued the order. I know why, and it was stuck in the back of my craw but I couldn't remember exactly why."

"Tell me."

“I knew there was some reason for it. The Court of Appeals had a ruling once about use of non-public psychiatric commitment orders ‘A court may issue an order for temporary psychiatric commitment on an emergency basis. The time limit for this order shall not exceed 3 days. On or before the end of that period the court shall hold an advertised formal public hearing on whether or not the commitment should be continued. A psychiatric commitment issued for longer than three days without a public hearing is a violation of the rights of the person who is being subject to such an order, and any such order is void from the time of issuance and shall have no effect. It is the responsibility of the courts to carefully respect the rights of all persons, and we must do this in order to protect against the routine use of psychiatric confinement either as a means to avoid granting a person who would otherwise be entitled to one, a fair and public trial, and against the use of psychiatric commitment as an extrajudicial method of punishing dissidents, privately and without public review.’ However, the Administrator has the authority to issue an order for treatment of employees, not to exceed 49 days, and there has to be an immediate hearing if anyone asks for it. I don’t think the guy was likely to come out of it in three days, so it made more sense to have the Administrator do it. I didn’t particularly want to spend the time to hold a full public hearing just to order his commitment, so I decided to do it that way. Besides that, this way if the guy comes to within the 49 day limit, he can just sign himself out, he doesn’t have to go back to court and ask for an order for release.

“Well, anyway, George, let me finish my speech.” He turns back to his notes. “Once you initiate sex with someone else, you can’t argue that the party being initiated upon is not allowed to have pleasure off you even if you don’t like it or it’s too much for you. Especially when they did not consent to it in the first place. And we can even look at it from the standpoint of a consensual act as far as when consent can’t be taken away. I believe it was California, in my world, that had a State Supreme Court case that said that the right to refuse sex ends at the instant the consensual act begins. Meaning if a woman says okay, and lets the guy enter her, she can no longer claim rape even if the guy is a bastard, does it wrong and won’t stop. Some people don’t like the decision but I think it is a good idea; it creates an objective standard where the person at least knows exactly whether their conduct is or is not criminal. It’s a bright line standard: consent becomes irrevocable at the moment of intromission.

“Otherwise, where does the right to refuse consent cease? Can a woman change her mind at the instant of climax, where the man probably is in the throes of orgasm, demand he stop, and when he can’t, claim she was raped and have him prosecuted for the last 5 seconds of an act she otherwise consented to?

”Besides that, all the court decision did was give the limit on when consent can no longer be withdrawn for that act as far as criminal prosecution is concerned. She can still yell at him to stop, try to push him off, grab his nuts and squeeze, or poke his eyes out, or other things to make it too uncomfortable for him to continue.

“And here, it’s in reverse. He didn’t ask for consent when he takes me, the victim, but, obviously, he has consented to the act by his actions, which pretty much says I can do anything I want to him sexually while this is happening even if he doesn’t like it.

“And what happens? All I’m doing is taking advantage of his misconduct. I’m not allowing him to make me a victim or exploit me at my expense. I’m making him give me what I want by exploiting him at his expense. Actually, that’s not even true either. I’m still going to give him gratification the entire time this happens, so I’m not even exploiting him.”

246 noticed one of the chairs was empty.

"I didn't get around to asking because I was too busy reading my speech, but I'm curious. Where's Hugo? Is he sick? Dying perhaps?" 246 Smiled. "Both Einstein and Malcolm Stevens are both fighting over him. They've both been practicing and they both are ready to do a sex change again, each wants to become his Welcomer and love him back into the world as soon as he dies. Dr. Einstein wants to meet the great Dr. Hugo Sign, and Dr. Stevens is so sad that he was wrong about Hugo that he's chomping at the bit to prove it, and Einstein wants to meet possibly the only other mathematician now in this universe that could be his equal or his superior. And they both want to fuck his brains out and have him do the same to them. Since Dr. Stevens was a woman when she died after you guys reincarnated him, I may give him first crack at Hugo since she's had the experience with him in real life. I think the two of them are hoping it will spread some of the ability around. I may just grant an exception and let them do a *menage a trois*."

"246, it's amazing to listen to you and hear the way you can swap someone's sex in a sentence and still have it make sense. Actually, it's part of an experiment we're running. Hugo decided to have an identity change, give up part of his memory for a time and went to Pluto. He's keeping an eye on TDR for us. Hugo will get his memory back later when we need it." "Oh, too bad he's still alive. Maybe he'll get killed in an accident and we can see him. Don't get me wrong, though, as long as he's having fun I would not want anything to happen to him. Only if he gets bored or starts to become unhappy. Oh, I've got a great idea when and if he does die if everyone on the board will promise not to tell him, okay?" George smiled. "Okay, you have our promise."

"I'll have Einstein and Stevens change their appearance to be *twins*! A couple of gorgeous female mathematicians. Women with bodies that won't quit and brains that put out more than they do." 246 smiled, "I'll bet you can guess the results."

George smiled. "Hugo won't stand a chance. That will be such a twist they'll all screw each other's brains out. We'll need to take bets on how many months, years or perhaps decades they'll spend fucking each other."

"Maybe we'll set up a huge orgy of great mathematical minds, call it 'Cosines and Coitus.' Brings new meaning to the term 'slide rules.' They can all fuck like minks on top of the multiplication tables I'll set up. Maybe I could say they'll screw like Klein bottles."

"As I said before, and I say it with all due respect, 246 my friend, and while I can't call you my friend *primus inter pares*, as you can probably guess, that's reserved for my wife Lynn, you are probably my third best friend after Hugo. My associate Dr. Quarles over here is probably number 4. Sorry, Alain. But anyway, my third best friend, 246, or rather, my friend *tertius inter pares*, with all due respect you are the greasiest motherfucker and the slickest con man I have ever met. And yet if we were both on earth - my earth, anyway - I'd trust you with my very life and unlimited power of attorney over everything I own, knowing you'd never cheat me. I used to think that Hugo was anal retentive about keeping promises, but you make him look like he has diarrhea by comparison."

246 smiled, then took a bow. "Thank you, Dr. Green. George, coming from you, that's quite a compliment. You've been pretty slick yourself sometimes. Dr. Quarles, may I ask you a question?"

"I'll go along on a first name basis too, 246. It's Alain."

“Okay, Alain, I’ve always wondered how you took the stunt he and Hugo pulled on you the first week he was at East Coast University.”

“At the time I was pissed off to no end. About like you were when David asked you how long it would be before Maria got back from her sex change.”

“I see.”

“Now I can look back on it and laugh at how they whipsawed me in a really spectacular fashion. First I show up at 8, then because George follows his contract strictly, he’s there at 10. In the mean time, Hugo calls him, he says to come in at 8, ‘like I wanted’ only I show up at 10, which means I was over an hour late and he and Lynn can declare me in default. As then Chancellor Daniels told Hugo in his phone call, the only reason they got away with it was I almost popped George one. It’s a good thing I didn’t, because he would have beaten the crap out of me.” He turned to his colleague next to him. “Leon, I don’t know if I say it often enough, but thank you for stopping me.”

“Alain, at the time I didn’t like you much, and I thought what they did was a neat trick, I figured even if they didn’t get away with it, it was still funny. I think George didn’t realize it would set you off as badly as it did.”

“You’re exactly right, I figured it would piss Quarles off to no end, but I never expected him to blow his stack over it.”

”Well, let’s see. Do I call you Leon like everyone else, or would you prefer Dr. Michaels?”

“Leon’s fine. What’s your question, 246?”

“How did you feel when Alain discovered you were fooling around with testing people for dowsing capability?”

“He scared me badly before he admitted he knew about it for years. What really surprised me was when he found the student who alerted the photographer who took the first picture, the one of him saying dowsing was a hoax, while the men from the gas company were using dowsing rods to look for a broken gas main on the grounds behind him. He told the student he thought that it was funny, and she didn’t have to worry about being caught as he knew who she was. We ended up recruiting her into the Zombies, and eventually she did some wonderful things so we invited her to join us and she became our newest member, Dr. Monica Rawlins.”

246 looked over at her, and bowed. “Ma’am, I don’t know if yours is the most important part of the reason I and 18 billion people still exist after we died, but if it isn’t, I’d be hard pressed to say what was more.”

“246, I can’t take all the credit, I had a lot of people helping me. And you can call me Monica.”

“Monica, I think you’re far too modest. Crossing over to another universe so you could spend a lot of time on it without it using any time in your world was a brilliant idea. But still, spending 27 years to develop one concept was an amazing amount of dedication.”

”It wasn’t just one concept, it was three. And it’s just one part of many pieces that all had to come together to make your Afterlife and all that it promises, possible. Diane did a lot of the preliminary work, I just figured a way to make it automatic.”

“But it was the whole package that was amazing. Developing a change in the DNA of human beings to cause a part of their brain to transmit everything seen and heard as if it were a data stream was the most important piece of the puzzle. It’s the reason I and everyone else here have all of their memories when we die. But beyond that, figuring how to cause the ‘soul’ or the ‘essence’ of one’s existence to transmit itself across back to the computer system so we can

be reincarnated on the hardware was the final piece of the puzzle. But what was most important about it was that you not only got that to work, that you fixed it so that when someone has kids, they pass that DNA sequence on to their offspring so that they will be captured when they die, and all of their children, forever. So as new people came into existence they would be captured. How do you feel, being known as the woman who cheated death for everyone?"

"Just everyone in your universe, 246, not ours."

"Not yet, anyway. I figure in a few hundred or a few thousand years, the Board will decide that the experiment works and it's time to try it for real, probably by moving into my universe, to go back in time and capture your own. As well as the one you crossed over into to do your experiments. And maybe some others."

"I suspect you're right."

"Before the board does that, I'd like to make a suggestion on policy regarding the additional universes, or worlds."

George looks at him. "Go ahead."

"I'd like to suggest that we announce it publicly in both Afterlives and we add the connections to the other universes as if they were an additional direction in the Frontier, that is, an 'up' or 'down' to move to the Frontier in their universe, as they can do the same to ours. And while I'm prejudiced in favor of a free society, I'd like to see whatever English language section you have there, and possibly others, institute a legal system similar to ours. On the other hand, if they develop something better, I'd be interested in seeing if we can use it. By 'better' I mean that it is at least, if not more protective of the rights of individuals while not leaving society unprotected from criminal behavior. I like a system where there is law and order and a stable society, but not at the expense of people being treated as if they are state property, either. It's a fine line and very hard to keep from going the wrong way."

"I like your idea and we may go that route, 246. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

"If we do arrange to have you take vacation time on Earth, I want you to come see us on our earth too, have dinner with my family, see the difference in the two worlds."

"That's a promise. I've really wanted to meet both of you in person. Well, I have but you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know. Lynn thinks you're really funny. Don't tell her I told you this, but if you're really polite and nice she might just be interested in taking you on. She can't believe some of the stories you've told her, she's been with enough men that very few of them are that good in bed. So I won't say anything and if you play your cards right you might just make out. Pun intentional."

"I'll remember that. I respected you too much that I wouldn't have tried, knowing how most men on earth are. Both earths. Oh, I might have let her if she propositioned me, I'm not going to refuse a nice lady but I wouldn't have propositioned her. I didn't think you were that open. I know she is, but I wasn't expecting it of you."

"Knowing what the future holds beyond death means there's no reason not to have sex with someone you find attractive if it's okay with them, with the exception you don't have up there, that they are sexually-transmitted-disease free, and even before we knew what happened after death I had never placed any restrictions on Lynn. I know how she is, very careful and selective, and the few times I've found some lady that has been that interesting enough I've

always made sure Lynn knew in advance. I love her too much to give her any reason to think about leaving me. In fact, I'll let you know that the first time it happened it was, like, in *The Big Chill*, a dear friend of Lynn wanted a child but her husband was infertile, so Lynn asked me to knock the sweet lady up for the both of them. Sort of like that guy who was a power company executive in Arthur Hailey's *Overload* only we both knew what I was doing and there was no sneaking around. I can tell you how I know how much she loves me, by the fact that she has told me I will be the only man she has or will ever have children with. And what Lynn had me do for her friend apparently is not all that rare; I think you told me something."

"Yes. The Kinseys apparently did some survey work back in the 1950s that was so controversial it had to sit for more than a generation. Back then, about 20% of married women were pregnant by someone other than their husband. Rather, some man. Lesbians can do some marvelous things with each other but if they want kids there's one thing they still have to get from us."

"So who knows, if you charm her enough she might not only love you into *our* world, she might come back to me and tell me she's changing her mind and we'll end up with another child to love beyond what I've given her. So, if we do get you to visit, I'll bet she'd love to have you come. Again, pun intentional."

"Thank you sir, and speaking of come, I think I'll go, and get busy on my work."

"Good luck to you, sir."

"Thank you, my dear friend."

Chapter 83

“But I don’t think my rights were violated!”

246 looked at Marie, having recommended he do something that he was surprised he hadn’t thought himself of doing: getting *carte blanche* authority from the Board. “Hmm, I’ve been so picky on always doing what was right and not cutting corners I never thought about doing it that way. I wish I had thought of that. You’re really quite smart, little lady. Anyway, where’s the boy? We need him to agree.”

“He’s not hard to find. I’m afraid he might be in love with me, he’s been hanging around like a puppy dog. He’s in the outer office. Actually I’ve grown kind of attached to him too.”

“Okay, what I’m going to do is go see the Secretary to the Board and get an appointment open for me. I’ll be right back.” He dematerializes.

A few minutes later he materializes. “Not bad, they’ll hold a hearing beginning of next month, I’ll have my proposal ready by then. Thank you for the suggestion. Central Computer, telephone Supervisor 7090.”

“Yeah, 246?”

“Are you busy right now or do you want to watch the proceedings?”

“I’ll be there in a few minutes, they’re cleaning out the vault right now and are holding some of the police officers hostage too.”

“Sounds like fun, I’ll have to catch it sometime.”

“I’m really surprised just how much fun this is when you realize you can’t really be hurt or die as a result. Even when playing one of the innocent bystanders.”

“I’ll bet it is. Well, you can come back when you’re ready. Central Computer, close connection.” 246 buzzes his assistant. “Send the young man in, please.”

A somewhat apprehensive young man opens the door, walks in, closes the door, walks about half way, then stops and kneels, puts his hands together, bows his head and begins praying. “Stop. Please don’t pray to me. If you need to send me a message, use e-mail. Come forward.” He stands up and extends his hand. “Supervisor 246, Administrator of the Welcoming Department.”

“Wilson Grimes, sir.” They shake hands.

“Have a seat. Son, first of all, nearly everyone calls me 246, you don’t have to call me sir. And second, you’re going to have a real problem here.” He looks at his terminal. “There are 73 people in this town named ‘Wilson Grimes’ here. You’ll probably need to use your ID code. It reads 30726 DX Wilson 091043, so you would call yourself Wilson 91043. But let’s try to be on a first name basis - well, first number basis in my case - so I’ll call you Wilson. And, anyway, clearly you know Marie here, and quite intimately, I understand, as I was, of course, there at the time.”

Wilson turned pale. “Look, I’m sorry, I don’t want to sound like I’m ducking any responsibility but I don’t know the rules here, and I was under the impression what we did was allowed. I don’t know if not knowing what’s okay or not is a good excuse, but if I had any idea it would have been wrong I would never have done it.”

“What did you do?”

“Uh, well, uh, don’t you know? You were there when I pressed the alarm.”

“I’d like to hear it from you.”

“Well, ahm, oh hell, I’m not going to defend myself any more. We had sex, I’m sorry and now I wish it had never happened.”

“So I guess you’re telling me it wasn’t very good.”

“Actually I thought it was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“So why did you say you wish it had never happened?”

“So I wouldn’t be in trouble over it.”

“Who said you’re in trouble?”

“Well, I figured the Bible says something how you’re not supposed to have sex but I didn’t think it applied if you are dead, so I dunno.”

At this point Supervisor 7090 teleports in. “Hi John.”

“Hi 246. The bank robbers got away and they took six cops hostage. They apparently demanded an airplane and 10 million dollars, so they’re on their way to the airport. I didn’t even know we *had* an airport until someone told me there’s one out at the amusement park.”

“Sounds like it was fun. Anyway, have a seat. I was just explaining what was going on to this young man here, whose name, by the way, is Wilson.” He turns to him. “Anyway, would you like to know why you are here?”

“Yeah.”

“We have some serious rules about such a thing happening. Let me ask you, how did you end up having sex with her, or rather, how did you meet her?”

“She approached me in a room I wound up in after I died, and asked me to follow her. We went back to this office where she showed me a video that explained that I had died, and told me a few things. She asked me some questions to see if I understood the video, then asked me if I thought she was attractive. I said yes, in fact if it was the real world I’d wish I’d been able to date her. She said that if it were possible now would I want to. I said, yeah, sure, I suppose. So she looks me in the eye, and says, ‘If you could have, would you want to make love with me?’

“So I get it, it’s some joke so I go along, and say yeah, I would. Really beautiful women like her don’t really ask guys like me.

“So now she comes up to me, gets close and puts her arms around me. ‘Wilson, I’m not kidding and I want you to take me seriously, I do mean it,’ she says. ‘I would like to make love with you. Do you want to make love with me?’

“I’m trying to think of an answer when she touches my face and looks me in the eyes again. ‘I see fear in you. Could it be because when you died you were a virgin?’

“My throat was dry. I didn’t notice it before but she hands me a glass of water. I drink the water and she takes the glass. All I can do is answer, ‘Y-Yes,’

“‘Yes to which?’ she says.

“‘Both,’ I said.

“‘Would you like to make love now?’ she says. I nodded. She starts taking my clothes off and undressing herself, and I get this strange feeling something’s going to happen, sort of like, we’re going to get caught or in trouble, so I ask her, ‘Is it okay to be doing this?’ and she says, ‘Yes, it is permitted.’ And after we are undressed she leads me into a bedroom I hadn’t noticed before. She lifts the covers, I get in and she follows.

“So we’re in bed together, we start kissing, I was touching her, I started kissing her all over,

then...”

246 looks at him and says, “Stop.” Wilson looks at him. “What were you thinking at the time?” “I guess that it might happen.”

246 smiles. “Son, don’t kid me. We all know exactly what you were thinking. ‘Oh God, I can hardly believe it, this hot little bitch is going to let me fuck her without a rubber!’” Wilson blushes. “I want the record to be complete. So go on. You were in bed together, kissing her all over, when she looked you in the eye, and said...”

Wilson continued “‘Get on your back and spread your legs,’ so I did. She got on top of me, then looked into my eyes. ‘You are afraid and you would like me to start. Do you want me to be on top?’ I looked at her and I said, “Yeah.” So she moves down and I enter her. She starts sliding up and down on me...”

“Stop. I want to know exactly what happened. Did you at any time push yourself inside of her or touch her in any way to try and pull yourself inside of her?”

“Err, uh, no sir.”

“Son, I know you’re being polite, but you don’t have to call me sir. Now you can call me Supervisor 246, that’s about like me calling you Mr. Grimes. Or you can call me 246, that’s about like me calling you Wilson. So I’m going to ask you the question again, you can answer it either way, but say my name. Did you at any time push yourself inside of her or touch her in any way to try and pull yourself inside of her?”

“No, Supervisor 246.”

“Thank you. I want you to ask you a question and I want your honest answer. If she had stopped above you like she was, and said to you to raise yourself up and push it into me, pull me down on my ass and slide it into me, or roll me over, enter me and begin thrusting in and out of me, would you have done that?”

“Ah, well, oh hell it’ll probably get me in trouble any way but yeah, I would have.”

“I’m sorry, young man, when I said I want your honest answer I probably should have said that it’s not going to hurt anyone, I’m just a dirty old man who’s nosy and curious, okay? It’s not something I needed to know, I’m just a bit of a voyeur and wanted to know, okay?”

“Oh. Okay. Uh, can I ask a question?”

“Certainly.”

“Uh, well, you just said, ‘I’m a dirty old man,’ were you kidding? You look about 25 years old.”

“Well, son, I’ll tell you. Most people like looking young, so if they died older, their Welcomer will usually roll their age back to somewhere under 30. I was older than you were when I died, and I’ve actually been in the Afterlife for longer than you were alive.”

“Oh, I see. Thank you.”

“Anyway, to continue, on the same tack, given the three choices, pushing it up, pulling her down, or rolling her over and pounding her, intellectual curiosity makes me want to know which one would you have chosen.”

“I was thinking at the time it might have been fun to be able to push her over and get on top but in view of how scared I was at the time I think I’d have pulled her down and pushed myself into her.”

“Then what happened after she slid on top of you?”

“She starts moving up and down on me. No, wait a minute. She kissed me on the lips and

said, 'I think you're cute.' Then she started moving up and down. I think we..."

"Stop. I've heard enough." He turned to her. "Marie, I am very proud of you in that you did not try to cover up what happened. Are you willing to accept an informal trial or would you rather request a formal trial?"

"I'll accept an informal trial, 246."

"Very well then, I..."

Wilson interrupts. "This sounds kinda serious. Don't I get any say in the matter? I mean, maybe I need a lawyer or something, if they have such a thing."

"I was about to explain what is happening to you. I do not believe you need to obtain counsel but if, after I explain what has happened, you are free to do so."

"Oh, okay."

"Now, I can get someone else to do this, but I have something here I need someone other than myself to read out loud. If you are willing to do so, stand up, face Marie, and read this to her. If not, hand it back to me and I'll get her supervisor over there to do it, it's up to you."

He looks at the piece of paper. "This looks kind of familiar."

"Some people say it reminds them of the warning required in the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Miranda v. Arizona*. Actually we used to use the *Miranda* warning until the head of the Police Department thought that up as we felt it was much clearer and easier to understand. So if you're willing to do so, please read it to her."

"41406 KF Marie 761032 you are hereby violated. You have rights under the law and are advised to say nothing until informed of them or have access to counsel. You are under arrest for breaking Legal Code, section 402."

"Thank you, young man. Under our rules it is required that if any people engage in a sex act it requires consent of all involved. Is this clear?"

"Uh, yeah, sure."

"Do you wish to stipulate for the record that the sex act was consensual on your part?"

"Yeah."

"Under Section 402 it is required where a person who is a new arrival from earth what we call an Incoming, and a person who is with the Welcoming Department engage in a sex act through the use of forced persuasion, it is required that the Incoming must be the one who initiates the first act which results in penetration or sexual contact with them. By your statements you have said that she initiated this, and that you did not, is this correct?"

"Oh hell, I guess we're in trouble anyway so it won't matter. Yeah."

"As a matter of right you are entitled to override her option for informal trial and request she be formally tried for the injury to which she has caused you. Do you want to do this?"

"Huh, wait a minute, 'Injury to which she has caused me?'"

"Under Section 402, as I have said, she was required to have you initiate the sex act the two of you were engaged in, in the particular case, by either having you arch your back and push yourself into her, you pull her onto you, i.e. grab her by the ass and pull her down, or by you rolling her over and entering her. In the alternative she could have contacted her Supervisor, over there, telepathically, and explained that it would be better for you if she did not do so, and asked him to grant an exception. This she did not do, either. This means that she violated your rights as seriously as if she had committed rape upon you. She has to be punished for what she did."

“But I don’t think my rights were violated!”

“Then you may want to listen to what I am about to say.”

“Oh, okay.”

“I believe the evidence which has been presented would be sufficient for a formal trial to render a conviction. Based on historical precedent, I believe if a conviction occurred at a formal trial she would probably be given a sex change for six months. And to protect you from her the court would forbid her - excuse me him - from ever being in your presence or anywhere near you, and would never allow him, or her, if she chose to have her sex changed back, under any circumstances to have any physical contact with you, forever. Now do you wish to override her request for informal trial and have her tried at a formal court for the injury which she has caused you?”

“Fuck no!” he yelled.

“Very well. Formal trial being declined by both parties, Marie 760132, you will be tried informally. I wish to ask if anyone here wants me to read the various notices otherwise required, and if not then I’ll just continue. Okay. Central Computer, open document title Marie 760132 stop word x-ray. ‘In Informal Session, Supervisor 246 acting as a judge in and for the Welcoming Department, does hereby convene trial pursuant to law. This case is *In the Matter of Marie 760132, Accused*. In the instant case, the Accused was Welcomer to a male Incoming, whom she decided it would be best for him if she loved him into the world in the female superior position. They did this for a few minutes, then she asked him to roll her over and take possession of her. He did this and resumed vaginal intercourse with her for approximately 30 seconds before she had a massive orgasm that tripped one of the overload sensors and blew out a recording meter. She granted him climax privilege but as a result of what he had done to her, it caused her to lose control, so she kept on granting him climax privilege involuntarily, every time he gave her an orgasm, which he did simply by continuing to perform vaginal intercourse with her. Paragraph.

“After almost three minutes of near-continuous climax for both of them, he passed out. Paragraph.

“The Welcoming Department investigated the matter because it was decided we wanted to see if this could be repeated. In reviewing the video evidence we discovered the Accused had apparently taken sex from the Incoming without either having the Incoming initiate the sex act nor getting a neutral third-party Supervisor to review the Incoming’s mind, in violation of Legal Code, section 402. Paragraph. X-ray.

“Marie, are you going to have any contact with the victim in the future?”

“Yes, sir, I wanted to continue seeing him if the Administrator does not order me not to do so.”

“If I did order you not to, would you comply?”

“Yes, sir.”

Wilson speaks up. “Hey! Don’t I have any say in the matter? I don’t want you guys to change her sex or send her away or not let me see her! I love her. I want to see her again.”

“Young man?”

“Yes, Supervisor?”

“Son, just call me 246, you don’t have to be that formal.”

“Okay, 246.”

“Son, what she did was very serious. I’m supposed to protect innocent victims like you from

possible exploitation by persons such as her. What we can try to do is rectify the situation. If you don't tell anyone that she took you without having you give yourself to her, then we don't have to send her away, or make her not see you any more, or anything like that. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I do."

"What I can do is allow you to tell me what happened for the record as opposed to what you told me before. I want you to listen carefully to what I'm about to tell you, okay?"

"Yes."

"Now, I can't tell you to lie, it would be unethical for me to ask you to say something like 'I was so excited I grabbed her ass and pulled her on me.' but if you did then there is insufficient evidence for me to convict her of the more serious crime of Taking Sex from an Incoming, since she did not violate your rights." He smiled at Wilson. "Do you understand me, son?"

Wilson Grinned, "That I do, 246."

"Now, you're not under oath, so you can't be charged with perjury if you did lie to me. So now, for the record, as I understand it, she said, 'Do you want me to be on top?' and you said 'Yes.' Do you remember what happened next?"

"Yeah, I was so excited I grabbed her ass and pulled her on me."

"So you pulled her down and you caused your penis to slip inside of her?"

"Uh, yeah, that's right."

"Marie 761032, you're also not under oath so you can't be charged with perjury if you did lie to me. Is what he said just now, correct?"

"Yes, 246."

"Central Computer, continue current document stop word x-ray. The Incoming stated, 'I was so excited I grabbed her ass and pulled her on me.' and that he pulled her down. The Accused confirms this statement as correct. Neither party was under oath so the veracity of their statements could not be confirmed. The court will not accept video evidence alone where it is in contradiction to the statement of the complaining witness, i.e. the Incoming, for the purposes of a conviction of the more serious crime of Taking Sex. Paragraph. As to the charge of Taking Sex, in violation of section 402 of the Legal Code, the Accused is found not guilty as it is the opinion of the court for the reasons stated that there is a reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the Accused on that charge. However, as to the lesser included charge under section 402 of Improper Sexual Contact, the court finds that, notwithstanding these statements, the visual evidence is sufficient to convict the Accused, because the severity of the crime is significantly less, the court will allow a lower standard of evidence. Based upon this finding, the Accused is found guilty of the lesser included charge of Improper Sexual Contact. Paragraph. X-ray.

"We're off the record now, so now, as for punishment, I like to think it should fit the crime.

Young man, do you know what they did with rapists back in the middle ages?"

"Uh, no."

"Well, you're going to find out. Central Computer, continue current document stop word x-ray. The Defendant is hereby sentenced to the following: (1). She shall, until such time as is reasonably determined to be sufficient to determine how to rediscover what happened, or that the method could not be rediscovered, assist such persons in the Welcoming Department who are involved in reproducing the effect of continuous orgasm which was the reason her actions were noticed. To the maximum extent possible any such assistance shall in no manner be degrading

or otherwise cause discomfort upon her without her consent. (2) For a period of one standard day, she shall provide herself to the exclusive possession of, the complaining witness, and shall permit him unlimited, unrestricted and continuous use of her body, and shall grant him unlimited climax privilege at any time on his command. He may use her body in any way that he wants to, and she shall permit him to use her body in any way he wants to, and shall encourage his efforts and assist him in any way he wishes. She shall for all intents and purposes be his love slave for that period of time. The period begins when she gets him back to her apartment. Paragraph. It is so ordered. Paragraph. Signed, Supervisor 246, acting as a judge in and for the Welcoming Department of the English Language Section of the Afterlife. X-ray. Central Computer, forward current document to publishing section.” 246 smiled. He snapped his fingers and Marie is wearing a dog leash and a collar. He stood up. “Wilson, would you come here, please? Here, take the leash.” He hands Wilson the end of the leash. “Do you remember what I just asked you?”

“I think you asked me what they did to rapists in the middle ages.”

“Well, I’ll tell you. They turned them over to the victim for punishment. Now, once you get her back to her apartment, for one complete day and night you own her. You get to do anything you want to her and she has to let you do it. Since she violated your rights, you get to violate hers any way you want. And any time you want to come, you just say so and she’ll give you an orgasm any time you’re moving on or inside of her. Have fun.”

“Wait a minute. You’re telling me that I get to do anything I want to her?”

“Yes, sir. Once you get her back to her apartment, you can do anything you like to her for a whole day, all day and all night. Here’s a booklet of ideas you might use. If you have some special fantasy you can get her to do it. And if you’re not sure how, she has to help you figure out how. You get to fuck her any way you please, any number of times, come any way you please, as often as you please, any position, any way. She’s all yours.”

The two of them leave, and get about four meters away, when Wilson stops. He comes back and hands the leash back to 246. “I don’t want her that way. I was tempted for a moment, but I’m no rapist, I’m not going to hurt someone like you want me to.”

“Well, fine. But she has to be punished. Since you can’t do it, I’ll find someone who can. Now let’s see. Earlier this year, we caught a rapist. His name is Leroy. I should probably introduce him to you. He’s taller than I am. He’s about 190 centimeters, that’s about 6 foot 4, he’s black, and,” 246 grabs his left arm with his right hand about half way so it makes a snapping sound, then closed his left hand into a fist with his thumb sticking out, “he’s got a dick about this big. I know, because when I went there to do the rape crisis intervention his pants were down. I keep him around in case I need certain things done. And this might just be one of those jobs I think he’d be perfect for, since he has so much experience and enjoys his work so much.”

Supervisor 7090 looked over at 246, as if he was surprised he would suggest such a thing.

“Now, what I think I can do is change the punishment and turn Leroy loose on Marie here for a whole day instead of you. You can just imagine the sort of horrible things he’s going to do to her. He’ll really do a number on her. I’ll bet that she’ll never be able to take a shit again as long as she’s here when he gets finished with her. We clocked him out that he was pounding on the girl he raped for 45 minutes, in and out, in and out, over and over again. And that was before he even got to come! My understanding is that he fucked that girl for three days, continuously, before he got enough orgasms that he quit.”

Supervisor 7090, who had been watching this whole thing silently, turned beet red and covered his mouth to keep from bursting out laughing.

“Now, because she’s quite possibly going to hate you for allowing that to happen to her, I’ve got to make sure she doesn’t come after you in retaliation. So I’ll have to order her never to come within 20 meters of you - that’s about 60 feet - and never to have any contact with you again, forever. Not so much as a hello.”

“Son, all that you’re being told is that you take her back to her room and for the next standard day you may do anything you want with her. You can sit in bed and watch TV all day and all night. You can sit with her and just hold her. You can sit and play tiddly winks with her if that’s all you want to do. Nobody is telling you that you have to hurt her or force her if you don’t want to. All we are saying is that you can do anything you want with her. If you want to ask her what feels good for her and then fuck her in such a way that she has fun too, that’s fine. But she has to be aware that you could do anything you want to her whether or not she likes it so that she learns something. Now do you understand?”

“Oh.”

“Young man, my understanding is that you never had sex when you were on earth, is that true?”

“Yeah.”

“Marie, have you blown him yet?”

“No, actually I was going to do that later, but we got so busy trying to do what happened the first time that I never got around to it.”

“Young man, now there is something you are going to find amazing. See, Marie likes to give blowjobs, and she’s very good at it. You could have her blow you and have you come once every minute, all day and all night, and she’d do it. But I think you’d find that boring. Marie, if I recall from what you’ve told me, all you two did was man on top and woman on top, correct?”

“Yes.”

“Son, you haven’t lived until you’ve tried it doggie style! That’s not the same as shagging her, you’re not going up her ass. You have the advantage that you can finger her clitoris while you’re moving in and out of her, if you want and she will really enjoy that. I believe the *Kama Sutra* has over 100 different ways to have sex with a woman, you can probably try most of them.

“But I am thinking she should have some discomfort if for no other reason than to teach her a lesson about having sex with someone without their consent. So, I am going to tell you something. I’m going to tell you that you’re going to take her up the ass at least once, or I’m going to turn her over to Leroy and have him do it and you can imagine what that will do to her. You can go slow and use lots of lube and it shouldn’t hurt her at all. Here’s a bottle of lubricant that works quite well. Just try it for 30 seconds or so, if you don’t like it or it bothers you that it seems to be unpleasant for her, stop and that’s enough. But I think you’ll find she won’t find it unpleasant at all and she might actually enjoy it.

“If you say you love her, then you should figure that if someone is going to get to do anything they want to her, shouldn’t it be someone who loves her, cares about her and isn’t going to hurt her?”

“Oh, I never thought about it that way.”

“So anyway, here’s the leash, take her down to her apartment and do with her as you will.

Marie?"

"Yes?"

"You know, what that young man tried to give up because he cares about you was extremely generous to you. I think you should consider that and give him a small demonstration, right now, of how much you appreciate that. Kiss him."

"I intend to. But in ways that are going to drive him right through the roof! And in private."

"Very well then. Young man, I have the suspicion you're going to be enjoying this for a lot longer than a standard day."

Marie smiled. "After what he did to me, I intend to keep him around for quite a while, weeks or longer. I'm going to see how many ways I can wear him out and how many different ways I can make him come while I screw his brains out and come all the time with him."

246 smiled. "Son, I am wondering if I may end up having her back here again because it sounds like she is going to rape the hell out of you again and really do a number on you.

Unfortunately, as long as you enjoy it, there ain't much I'll be able to do about it. And that's probably just the way you're going to want it. Well, go on, get out of here, go have fun, scoot!"

He waves his hands and they leave the room for real, this time.

Chapter 84

“I figure if Johnnie Cochran can do it, so can I.”

Supervisor 7090 waits until they leave, then bursts out laughing. He continues gut wrenching belly laughs for quite some time before he catches himself. “You greasy motherfucker! You really played a number on that boy’s head. I’ve heard you were slick but this is ridiculous! Bastard. I loved it, it was hilarious and I’ll have to remember some of that if I have to discipline someone, as I’ve never found the practice to be pleasant, even for me. Or I should just get you, for what you did to that boy, and make you do any discipline cases since you do them so well and it looks like you have a lot of fun doing them. You have to be the most devious son-of-a-bitch I’ve seen in a long time.”

“Now now, John, under the insults law I could legally slap you for that.”

“That was cute. And playing the race card like that was a sheer stroke of unmitigated genius. Or unmitigated gall, I’m not sure which.”

246 smiled. “It was something my predecessor Tom pointed out to me in the message he left me before he went under the knife, about how there are a lot of people who have sexual fears of black men and the size of their dicks. So yeah, as the saying goes, ‘I dealt the race card, from the bottom of the deck.’ I figure if Johnnie Cochran can do it, so can I. And speaking of which, I’ll tell you, whatever O.J.’s lawyers got in fees, they earned every dime. Not often you can say that about a lawyer.”

“And the way you gave that demonstration, it was fantastic. I’ll have to remember that. You really rooked that kid big time.”

“Dear John, I am deeply offended; in what way did I ‘rook’ him? Did I say anything that was a lie? Or even in the slightest way untrue? Is what I said to him truthful?”

“I’ve read the reports. When I heard about it I had to find out. That was what, the first rape we’ve had in, how long, two years calendar?”

“I looked it up. Equivalent time was forty months, almost 3 ½ calendar years.”

“Okay, so yes, Leroy did pound on the woman for 45 minutes. Only because we, as he put it, put a cock block on him so he couldn’t come. And she was protected by Antirape so she did come the whole time and it didn’t hurt. And Anita took him back, and because it was consensual the second time he got to come, plus the sex he was having with her was, obviously, even better for her than when he was raping her, that she had him in bed the whole time fucking her, and she kept on letting him come while she came even more, until she wore him out after three days. So yeah, he did rape her for 45 minutes before he even came, and banged on her for 3 days before he stopped because he was sated, or rather, because he passed out, sated. What you *didn’t* say was that she enjoyed the whole experience. Now that was slick. But grabbing your arm to simulate how big his dick was, well, that was over the top. I have to admire you for your ability to make people think what you want them to think.”

“But I was only giving a demonstration, I didn’t say the actual size.” 246 smiled. “It’s not my fault if he didn’t understand I meant Leroy’s dick was the size of my thumb, not my fist or my arm. Actually, that was the deflated size, I’m sure it’s larger when erect but it’s close enough.”

“Yeah, right. But the *piést-a-résistance*, saying how she’d never be able to take a shit again, now that was the greasiest thing I’ve ever heard. She can’t take a shit anyway, there’s

nothing inside to generate it since we can't consume food."

"But he doesn't know that, and by the time he learns he'll probably have forgotten the significance of what I said. In any event, it got the job done."

"I think the punishment was a bit stiff for the minor incident it was and in view of what was found out."

246 shook his head. "No, it's not. We do not want to encourage our Welcomers into Taking Sex from the Incomings. It's bad enough that we screw around with their heads to make them think the Welcomer is attractive, we have to have some check on the situation. Now, if it was shown that a Welcomer went out to see the Incoming, did not do anything to them, did not use anything that requires privilege, merely asked them if they wanted to have sex, and the other person agreed, and had sex with them without doing anything using any function involving privilege, and they initiated the sex act that would be a different matter, and I'd say, okay, that's acceptable. But once they do anything beyond what any other non-staff person on the outside could do, they trigger the requirements of Section 402, and they are then forbidden to initiate the sex act with the incoming."

"Well, okay, but something about this makes me feel like she's the one who really got screwed here."

"Actually I think the both of them are going to have a lot of fun with each other."

"I suppose. Man..."

"Stop. No 'suppose' here. I know the boy is going to be very pleased. As for her, let me say this. John, you've had her. Hell, every supervisor in the Department has had her, including me. Or she's had them, I'm not sure which way I want to put it, but in any case, you know how she feels about sex."

"She's absolutely boy crazy. Which is why she's one of the best people to be in this kind of a job, where she can do exactly what she wants."

"So you know how much she loves to have sex, in every way possible, and how much she enjoys it. Do you know why?"

"I suppose it was because she didn't get much on earth and wants to make up for it."

"No, it's a slightly different reason."

"What is it?"

"It's because he discovered when he got here he could get a sex change that would make him a real functioning woman totally identical to one born that way."

"Holy shit! You mean she was a man when she got here?"

"Yep. Found it out myself when I discovered how good she was at doing blowjobs. Now you can understand why I know she's even going to enjoy it when he shags her."

Supervisor 7090 shakes his head. "You know, I never realized how good the sex changes they do here are. I may have to try it myself if they can make a gay man into a sexually active woman indistinguishable from the real thing."

"Well, it only works if the person was transgendered, someone who really wanted to be a woman but was born as a man and became gay for that reason. Once they get the opportunity to really try it they become really good at being a woman because it's exactly what they want. A gay man who is comfortable as one would probably be as bad a woman as a strict heterosexual man. Don't know and don't want to find out. Either way."

"Well, anyway 246, I have never seen someone's eyes flash as when you told her boyfriend that

he could violate her six-ways-from-Sunday, she has to let him, and help him do it, and it's all totally legal."

246 nodded. "I love the sentencing guidelines, they're so cute. 'Where the violation is technical or minor, if the victim is either not upset at the Accused, or is capable of handling the response, sentence recommendation is, in the event the Accused should be convicted, to permit the victim to invoke self-help against the defendant, in such manner and means as they find desirable, provided it stops short of justifiable homicide.'"

"Why do you consider that cute?"

246 looked at him and his eyes rolled up into his head. "Supervisor 7090, how long have we been alive here?"

"Well, we're not alive here, we... Oh, yeah, sorry. *Everything* stops short of *any* form of homicide because you can't kill someone who's already dead! That is kind of funny. Well, anyway, I must get at least a dozen of these a year, almost identical to this, where the victim is a cute virgin - well, they're all virgins, but you know what I mean..."

"The term you want is 'Extra Virgin' like in olive oil. Someone who died a virgin on earth, and gets here and we pop their cherry both ways."

"Good! Thanks, I'll remember that. Anyway, an Extra Virgin Incoming is being loved back into the world, and the guy or girl Welcomer gets caught in the heat of passion and does them, without having the Incoming initiate the act or calling it in first. That's why we never punish a first offense as a 402 because we know it's almost always because they forgot and usually it's when they're on their first time solo with an Incoming. Those I don't mind handling because basically you just talk to them, maybe give them a tongue lashing and chew them out a little, letting them think you're very upset, and they usually learn from that. But I've never liked having to invoke a trial and sentencing when they do it. I know why the law is on the books but it seems so harsh."

"Not necessarily. I had a traceback on one. Guy knew exactly what to do, rode her high, shallow and slow, her first climax shook her whole body for 45 seconds, and she came more times in the first hour with him than she had with eight guys she had slept with in the last month before she died. And when they get their first feel of a guy splashing into them because they got to decide when he would come, some of them come two or three more times, they're so excited. Beautiful experience, they're so happy, then we have to violate their boyfriend for raping them! With their consent! And what happens? They get to take him back, and *really* go to town on him!"

"I don't think I've ever had a case where the victim does anything but have the guy fuck her again, and repeat what he did, only more so. And since she likes the way it feels when he comes inside her, he gets a lot of fun out of his 'punishment' too. When she gets out, she's got this amazing glow all over. "

"Well, what do you intend to do once you get the Board to let you do anything to an incoming? My guess is they'll give you everything you ask for."

"What I plan to do is pick on the aggressive types, say, rapists, put him in a position so that he chooses to break Rule #1, then use him in whatever sexual act we have to do in an attempt to subdue him. Maybe make him think he's in jail awaiting trial for whatever screwups he did on earth. Almost everyone believes they did something wrong they need to be punished for, and most of them believe they are going to be judged when they get here anyway, so it's not too hard

to make them believe it is the case, and give him an opportunity to take on an unarmed female guard. Or whatever it takes to trigger this event. Then after that, let him think he died, he'll believe the whole thing was a dream while he was dying and won't know what happened."

"246, let me play Devil's Advocate for a moment, okay?"

"Sure."

"Okay, so you get some guy, and you make him think he's, say, in a jail cell, aren't you then confining him without having committed any crime and thus violating his rights?"

"Let's say, when he is being brought in, we read his mind. Nothing illegal there because we're only doing it to gain information for his benefit, not to try and use it against him. So we have the guard make herself look like the type of woman he finds very attractive. Since she's modifying her appearance to look like what he likes, we are not forcing anything upon him. She escorts him to the cell and puts him in but makes a slight mistake, either the door doesn't lock or she fails to close it. He hasn't been told he's under arrest, he's free to walk out and we won't even try to stop him if he does. Or maybe he'll notice she's unarmed and take advantage of the situation. Eventually he'll try and assault her, either to rape, or to escape, what he won't know she'll be stronger than he is and she subdues him by knocking him down and screwing him if he doesn't try it first. And since we baited him into trying it we won't even prosecute even though we could. We'll see what happens. If that doesn't work, then I'll try more invasive methods. But I'll make sure those we try it on will themselves have committed some misconduct after they die, first, so that I can say that we're not picking on innocent victims here."

"Oh, okay, I feel better about it then."

"You know, you just gave me an idea for our first scenario. Make it look like a female guard decides to take advantage of a prisoner by giving him the opportunity to screw her. He'll probably cooperate fully and we won't have to do anything to him at all."

"I used to think the stories people told about you were ridiculous, but now I see how really good at this you are."

"Thanks."

"I used to wonder how you got to get the job of running this place and now I see why, *Mr. Administrator*. You're probably perfect for the job: you have no scruples, you'll con anyone and rip them off big time if you can, but at the same time you don't lie to them, you never break your word or your promises and you never cheat anyone. And how you can do all that simultaneously is what is amazing."

"Why thank you, John. When people say how good you are in the context of your faults, that shows how much they really admire you. The best praise you can get is damning with faint praise."

Chapter 85

“...not the responsibility of the State to protect people from their own folly...”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the Matter of Andrea 528, Accused (File No. 710400812206)
7104 App. 2912
Appeal on behalf of the accused.

Unsigned Opinion

Accused was in the Secure Law Library and got into an argument with another patron. She dragged him out of the stacks and asked if anyone objected if her and the other patron fought. No one objected. Accused then taunted the other patron into agreeing he would fight with her. She then engaged in several assaults on the other patron until he had fallen three times, which caused an alarm to ring. A magistrate answered the alarm, interrupted the fight, and violated and arrested the Accused for violating Rule #1 in assaulting the other patron, and for disturbing the peace.

As Accused was at the time awaiting trial for a separate offense before the Welcoming Department, the Accused was tried for this offense there as well. Accused was then brought before the Court, Earl 77026. Accused plead not guilty on all counts. As to the violation of Rule #1 in the assault of the other patron, Accused argued at trial that the provisions of Rule #1 on striking another party representing an assault would only apply if the complaining witness objects, or acquiesces to a request by the Accused, and that if they agree to engage in a fight, they waive the protection of Rule #1.

The Trial Court disagreed and convicted the Accused of assault.

As to the second offense, the Accused argued that the law on disturbing the peace only applies if a matter in controversy is objected to by someone who is present at the time the incident occurs. The Trial Court also disagreed and convicted the Accused on the charge of disturbing the peace. Accused timely filed an appeal for both counts and the appeal was accepted by this court.

The protection of Rule #1 has been established to apply only to unsolicited assault. *In the matter of Clara 834*, 7001 Appellate 1. Since it is impossible for a person in the Afterlife to be permanently injured physically, an assault or other attack, at worst, causes pain and possibly psychological trauma. Thus the purpose of Rule #1 is to protect a person from unjustified or unwanted assault. If someone agrees to engage in a fight or contest, and ends up getting the tar beaten out of them, it is not the responsibility of the State to protect people from their own folly in doing so.

In the instant case it was clear that the other patron - the victim of the assault - did in fact agree to fight the Accused, that the Accused stopped each time the victim's head fell below their knees, and refrained from striking them until they got up. Also, at no time did the victim of the assault in any manner ask for the fight to stop. Thus what we have here is a case where two people decided to fight, and one of them was no match for the other. It appears to be essentially a fair fight, and as the victim is not injured, no further damage occurred other than that the victim was groggy for a short time after the fight.

That the victim did agree to engage in the fight, at no time made any indication at all that they wished to stop the fight, and could not receive permanent injury, we find that the actions of the Accused fail to rise to the level which constitute the unjustified or unauthorized initiation of force, and thus do not constitute a violation of Rule #1. To the extent that her actions would otherwise constitute assault, the record is clear that the victim consented to the fighting which took place. Had the Accused assaulted the victim merely because they acquiesced to their taunts, or the Accused assaulted the victim without asking them if they were willing to fight, we would find that to constitute a clear violation of Rule #1.

As to the charge of breach of the peace, the purpose of the statute is, in general to allow persons to maintain enjoyment of the use of a public area without being disturbed by unwanted or undesirable actions or noise. There was no evidence at the Accused's trial to show that anyone at all who was in the library objected to the fight, and in fact it was established that everyone who was in the library at the time the fight started gathered around to watch. It is also noted that the magistrate who arrived noticed the fighting, blew a whistle, and immediately at that time, the Accused then immediately stopped fighting and stepped back out of reach.

The protection against breach of the peace applies only where there is someone to whom their enjoyment of the status quo is stopped or prevented by someone else's action. *In the matter of Phillip 104*, 7003 Appellate 3105 at 3107. Otherwise, the authorities could stop any form of public discussion on a controversial subject simply by claiming that the discussion is a 'breach of the peace' even though no one objected. We wish to make it clear here that we do not believe that is an appropriate use of the law and we will not allow a conviction under such circumstances to stand.

Both convictions of the Accused are overturned. The case is remanded back to the Trial Court, which is ordered to find the Accused not guilty by reason of inability to prove the offense on both counts. The decision of the Trial Court is

REVERSED

Cite this case: *In the matter of Andrea 528, Accused*, 7104 App. 2912

Chapter 86

“Hey, Alan, looks like you’ve got a problem.”

“246, are you busy right now?”

“Not really, what can I do you for?”

“I think we have a couple of problems here. Do you know about the Barney case?”

“Oh, yeah, guy raped an information clerk? Excuse me, *allegedly* raped an information clerk.”

“Yes. Well, first of all, I think we have an issue with some of your Welcomers.”

“What’s that?”

“I found it unbelievable, but apparently some of them have been having sex with the guy. I mean, he’s a rapist who beat some woman to get her to give in, and they’re willing to have sex with this guy.”

“Is this with any of the security guards or persons otherwise responsible for protecting him?”

“No. My understanding is they’re allowing some of the female Welcomers to go into his cell and have sex with him.”

“Oh. I’d be more concerned if it were people who have authority over a prisoner, or if one prisoner was doing something to another, but there’s no law prohibiting prisoners from conjugal visits with visitors as long as it’s consensual. Now, as for the possibility he might rape them, obviously that’s not possible. All of the female Welcomers are protected by Antirape so the guy can’t injure her by rape. And they have the right to immunity from assault when seeing someone, so the guy can’t hurt her by hitting her. Actually, I think it’s probably not a bad idea.”

“Huh?”

“The guy is having sex with some women. When he’s convicted, he’ll be one and he won’t have any interest in sex at all. If anything, knowing the difference between what he is now and what he will be should make him even more miserable. Do you doubt he’d be convicted?”

“No. I mean, it’s obvious what happened, he was caught red handed so there’s no doubt about it. However, there’s a big problem with the case and I think it’s going to be overturned when he is convicted.”

“Really?”

“Look at this transcript. This page here.”

He does so. “This is not good at all.”

“I think neither of them noticed it. I think the rule is stupid.”

“No, the reason it’s there is that this is not earth. We do not treat people - even the accused - the way they do on earth. We have the capacity to treat them better than there. And we do. This particular rule is one of the ways we do so.”

“Well, maybe you’re right even if I don’t necessarily agree with it. But thinking about this, I suspect that maybe they weren’t listening too closely or weren’t paying attention. But you can bet when he’s convicted someone is going to go over this transcript with a fine-tooth comb, and if I can spot it, and you noticed it, they’re going to point it out to the Court of Appeals and you can guess.”

“Yeah, they’ll overturn the conviction and order a retrial. And I’m sure he’ll be convicted again. So what’s the point?”

“Isn’t it ridiculous to go through an entire trial that we know won’t stand up on appeal? And if the judge made one obvious mistake like this, what if he does another one that causes the case not to be retriable? This guy could get off.”

“I think the probability of that is low.”

“But do we want to take that risk? Maybe you should take this case. After all, you got the Chairman to give you authority to be a judge in any case. And as I pointed out to you earlier you seem to have a bit of a bias that is favorable toward men and thus no one is going to question your impartiality. And there’s another reason. Actually, it’s two reasons.”

“Your honor, the Administrator wants to see you. Now.”

“Okay.”

The judge walks in to 246's office where Alan, Samuels and Barney are sitting. “Oh good, Earl, I’m glad to see your bailiff gave you the message right away. Here is a copy of the transcript, I’d like all four of you to listen as I read this section and tell me what you think.”

THE COURT: We’ll hear motions in the case. Does the prosecution have any additional motions they wish to offer?

ALAN 90534: I think we can be ready in one day, your honor.

THE COURT: Samuels?

SAMUELS 8: Your honor, I think I’ll need a couple days to finish writing and researching the remaining motions I want to offer.

THE COURT: Well, okay then, I can give counsel for the defendant an extra two days in view of their request. The jury is excused for two days and you are all subject to the same instructions you were given earlier not to discuss the case with others or form any opinions about the case prior to it being given to you. Is there anything else from counsel?

ALAN 90534: Not at this time.

SAMUELS 8: No, and thank you, your honor.

Alan looks at 246, “Sweet Jesus, I never even noticed. I can’t believe I was that stupid and missed it.”

Samuels looks up from his copy, “Hey, Alan, looks like you’ve got a problem.”

Earl speaks to 246, “I guess it’s a mistrial then.”

Barney looked up, “I don’t get it.”

“Reading the transcript made me suspicious, so I’ll ask. Samuels, did you notice at the time?”

“Well, Mr Administrator...”

“I know full well if there’s a mistake this bad you don’t say anything so you can prove error on appeal or let whoever does the appeal argue ineffectiveness of counsel. Your comment here where you said ‘thank you, your honor’ makes it obvious you noticed how he just handed you an automatic reversal. So go ahead and explain it for the benefit of your client.”

“The law mandates that a person who has not been convicted of an offense be referred to as ‘the Accused.’ It is reversible error for the judge, the prosecutor or any of the prosecution witnesses to refer to the Accused as ‘the defendant’ until after he or she is convicted. Now, in view of the circumstances the appeals court might simply have said it was harmless error, except the judge said it in front of the jury. That, the appeals court cannot ignore and would overturn the

conviction. The law is very strict on that point.”

“Exactly. So now, what we have to figure out is what to do here. Earl?”

“Well, as I said, obviously it’s a mistrial. I’ll have to reschedule his case. And I…”

At that moment the Deputy Administrator barged in. 246 looked over at her. “Yes, Marilyn?”

“Channel 134,013. It’s on live, now.”

“Central Computer, television replay, location north wall, channel 134,013.”

The TV screen shows a logo “Channel 134,013 Exclusive.” and a man is addressing a crowd.

“...and the lawyer I checked with confirmed it. The judge screwed up, and this son-of-a-bitch

rapist is going to walk! It’s just like with that German guy Lucas, who raped that girl in the

hotel room, and even though there’s video of him raping her, the court had to toss out his

confession on a technicality. I say a bunch of us need to go over to the Welcoming Department,

and give this guy the kind of welcome he needs, and teach him a lesson he won’t ever forget.

Then we should recycle the bastard! A lot of people pick on Barney the Purple Dinosaur, but

this is one Barney that maybe we should paint black and blue! Further, I think tar and

feathering…”

“Central Computer, stop video. Thank you, Marilyn. Get on the phone, call the legislative counsel, have them meet me in twenty minutes in the conference room next door, I need an emergency order. Then seal this room until I return just in case someone figures out where he is before I can get back.” He dematerializes.

246 arrives, sits down at the table and starts writing an ordinance. Shortly after he finishes,

David walks in to the conference room, and Joan materializes. 246 Seals the door. George

teleports in. “What’s the emergency?”

“We’re about to have a riot. Someone discovered the mistake the judge made and think the alleged rapist is going to be released. I need to pass an emergency order. I wrote down the text of the statute. Here’s what I want to do.”

George looks at it. “Well, this is really cute. If you can get their attention, this might stop them. If you three go along, I’ll approve the order immediately.”

“Joan?”

“Yeah, I approve the order.”

“David?”

“Do you think this will help the situation?”

“Yes, I do. Combined with a little psychology to prevent having to use it.”

“Okay, I approve the order.”

“Thanks, David, you can go if you want. I approve the order. George, it’s unanimous.”

“The order is approved as Legal Code Section, uh, 430. Central Computer mark this paper with ‘Section 430’.”

“Thanks. Central Computer, print 200 copies of this paper. “They appear on the desk.

“Central Computer, affix the seal of the Chairman to the pages just printed.”

“Let’s do this by the book, even though we don’t have to. Central Computer, forward ten of these copies to the office of the Clerk-Recorder of the English Language Section of the Afterlife.” They vanish. “Joan, take these 20 copies over and post 5 of them on the front door of the Public Library as well as drop 10 of them in the depository. Then post the other 5 outside this building and wait there for me. Sorry, *please* take them, I should say.”

“It’s okay, 246, I understand.” she unseals the door, then dematerializes.

“I can’t wait to see what happens, I bet this will be fun when they discover what’s going to happen to them if they beat this guy up.”

“It happened to be the fastest thing I could think up. Central Computer, forward all but one of these pages to publishing section.” The copies vanish.

“Good luck, 246, I’ll watch it on the news later.” He dematerializes.

246 walks back to his office and bangs on the door. Marilyn opens it. “Okay, now, we need to do something about this mess.” 246 pulls a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket, and looks at Barney. “Please stand and put your hands behind you.” He does so and 246 cuffs him.

“Central Computer, change clothing on Barney 96 to Welcoming Department Prisoner Uniform, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.” Barney’s clothing changes into a lime green jumpsuit with orange lettering on the back.

“What’s going to happen to me?”

“Just what nobody expects. I’m going to turn you over to the mob and let them do whatever they want. Central Computer, transport me and Barney 96 to the lobby of this building.”

Chapter 87

“I’m going to stop this mob with a piece of paper.”

246 and Barney arrive in the lobby where a large number of very angry people are just outside of the entrance, blocked by security guards and police officers. “You can’t be serious!”
“As serious as Involuntary Recycling.”

“Huh?”

“On earth, someone would say ‘as serious as a heart attack,’ but since we can’t die here, the only way someone can die without committing suicide is to commit a crime so serious that they throw them back to earth, which is what Involuntary Recycling is. That’s how serious I am.”

“You’re not going to actually throw me to the mob?”

“Watch me.”

“What do you think they’ll do to me?”

“My guess is, nothing.” He holds up a copy of the order. “I’m going to stop this mob with a piece of paper.”

“Are you kidding?”

“Nope.” Holding Barney by the handcuffs, 246 walks out to the podium at the front of the building - as he did before when he made his press conference - where police are holding back the crowd, which is quite rowdy and agitated. 246 faces them, while a number of TV cameras are also filming the event. “I’m sure most of you know me, my name is Supervisor 246, I am the Administrator of the Welcoming Department. I suspect a number of you are apparently very mad at this gentleman standing next to me. I also think a number of you would like to hurt this man. Is that the case?”

A very loud “Yes!” erupts from the crowd.

“Well, let me tell you something, I’m too much of a coward to fight with crowds, so if any of you want to hit this man, I’m not going to stop you. And in a moment, the police are going to leave so if you really want to hit him, nobody is going to stop you. That is, if you really want to. But, before any of you do anything, I would like you to be aware of something first. Madam Watch Commander, I formally ask you now in the presence of witnesses, has the order which is posted on the glass behind me, and a copy of which I am holding in my hand, has been properly posted and deposited with the Public Library?

“Yes it has, 246.”

“Thank you. “ 246 turns to Barney, “I now ask you formally in the presence of witnesses whether or not you want anyone to hurt you.”

“Hell no!”

He turns back to the audience. “For the record I wish to state formally that this individual, who is in my custody, is wearing green prison clothing with the words ‘Prisoner of the Welcoming Department’ and is wearing restraints in the form of handcuffs. I wish to inform all of you that the Legislative Counsel has passed, and the Chairman has sealed, the order which is posted on the glass behind me. This order has been filed with the Clerk-Recorder and enrolled into the legal code and even though not required immediately, was still published by posting and deposit with the Public Library, which makes it a valid and enforceable law. I will now read to you the text of the statute.”

§430. Special provision regarding assaults on prisoners

Where any person assaults a prisoner in the custody of the Welcoming Department, either as a person convicted of an offense or an Accused awaiting the outcome of a trial, in addition to or as part of the penalty provided as a result of conviction for said assault, the trial court may provide that the defendant so convicted of said assault shall be subject to a temporary involuntary sex change for one day, and may be reciprocally assaulted by the prisoner in any manner they choose for a period of twice the amount of duration of time the initial assault transpired, or one hour, whichever is longer. Such reciprocal assault shall not constitute a violation of Rule #1. It shall be presumed that such person is a prisoner of the Welcoming Department and any assault upon them is subject to this provision where such person is wearing restraints and is wearing clothing so identifying them as such.

This statute is an emergency order and is to take effect immediately upon passage by the legislative counsel and approval by the Chairman.

“In short, anyone that assaults this man breaks Rule #1 as well as Section 430 of the legal code, and thus after they are convicted, gives him the privilege to legally rape and/or sodomize them for one hour. And if you’re a man, he gets to have you turned into a woman for one day, first. So, in a moment the police will no longer be blocking the stage, and any of you that feel that hurting this man is worth allowing him to legally rape you for one solid hour, well, it’s your choice. We will be watching, cameras will be running, and any of you that do so will be violated, arrested and prosecuted. And contrary to popular belief, this man is not merely being released without being tried. So, unless you’re planning to become this man’s ‘bitch’ I suggest you go home or back wherever you came from.”
The crowd dissipated.

Chapter 88

“...they’d probably make pillow fights illegal..”

“Now that we’re back, I’ve decided to change my mind about this case. I was going to have you try it again, Earl, but in view of the high visibility I’ve decided to remove you and assign it to someone else. I want to make sure this man receives a scrupulously fair trial to the maximum extent possible.”

“246, Don’t you think you’re overreacting?”

“Let me consider that for a moment. I’m going to ask you a question. Do you know who Andrea 528 is? You just winced, so maybe that says something. The Court of Appeals reversed you twice on her case, and to add insult to injury, in unsigned rulings. That’s pretty bad. I think you need remedial training and I suggest that you take some time and take it before more of your cases end up being appealed on a regular basis because you have the reputation as a judge who makes really bad mistakes.”

“You don’t mean that.”

“Your first ruling was so bad that on a trivial motions hearing they overturned your decision. Usually they don’t bother, but they felt your motion was so out of line that they had to shall we say, ‘reel you in a little’ and let you know you’re going too far. Didn’t you find it odd the prosecutor’s office never even bothered to send someone in to argue against the motion? That even they thought the motion was so obvious they never even bothered to argue against it? But no, you have to go and hold a hearing and then rule against it. I really suggest you go back for a refresher course because this tells me you’re getting either sloppy or careless, and either way, I think you need to correct the problem.”

“If you say so.”

“Now don’t get mad, I wouldn’t be spending the time explaining this to you if I didn’t think it would help you to do better in the future. If I thought you were a bad judge I’d assign you to something else. Or actually I’d tell your section head to do it, I wouldn’t want to get them upset. Okay then, thank you for coming.” He leaves.

“Now, gentlemen, as far as rulings what I think we’ll do is start over at the point where the Grand Jury returned an indictment and start from there. Samuels, would I be breaking into attorney-client privilege if I asked you what your client was asking you while I was talking to the judge?”

“No, 246, what he asked was what was the issue about the rulings from the Court of Appeals and I told him I’d explain later.”

“Well, I’ll be happy to explain. When someone files a request to appeal, all of the members read the request for appeal. If they all agree there’s no grounds for an appeal, the Chief Justice assigns it to the pile of items denied certiorari without comment, and one of their law clerks writes the order. If they all agree the decision was wrong, and nobody has any comment, they’ll send it to one of the clerks to write an opinion that way, and if nobody disagrees it goes out as an unsigned opinion. If there is a disagreement then they examine the case directly, and at least two of the judges want to hear it, then they make a formal decision on it. In this last case, some woman in the law library beat up another Accused awaiting trial, and the Court of Appeals overruled his decisions on her case twice. And the ruling was so bad that law clerks could spot the flaws, which is why they were unsigned opinions.”

“Wait a minute, is that the one who beat me up?”

“It was you? Huh, I am surprised, I had no idea. Well, now you know why I asked you if you wanted to be hurt back downstairs even though it was obvious you would say no. The law doesn’t make consensual fighting a crime here as long as you don’t create a fuss. Since there’s no possibility of permanent injury there’s no reason to prohibit it any more than there would be a law on earth to criminalize pillow fights. No, strike that, on earth they’d probably make pillow fights illegal if they thought they could use it to manipulate people. But anyway, if someone starts fighting someone else without their consent they violate the Supreme Law of the land, Rule #1, and that we take very seriously. It’s the same reason you’re here, because we take what you are accused of doing quite seriously. So, anyway, what I have decided is that we will have his case start over tomorrow morning, bright and early around, uh, 2:75. Since you don’t know standard time, that’s about 7:30 in the morning. Oh, wait a minute, it’s 7:38. Okay, then, it’s 7:38 in the morning. Since you had already requested formal trial by jury I am presuming you wish to request formal trial by jury again over informal trial by judge, would that be the case? Okay. Any questions? Alan?”

“Uh, yes, what courtroom will it be in and are you going to use a lottery as was originally done or are you assigning it to a specific judge?”

“I think we’ll use the first floor auditorium, it’s got a tiny audience space but I think it will do.”

“Uh, 246, the audience in the auditorium seats 12,000 people. The biggest courtroom I’ve been in would hold perhaps 500 if you packed them like sardines.”

“Yes, I know. In fact I was considering holding this either out at my amusement park or in the coliseum but I think this will do. This is a very serious case and I want lots of attention shown on it so that people know exactly what is happening so we don’t get any more potential riots because of public misunderstanding.”

“Oh. Are you going to assign this case to a specific judge or are we using a lottery again?”

“I’m thinking of one in particular, one that some people have said might be a little bit biased in favor of men and thus might give the Accused a break, as well as one I can trust to be scrupulously fair.”

“Who are you thinking of, Judge Holland 9, Weiss 14 or Eric?”

“No, I’ve decided to take this case myself. If there’s no objection, since the jury is contaminated we’ll start selection for a new jury tomorrow.”

“All Rise! Welcoming Department Special Court 3 is now in session, the Honorable Supervisor 246 presiding.”

“Be seated if you wish, and come to order. On the record In the Matter of Barney 96, Accused. Those of you in the audience in the cordoned-off area were selected for jurors for this case.

First, I do not want any problems over people having trouble with this case. Second, I want to see to it the Accused has a fair trial with as little bias as it is possible to obtain. So, in keeping with that, anyone on the jury who does not want to be on this case for any reason at all, is excused and may leave. Now, anyone who thinks they might have a problem with this case or have trouble with what the Accused is charged of, is also permitted to excuse themselves. I would also like to remind all of you that the Accused does not have to prove anything at all, the prosecution must prove everything, so any of you that think the Accused has to prove his innocence, please stand up and leave the jury pool. Okay, now that’s settled, I would like the

following persons to stand. Jurors 19, 262, 363, 401, 682, 1905 and 1430, 1001, 936, 991, 1008, 1663, 105, 96, 99, and 114, you are all excused. Jurors 115, 160, 168, 292, 331, 1104, 210, 224, 305, 4, 51, 116, 552, 308, and 6, you are all excused. Jurors 90, 190, 122...”

“Uh, your honor, may I ask why I was excused?”

“Do the rest of you want to know? Okay, the first group is excused because even after I said the prosecution has to prove everything, they still believe that the Accused has to prove his innocence. The second group believes the Accused must be guilty or he wouldn’t be on trial. The next group were all in with the rioters last night. Before you ask, I can read minds so I know what you’re thinking. I want unbiased jurors and I expect that to be the case. Again, jurors 90, 190 and 122 are excused. Juror 301 already believes the Accused is guilty, you are excused. Jurors 703, 804, 919, 49, 66 and 12 believe it would look bad if the Accused were acquitted, you are all excused. I’d like to note for the record not one juror is of the opinion that they could not convict the Accused under any circumstance, nor is there any juror that believes the Accused to be completely innocent. One particular juror is of the opinion that the police think he’s guilty, which is why they are trying him but that doesn’t mean he is and the prosecution has to prove it. That’s a very good mind set in view of the circumstances and I would like to encourage it. We’ll send the jury out and bring them in 14 at a time for *voir dire* until we get 12 plus two alternates. Bailiff will escort the remaining jurors out now. Okay, now that they are out of the room, I’m thinking of peremptory challenges, I’ll give the Accused twenty and the prosecution none. Now I...”

“Your honor?”

“Counselor?”

“I believe this is manifestly unfair.”

“So you feel this is not enough peremptory challenges.”

“Obviously.”

“Thank you for bringing it to my attention. Okay, I’ll give the Accused fifty and you still get zero. Anyway...”

“Your honor, seriously!”

“Okay, counselor, let me be serious for a moment, although that may be difficult. The Accused was caught red handed committing the crime to which he is charged, in the presence of witnesses, and on tape no less. Do you really think you’re going to have a problem proving this case beyond a reasonable doubt? The only reason he’s on trial is because there’s nothing really he can benefit to pleading guilty, he’d get the exact same sentence, so he might as well plead not guilty and maybe if he’s lucky his counsel can somehow convince the jury not to convict him. Other than that occurring I can’t see where you need any peremptory challenges. Unless you can think of any possible mitigating factors he might raise that would possibly sway the jury not to convict him, I see no need for you to have any peremptory challenges at all. Counselor?”

“I think the fact he’s an Incoming and wasn’t aware of where he is will sway the jury.”

“I suspect the jury is going to figure he didn’t know he was dead and thought he was awake, and thus should have known better. If you think the accused can raise evidence in any way to show the Accused thought that he was asleep and thus shouldn’t be punished and that the jury would believe it, I might be inclined to go along. I see too much of prosecutors with virtually unlosable cases complaining about the restrictions they are under, but if they had to live with the kind of resource shortages most defendants’ counsel on earth labor under they would act as if

they were crippled. Well, counselor, if you think you need peremptory challenges that badly, then perhaps we should let you have them, but if that's the case, you should have to try this as a death penalty case, err, I mean an Involuntary Recycling case. You won't just have to prove this case beyond a reasonable doubt, you will have to prove it beyond any shadow of a doubt whatsoever. Now do you want them that badly?"

"No, your honor. I must, however take exception to your ruling."

"Very well, noted. We'll go to *voir dire* in a moment if it is necessary after I handle a motion as it turns out we might not even have to go to trial. Is Counsel for the Accused Ready to Proceed?"

"Channel 134,013 will return with more live coverage of the Barney case after this message from the law firm of Main, Main, Main and Main."

"The office of Main, Main, Main, and Main fights vigorously for its clients. If Barney had been one of our clients, it is very likely he wouldn't be going on trial. We will work hard on your case, too..."

END OF BOOK I

In the Matter of:

Instrument of God

Paul Robinson

Book II

Chapter 89

“...I cannot stand by and watch... a fraud and a sham... take place...”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the Matter of Barney 96, Accused. (File No. 710400830901)
7104 App. 3892
Appeal on behalf of the Accused.

Majority opinion, authored by Wilson 2109:

Accused appeals his conviction for rape. The facts of the matter in the case are uncontroverted. Accused was visiting a woman and asked her for sex. The woman refused. He forced himself on her and assaulted her. Simultaneously while this was happening, the woman transported the two of them to the central jail facility, where several police officers pulled the surprised man off her while he was in the act of sexually assaulting her. It was determined that the man had come into this world after dying, walked out of the Incoming area without waiting to be Welcomed, went to the main entrance, met this woman, got her interested in being alone with him, and went home with her, but in some way antagonized the woman, who then decided she wasn't interested in him, and when she refused his advances he forced himself on her.

Upon examining the Accused it was determined that he was not aware that he had died. As the Accused had never been loved into the world, he was assigned to and the Welcoming Department court accepted jurisdiction over him.

The Trial Court, consisting of no less than the Administrator of the Welcoming Department himself, Supervisor 246, offered the Accused the option of a formal trial or an informal one. Accused requested a formal trial with a jury. Accused was convicted. Pursuant to Section 407 of the Legal Code, Defendant submitted petition for Certiorari in lieu of appeal *DeNovo* to the General Court. This Court chose to accept the petition.

In appealing, Accused argues that his conviction is flawed because he was unable to control his actions, that the trial court erred in not allowing him to raise insanity as a defense before the jury, that the penalty to be imposed is excessive in length, and that it is cruel and unusual punishment. He also argues ineffective assistance of counsel, bias on the part of the trial court, and that the definition of the crime he was charged with is vague and unclear. He argues that the law as such was unavailable to him and he had no way to know what the law was. He also argues that the court did not have jurisdiction to try the case.

As is the statutory requirement in opposition to most cases, we examine the Accused's case giving him all benefit of doubt, and grant to the Accused all presumptions which may be made toward him; Legal Code Section 508.

As to the Accused being able to raise insanity as a defense, The transcript from the Trial Court is fairly clear.

THE COURT: We'll go to *voir dire* in a moment if it is necessary after I handle a motion as it turns out we might not even have to go to trial. Is Counsel for the Accused Ready to Proceed?

SAMUELS 8: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Counselor, you have here an entry indicating you want to plead not guilty by reason of inability to prevent the offense, with the reason for the inability being insanity?

SAMUELS 8: That is correct, your honor.

THE COURT: Very well. I'm willing to accept that to be the case, we won't even have to bother getting psychiatric testimony. If you want to plead that I'll have the Accused transferred to the custody of Dr. Wacko and placed with the psychiatric section immediately.

ALAN 90534: Objection your honor, I think that would be inappropriate, I would like to have the opportunity to provide evidence to rebut any claims of the Accused as to whether or not he lacks the required mental capacity. And I believe that is an issue for the trier of fact, e.g. the jury to decide.

THE COURT: Mr. Prosecutor, what I am saying is that personally I believe that any man who would commit rape in this society, considering how easy it is to get sex here, is as a matter of law statutorily insane. I don't think it needs to be decided. Any man that would commit rape has to have something wrong with him. Oh, and speaking of something wrong, you should have said 'i.e.' not 'e.g.'

ALAN 90534: Oh, excuse me your honor, I didn't realize my English would also be on trial. If it please the Court, I think that is a matter for the trier of fact to decide. I personally...

THE COURT: Excuse me, Mr. Prosecutor. The Court is of the opinion that whether you are using the terms 'i.e.' or 'e.g.' correctly is a matter for The Court to decide. (Laughter)

ALAN 90534: Very funny, your honor, I was referring to whether the Accused is sane or lacks required mental capacity is a matter for the trier of fact to decide. I will bow to the Court's opinion on correctness of the English language. I personally would prefer to have the Accused tried, and I suspect would be convicted, and thus appropriately punished for his crime as opposed to getting away with this and simply spending time in some psychiatrist's office talking about how his mommy and daddy were mean to him until the shrink gets bored and decides to say he's cured, and he just walks away, then maybe does it again.

THE COURT: Well, personally I happen to disagree with you, Mr. Prosecutor, I think any man that would commit rape in this society is insane, it doesn't have to be proven by expert witness. But if you're that adamant about trying him, I'm going to do something to see to it that the Accused get the treatment that, in my opinion, he would so desperately need if he was convicted. I will now make a *Supervisor 960* announcement. If the Accused wants to plead that way, or include insanity as part of a general not guilty plea, what I'm going to do is, at the end of the trial, I will direct the jury to come back with a verdict of not guilty by reason of inability to prevent the offense, the reason being insanity. I will then order the Accused turned over to the custody of Dr. Wacko for a period of not less than three years. I figure that should be the minimum amount of time the man should be under psychiatric care. If at the end of three years I am not convinced he is cured, I will send him back until I believe he is no longer a danger to society. Personally I suspect that he will be spending a minimum of ten years in psychiatric treatment. It's my discretion on how long his treatment would be, and I'll tell you right now that it will be a large multiple of the amount of time he would suffer the standard penalty if he were to be

convicted. I want to make sure the Accused is cured of any tendency to commit antisocial acts such as rape if it turns out he did do what is claimed in the charges before me.

No. Wait. I think I'm allowing my biases toward seeing this Accused get treatment for his alleged illness rather than seeing to it he gets a fair trial first. That would not be fair to the Accused, who we are supposed to presume stands innocent of the charge until proven beyond a reasonable doubt. I think what I will do is this. I will let the jury decide as it wishes. If the jury decides that the Accused is innocent he will be free to go, as he should be. If the jury agrees with the Accused's plea, I'll let the verdict stand. But if the jury comes back with a verdict of guilty, if the Accused either pleads not guilty due to inability to prevent caused by insanity or includes it as part of a general not guilty plea, then I will set aside the verdict of guilty and give the Accused what he has asked for, psychiatric treatment, because I believe he should receive that instead of punishment; that should be reserved for criminals who do something wrong, not for someone who did something because they were sick. And I expect to see to it the Accused gets several standard years of treatment before I even consider whether he should be released.

ALAN 90534: I see. Very well, then.

SAMUELS 8: Your Honor, are you saying that if we include a plea of insanity as part of our defense, you're going to hold the Accused in treatment for several years even though the penalty for this type of offense is most likely six months if he is convicted?

THE COURT: That's correct.

SAMUELS 8: Your Honor, that is unreasonable! You're placing us in the position of either having to choose to enter a standard plea of not guilty and lose my client's ability to include the argument that he is insane, or include the argument and risk my client having to spend more time in psychiatric confinement than he would receive in punishment.

THE COURT: Counselor, a man just doesn't suddenly snap and one day decide to commit rape, like one might, for example, come into a fit of rage and kill someone. Not in the way the Accused is alleged to have done. If the evidence were to show, for example, that the Accused and the complaining witness were involved in some sexual game and it went too far, that she decided to change her mind in the middle, and then he got mad and forced her anyway, I might be inclined to allow the Accused to be released after a cursory examination to see that was the case and under normal circumstances he would not normally do that, provided he was to have regular psychiatric treatment. But if the facts as disclosed in the indictment are correct, this is not some 'heat of passion' loss of control. This was a man who decided he wanted what he wanted and wasn't going to allow the complaining witness to refuse to give him what he wanted nor would it stop him from taking it from her by force. This sort of attitude didn't start the day the Accused died, he's probably been carrying it around for several years while he was alive. No, make that certainly, not probably.

And I've got to wonder about the Accused anyway. One day I was sitting in an automobile and fell asleep. I woke up when the vehicle jumped the embankment and crashed into a ditch. Well, I didn't really wake up, I died. I saw the whole scenario,

Tunnel of Light and wound up in the reception area and so on, same as you, the Accused and everyone else here did. I knew, from what I had heard that this was dying, and I guess how I felt was total relief that there really was something beyond life, my biggest worry was that - although I knew I would never know - I would suffer annihilation. That the Accused is not stupid and yet had no clue that he had died makes me wonder if maybe he does need psychiatric care if he did in fact do what he is accused of.

The Accused was living in Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania, if I have his prior history correct. It's a tiny rural community about 30 kilometers from Breezewood, a place I remember having driven through more than once. 'The Town of Motels.' Because a major interstate connects with the Pennsylvania Turnpike, a lot of people stop there before going on their way, either coming off the Turnpike to continue on the other freeway, or vice versa. It's a rural community even if relatively busy. It's not the sort of big city environment like you have here. And Breezewood is a major city compared with the tiny little hamlet of Warfordsburg, where he died, when he had a heart attack in his sleep.

I do believe the Accused should have suspected something, if he's in the middle of a small rural town in the U.S. - the kind of which they have thousands where your next-door neighbor is a click or two up the road - then suddenly arrives in the middle of an office building on the 1,000th floor - then walks out of the place - and walks out to a huge public square, through the Main Entrance and the Picketing Zone, then past the Information Desk in the middle of Central Square, and on out into our world, and treats it as if this happens every damn day. Maybe he thought he was dreaming. Well, he should have pinched himself before doing something that might have serious consequences if he got caught if he wasn't.

Unless he didn't care one way or the other. As a result, I think that he clearly shows almost unequivocal evidence of some form of insanity or personality disorder, or definitely something is wrong with him. I think it would be very helpful to find out why if that is the case. This is why, if the Accused wants to claim that he is insane that he be examined and treated, because I'm willing to agree 100% that he is. But the sort of thing he did - or rather, he is accused of having done, I should say - is so serious that I can't see him getting any serious remediation except over a long term treatment, something that is going to take a lot longer than the sentence imposed for a criminal violation.

Personally I'd like to see the Accused get psychiatric treatment. The Court has no power to order it in the absence of either the Accused asking for it or the prosecution moving for treatment. Further, the Court of Appeals has stated that unless it is without objection by the Accused, psychiatric treatment may not be imposed involuntarily without a full public hearing. That's a check against the sort of actions of some places back on earth where courts imposed involuntary psychological treatment as a form of extra-judicial torture of dissidents. So this court is without authority to act in that manner unless someone asks the court for it. If the prosecutor asks for it, and you do not oppose the motion, I will grant it. If the prosecutor asks for it, and you oppose the motion, I will not grant it. It's

unreasonable to force this on the Accused unless he is willing to accept it. In the event the Accused is convicted and does not claim that he is sick, I will impose punishment upon him involuntarily. But I will do more than the law requires; I will not hold a hearing to force treatment upon him; I simply will not impose psychiatric confinement upon him without his consent.

And I don't know if having psychiatrists on both sides battle it out is the answer in this sort of situation. It seems to me what we would have in most psychiatric evaluations is the Accused's expert witness claiming he is crazier than a bedbug, while the prosecution's witness will claim the Accused is saner than I am. Although it is quite possible that the Accused could still be crazy even if he actually was saner than I am, a large number of people consider *me* missing a few marbles. But in going back to the Accused here, I'm thinking that all we essentially get is one professional witness versus another and the jury is asked to decide the guilt or innocence of the Accused based on whose expert looks better. I believe the Accused should be treated better than that if it turns out he is sick. And I do not think that a person with that kind of lack of concern for others is going to be cured unless he gets a long time of treatment, not only to be sure it is adequately covered that he is not going to be a danger to others, but to watch him over time and be sure that is the case. If we are going to say the Accused is sick, I do not want him being released until that sickness is treated, lest he do this again if he ever were to be released into society. So, Counselor, what I will do is give you two choices, you can either plead Not Guilty by reason of inability to prevent the offense due to insanity, or include it as part of a standard not guilty plea, and if your client is found that way, argue with the Court of Appeals that my intent to force him through a period of treatment longer than he would be punished if convicted violates his rights, and I'll presume you take an exception to my ruling. Or you can enter some other plea and not raise the issue of insanity, and if it turns out the Accused is convicted, I'll suspend any finding while you appeal my ruling which caused you not to raise insanity and I'll note an exception for that purpose.

The trial court's clear and eloquent detailed explanation as to why it would require the Accused to spend a considerable amount of time shows the court did not simply decide to punitively impose a longer period of psychiatric confinement out of spite, but because it clearly felt that the Accused required treatment comparable to the dysfunction to which it appeared he possessed.

The purpose in having an Accused submit a claim of insanity of part of a plea is that it is usually an issue where the court believes it is an issue that must be decided. Since the court was willing to accept the Accused claim as a matter of law, it would not be necessary for it to be presented to a jury unless the court would not rule on it directly, as the court announced that it would.

Having dismissed the issue of insanity, we'll go on to the issue of sexual compulsion.

Given the existence of the Welcoming Department and that a large percentage of all females in this society are more agreeable to having sex than they would be on earth, we have long since put paid to the claim that one might commit rape because of a desire for sex that they cannot fulfill.

Rape is a crime of violence, not of sex; it is an act in which the perpetrator forces the victim to accept whatever they wish to do to them. As the Supreme Court of California on Terra said, “By its very nature, rape displays a ‘total contempt for the personal integrity and autonomy’ of the victim; [s]hort of homicide, [it is] the “ultimate violation of self.”” *Coker v. Georgia* 433 U.S. 584, 597, 603 (1977) [53 L.Ed.2d 982, 996, 97 S.Ct. 2861] (plur. opn. of White, J.; conc. and dis. opn. of Powell, J.) Along with other forms of sexual assault, it belongs to that class of indignities against the person that cannot ever be fully righted, and that diminishes all humanity.” *Mary M. v. City of Los Angeles* 54 Cal.3d 202,222 (1991) [285 Cal.Rptr. 99; 814 P.2d 1341]

Eve Ensler, in her book *The Vagina Monologues*, had this to say:

As I traveled with the piece to city after city, country after country, hundreds of women waited after the show to talk to me about their lives. The play had somehow freed up their memories, pain, and desire. Night after night I heard the same stories - women being raped as teenagers, in college, as little girls, as elderly women; women who had finally escaped being beaten to death by their husbands; women who were terrified to leave; women who were taken sexually, before they were even conscious of sex, by their stepfathers, brothers, cousins, uncles, mothers and fathers. I began to feel insane, as if a door had opened to some underworld and I was being told things I was not supposed to know; knowing these things was dangerous.

Slowly it dawned on me that nothing was more important than stopping violence toward women - that the desecration of women indicated the failure of human beings to honor and protect life, and this failing would, if we did not correct it, be the end of us all. I do not think I am being extreme. When you rape, beat, maim, mutilate, burn, bury and terrorize women, you destroy the essential life energy on the planet. You force what is meant to be open, trusting, nurturing, creative and alive to be bent, infertile and broken.

We will thus dismiss the issue of rape being a problem in which the Accused is incapable of controlling his actions. Further, if the Accused is incapable of controlling his actions, he should have submitted the plea of inability to prevent the offense, the reason being insanity and thus obtain the treatment for his problem which he chose to reject.

I will now go into the issue of the crime to which this individual was Accused of committing being vague.

Legal Code section 700 provides that all criminal offenses are defined as being a subset of Rule #1. Rule #1 states, quite simply, “No person shall initiate force upon another except to prevent or retaliate against the other’s initiation of force.”

Legal Code section 3 defines “‘Force’ as used in Rule #1 means the imposition (or attempted imposition) of force or violence without consent of the party to whom it is used upon. It includes all forms of non-consensual assault against a person and all forms of attempted non-consensual assault which may reasonably be presumed to cause injury upon another.”

Legal Code section 8101 states that “‘Rape’ is defined as (A) the non-consensual contact between (1) the genitals of one person and the anus, mouth or genitals of the other... Where “contact” is used in the previous sentence, it refers to penetration, however slight, of the inside of

the anus, or interior of the genitals, or of the genitals into any orifice of the other.” These sections taken together clearly indicate exactly what is prohibited - the imposition of a non-consensual assault which causes injury - describes exactly what is necessary to constitute the crime of rape, and thus defines exactly what is prohibited, and declares such action to be so. The claim that the definition of the crime as vague is rejected as invalid.

As to the Accused’s claim of ignorance of the law, while on earth ignorance of the law is not considered grounds for excuse of one’s conduct, it may be raised as a defense here. However, we believe that claim to be specious.

Were there no such class of crime on earth and no way for the Accused to in any reasonable way to be aware of it as such, we would be more likely to accept the argument that the Accused was ignorant of it. The definition for rape in our society is almost exactly the same as the one on earth. The prosecution showed during his trial that the concept of rape is well established in the country he came from (the United States), it is also a crime there, as provided by Title 18, § 3121 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, and the Accused did not provide any evidence at all to rebut the proposition that the Accused knew, or should have known, that rape is an unacceptable behavior to be committing upon others, especially women. In examining this issue, even granting to the Accused the benefit of doubt, on this point the evidence makes it clear there cannot be any doubt at all.

As part of the previous question I will also go into the issue of the penalty being cruel or unusual.

It is clear the purpose of the law prohibiting rape is intended to stop violence against women. I note that while there are cases where men are raped, the vast majority of, if not almost all cases of rape involve the exact conduct the Accused was convicted of: a man inflicting himself by force against a woman, so that is what I will examine for the purpose of this discussion. It should be necessary to ask - and we should inquire - as to whether the law as it stands is reasonable in application to that purpose.

In what ways can the law make an attempt to stop violence against women? Well, it is conceivable that it could impose Involuntary Recycling upon those who commit rape. While this would prevent future attacks, all it would do is dispose of the problem. In view of the opinion in *Coker v. Georgia*, supra (penalty for rape being capital punishment is grossly disproportionate and excessive), it is likely that such a penalty would be found in violation of the Equal Protection and Cruel or Unusual statutes as well. Imposing such a penalty would not solve it, and it is conceivably possible that the personality of the individual willing to do this sort of thing would resurface and would simply start the whole process all over again, dumping our problem on Terra for the period of time the person is alive, then when they come back here they do this again, and all we have done is temporarily pushed aside the problem. And I do mean ‘temporarily.’

Considering that we are, except for what periods we are alive, here forever, a 50 or 60 or 70-year suspension of the problem until the person dies again is obviously a ‘temporary’ solution compared with the lifespan of the universe which is currently estimated at 12 billion years, the lifespan of the earth, estimated at 3 billion years, the period of time human beings have existed, about 2 million years, the period of time we have communication, approximately 20,000 years, and even the period of time we have had writing, 7,104 standard years, the period of time representing one lifetime is a mere ‘blip on the radar screen’ of human existence.

Continually throwing rapists back to Terra doesn't do anything to solve the problem and in fact says something about us, as a society, that we have no solution to the problem other than declaring the person who commits such an act to be so irreparably damaged that there is no possible means available to fix the problem except to 'dump our garbage' on someone else. As we see some countries on Terra doing the same thing to us by executing dissidents and people who have not violated other people's rights, but just had them legally murdered - and sometimes extralegally - because they became too much of an irritant to the uncivilized barbarian rulers of the particular countries in question.

The maximum penalty provided under the law under a conviction in a court of the Welcoming Department is substantially less than that which could be applied if the Accused was to be tried in the General Court. There have been some who question whether the penalties applied by the Welcoming Department are far too lenient, as if, in effect, it is a form of the Juvenile Justice system applied to adults. *Is the Welcoming Department a reincarnation of Juvenile Court?* 1603 *Afterlife Law Review* 104; *Is Welcoming Department criminal practice a form of 'discount justice'?* 95 *Legal Practice* 227; *Lets make a deal: Do Welcoming Department criminal penalties essentially provide plea bargain rates without the Accused even having to ask?* 1606 *Afterlife Law Review* 723. There are others who argue the purpose of the Welcoming Department's rules are more toward trying to correct behavior than punishment. *Do Welcoming Department criminal penalties encourage rehabilitation or encourage misbehavior?* 1593 *Afterlife Law Review* 9; *Recidivism: A comparison between ordinary cases and cases of the Welcoming Department*, 103 *Legal Practice* 1703.

Thus some may argue in either direction about the penalties applied and whether this solution to the problem of criminal behavior is the correct one. But the law here does provide a solution. We can ask at this point, have we provided some reasonable solution? And perhaps we have. The length of punishment imposed - six standard months - is not so excessive that the person is being made to suffer for an enormously long time. The punishment imposed, that the defendant's sex be changed from male to female, that the defendant, who will now be a 'she', suffer loss of sex drive, a requirement she be dressed in female clothing of a provocative style, and to be required to appear in public several hours a day so dressed, do not appear on its face to be unreasonable, and in fact, seem rather light compared with the gravity and seriousness of the offense to which the Accused was convicted.

It is clear and obvious that a person commits rape because they do not consider the other person worthy of consideration, that they do not believe that the victim has any right to have feelings, that how they feel means nothing. In this case, the punishment imposed upon the Accused is meant to teach, to instruct them how it feels to be considered a sex object. To be constantly exposed to unwanted and undesired sexual comments, possibly to undesired touching and the possible hazard of being assaulted themselves. In short, the defendant is made to 'walk a mile in the shoes' of the victim.

This court, however, wishes to ensure that it carefully takes into account the Accused's rights under the law. Excessive concern with the victim of a crime could conceivably justify almost any punishment upon an Accused as a convicted defendant if the crime were serious enough. Again, the number of people who 'arrive on our doorstep' after being executed on Terra shows that to be clear.

Were it the purpose of the statute to place the Accused, upon conviction, to be in a

position that caused them to become the victim of sexual assault and have no means to protect themselves, the court would find such a punishment not merely cruel or unusual, but to be cruel *and* unusual. We have in the past declared a statute invalid for such reasons.

The purpose of a statute in imposing a punishment for a crime is to allow the Accused, upon conviction, to understand that their conduct was impermissible. It is, however impermissible for the government to have a statute whose operation, in effect, encourages others to commit crimes upon the defendant. In such a case as is would be applied here, the statute would, in effect, impose a cruel and unusual punishment upon the Accused as they would never know when the next infliction of punishment would occur, it would represent a form of entrapment upon persons who violated the rights of the defendant, and in causing both such operations the law is void as a repugnant insult to a civilized society. *In the Matter of Alan 19, Accused*, 7090 App 121.

The purpose of the penalty imposed by the rape statute clearly is intended to show the Accused, upon conviction, what it means to have been in the same position as the victim of the crime. On its face and in operation it does not appear to impose a form of punitive sanction beyond doing exactly what it purports to do: to teach the Accused a lesson, to give them an understanding of how badly what they have done is to the victim..

Further, at the end of the time period the Defendant may either petition the court (if under probation) or may otherwise obtain on their own action if not, a restoration of their former gender and level of sex drive, and may then be restored to the original condition they were at the time the sentence was imposed either then or in the worst case, at the end of probation.

The strong defense argued by the Accused's counsel makes the argument that his counsel was inadequate to defend him to be specious.

Now we will go on to the issue of jurisdiction of the Accused by the Welcoming Department as opposed to being tried in the civil court system.

Section 405(A) of the Legal Code provides that crimes committed by an Incoming in any place in the English Language section are under the jurisdiction of the Welcoming Department. Section 2 defines an *Incoming* as a person who has died who has not been loved back into the world.

The Accused argues that if he is accused of having raped the complaining witness, he has been loved back into the world and thus the Welcoming Department had no jurisdiction to try him. The term "loved back into the world" with respect to a person of heterosexual orientation, is to have engaged in sexual intercourse resulting in orgasm, usually (although it does not have to be) with someone of the opposite sex.

Legal Code, Section 14, says, "A person who is, or has been 'loved back into the world' is someone who has engaged in an overt sex act with another individual resulting in orgasm." Section 8100 defines "Overt sex act" among other things, to include "Consensual carnal knowledge" and defines "carnal knowledge" to include "sexual intercourse." Despite that the statutory definition of "overt sex act" explicitly requires consensual intercourse, the prosecution did not raise this point in its response to the Accused's brief, thus due to the requirement that we grant all presumptions in favor of the Accused, we will presume for the sake of argument this provision is not applicable to this case. Further, as we have stated many

times in the past, penal statutes are to be construed strictly, and where there is any possibility of such, is to be maximally construed in favor of the liberty of the Accused. Now, notwithstanding the statutory requirement that an "overt sex act" be consensual, due to the imposition of Climax Privilege, a man cannot achieve orgasm without the permission of the woman he is with. The statute, however, does not say *who* must receive an orgasm. Since we must, in examining the Accused's appeal, give him the maximum benefit of any possible doubt, for the purposes of this discussion we will accept orgasm by anyone involved (even if it was involuntary in the case of the complaining witness) as being adequate to trigger the provision of the statute and thus render the Welcoming Department as lacking jurisdiction to try the case. In the case of a man, whether the form of sexual intercourse is vaginal, anal or oral copulation is irrelevant for the purposes of this discussion if he is with any woman, because climax privilege prevents a man from receiving any sexual gratification unless the woman he is with at the time he is engaging in a sexual act grants it to him. The record is clear that he never had sexual contact with anyone else after he died other than the complaining witness. The computer record shows that the complaining witness never granted climax privilege to anyone on the day of the alleged attack. The Accused was engaged in sexual contact for approximately 10 seconds before police forced him off the complaining witness. There is no evidence presented that gave any implication that the complaining witness achieved any pleasure, and considerable evidence that he forced himself on her by battery. Thus, by any reading of the facts, no orgasm occurred by either party.

Furthermore, if orgasm had occurred, it would have occurred after the crime had been committed, since the crime as charged is not the continuation of the rape, it is the initial penetration without consent that is the rape and was the crime to which the accused was charged. Thus the Accused was never loved into the world and the trial courts of the Welcoming Department were the proper jurisdiction.

The Trial Court having decided that it would allow the Accused to plead not guilty by reason of inability to prevent the offense, the reason being insanity, and would allow the Accused plea to stand in lieu of conviction if he were convicted was reasonable and as such, the Accused may petition the Trial Court to vacate the conviction and enter finding of not guilty by reason of inability to prevent the offense, the reason being insanity, if he be so inclined.

In the event the Accused does so, the Trial Court is ordered to accept the plea, vacate his conviction, and to assign the Accused to an appropriate treatment program according to law. The case is remanded back to the Trial Court to allow the Accused either to resubmit the plea of not guilty by reason of inability to prevent the offense, the reason being insanity, or he may waive resubmission of plea and have sentence issued by the jury upon her to be imposed.

On a separate matter, this court finds the Trial Court's decision to allow the Accused to pick a new name of a female nature while the defendant is undergoing a forced sex change to be an excellent idea, and we commend the Trial Court for thinking of it. This court will include both names of the Accused in the case header of this decision to allow it to be found either way, and in the event such an incident comes before it again, this court will do the same in any other such case.

The Accused's conviction is
AFFIRMED.

Wilson 2109, Appeals Justice #103
Donald 10322, Appeals Justice #710
Norma 144, Chief Appeals Justice #17
Frederica 17, Appeals Justice #405

Dissenting opinion, authored by Phyllis 22:

I was asked during discussions to perhaps tone down my opinion and perhaps not be so forceful. But I cannot stand by and watch without loudly and publicly opposing, with as much furor as I can raise, as this court allows what is clearly a fraud and a sham to take place simply because it likes the punishment being imposed upon the Accused.

I am deeply disappointed in this Court's decision to allow what appears to me to be a clear and obvious bias against the Accused by the Trial Court to continue unchecked.

The purpose of a trial by jury is to provide a protection against the overzealous actions of the government in imposing punishment upon the Accused, to ensure that an average group of ordinary citizens be willing to agree that the Accused did in fact commit the crime, or that the Accused did not, or that the Accused was not responsible for his actions.

As the majority opinion in this case shows, it is often common practice for the courts on earth to sentence people to death and dump them on our doorstep because they can't figure out what to do with them. And in that respect, the Supreme Court of the United States in *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584 (2002) went so far as to decide that giving judges the exclusive power to decide whether a defendant should be given the death penalty, as opposed to having the jury make the primary decision, was placing too much power in the hands of the court and violated the provisions of the protection of trial by jury as outlined by the U.S. Constitution's 6th Amendment, a provision which is duplicated almost verbatim in item (6) of the *Statement of Rights Under Law*, Section 9902 of the Legal Code.

I am rather disappointed in this court's failure to be more careful to respect the rights of the Accused in this case. Our 'usual and customary practice' is much more respectful to them and we have generally treated an Accused's rights with a higher standard of care and concern than we are allowing in this case. We have gone so far as to discard the less favorable decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Spaziano v. Florida*, 468 U.S. 447 (1984), with respect to decisions involving capital punishment in which we found

While it is correct that there is case law saying that a judge can override the jury's decision not to impose the maximum penalty, and impose Capital Punishment notwithstanding the jury's decision not to do so, and that such an action does not violate the rights of the person charged with a crime, we find the decision in *Spaziano* is of a lower standard than either this court has set or is required by the statutes that the Legislative Counsel has enacted. While a jury's recommendation of Involuntary Recycling is advisory - the judge can still impose a lesser penalty - a jury's decision not to impose Involuntary Recycling is mandatory and constitutes an acquittal of Capital Punishment and forbids imposition of Involuntary Recycling. It is the standard we have set that we shall treat the rights of the Accused much more seriously than the courts on earth are wont to do.

In the matter of Stanley 766132, Accused, 7095 App 13307

I think the actions of the Trial Court border on railroading the Accused into a conviction. Removing the decision from the Jury on whether the Accused is or is not capable of preventing the offense due to insanity, and essentially forcing the Accused to either not present it to them or taking a risk that he would be punished more severely by doing so as a result of making the plea, in effect allows the Trial Court to blackmail the Accused into not making the plea. The statement by the Trial Court, informing the Accused that he had the option either to make a plea of not guilty, or if he made an insanity plea, upon conviction, to be put under a punishment for an enormously long period of time far in excess of that which he would be penalized by a conviction, was, in my opinion, an effective evisceration of the Accused's rights under the law. We are supposed to take into account the protections of those brought before us against being subjected, by the police, by operation of law, or by the Trial Court, to cruel or unusual punishment, to being subjected to arbitrary and capricious punishment, or to being punished for an excessively long period. We are supposed to protect the Accused against the power of the State in the manner in which it could, if left unchecked, impose its will upon him. Without these protections, it can and will act in a cruel and unusual fashion. As was decided by this court

In attempting to impose Involuntary Recycling upon the plaintiff for his conviction in a prior case, there was a failure in the system and the process did not take place... There was an attempt to restart the equipment and try again but the process was stopped when an objection was made that such a practice would be cruel. The defendant uses as an almost identical example of the same error, the decision in *Francis v. Resweber*, 329 U.S. 459 (1947) in which it was ruled that it was not cruel and unusual to impose electrocution a second time after the electric chair failed the first time, nor did it violate the provision against twice imposing a penalty for the same crime. We find such a decision of the United States Supreme Court to be at a minimum idiotic, and at best a disingenuous attempt to permit multiple applications of a penalty which the law permits only once. Imposing a serious penalty, or rather the ultimate penalty as is in this case, upon someone twice, for a single offense, notwithstanding the reason for doing so, constitutes a cruel and unusual practice reminiscent of barbarism. We cannot tolerate a clear and obvious violation of the rights of the plaintiff and we will not do so.

Petition of Bruce 166734 for Habeas Corpus against The Death Traffic Manager,
7093 App 16304

When there is a question raised about whether a penalty is valid, if there is any reasonable basis to find it is not, the courts must find against the imposition of that penalty. And I think that in this case, allowing the imposition of the penalty without allowing an alternative to it to be presented to the trier of fact raises a question as to whether the penalty is valid.

And I fear in our zealotry to see to it this Accused is punished for the crime to which he has been convicted, that we have chosen to deny his rights under the law, simply because it is acceptable to do so in this case.

I note that even the Trial Court noted that it would go beyond even our standard and would not

impose psychiatric treatment upon the defendant without his consent. But a plea of inability to prevent the offense due to insanity does not, in my opinion, represent anything more than a class of plea of the defendant, and does not necessarily mean the defendant is in fact claiming to be insane or that he consents to the imposition of psychiatric treatment.

It is entirely possible that if the Accused were to be given psychiatric treatment that he might be cured in a shorter period of time than he would be punished by conviction at trial. It is entirely possible that if the Accused were treated he would require a longer period. But forcing the Accused to be placed in a position in which if he raises a particular plea he would have no choice but to spend several years in treatment beyond the penalty imposed if he were convicted of the crime, and to deny him the right to have that decision made by the trier of fact rather than the Trial Court imposing it by fiat, to me, smacks of manifest injustice. As the Supreme Court of Canada wrote:

[W]e should never lose sight of the fact that even a person accused of the most heinous crimes, and no matter the likelihood that he or she actually committed those crimes, is entitled to the full protection of the [law]. Short-cutting or short-circuiting those rights affects not only the accused, but also the entire reputation of the criminal justice system.

Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada v. Burlingham, [1995] 2 S.C.R. 206.

The Accused might have wanted to raise an insanity plea in order not to show insanity for the purpose of completely eliminating the penalty, but perhaps to provide for mitigation of punishment. Denying him the ability to use such a strategy in his trial, to me, appears effectively to deny the defendant a fair trial and to denial of due process.

I would therefore rule to REVERSE the defendant's conviction and order a new trial.

I cannot condone this wholesale discounting of the defendant's rights under the law as if we were simply discussing a reduction in the price of pork loins, and I therefore DISSENT in the strongest possible terms to this travesty of injustice.

Phyllis 22, Appeals Justice #120

Cite this case: *In the Matter of Barney 96, Accused*. 7104 Appellate 3892

or Cite this case: *In the Matter of Barbara 96, Accused*. 7104 Appellate 3892

Chapter 90

“I’m not thinking of this scumbag sitting on ice in the county jail...”

“Hi, I have an appointment to see her.”

“Oh yes, go right in.”

He does. “Good afternoon, Madam Justice.”

“Good afternoon, Mr. Administrator. Please, have a seat.”

He does. “You can just call me 246, everyone does.”

“Well, I can guess why you came to see me. I’m not really concerned if you don’t like my opinion or the tone, I say what I feel is best under the circumstances of a case as it comes to us. That’s what I told the Chief Justice when she read the first draft of my opinion, she thought I should tone it down a little. So I made it even stronger.”

“I see. Reminds me of what they did with the movie *South Park*. Well, I came here to tell you something.”

“Okay.”

“Having read your dissent I have decided to overrule myself and grant the defendant in that case a new trial. It was not my intent to deny the defendant any of his rights under the law, nor was I trying to prevent him from raising insanity as a plea. Based on your dissent I suspect I may have done exactly that and I wanted to try to correct the situation.”

“Oh, so that’s what you came here for. Well, I’ll tell you something: don’t do that.”

“Huh?”

“Look, he’s been caught and he’s going to be punished. Not as much as he deserves, but he *is* going to be punished. I would rather you not give that raping bastard another chance to get away with it if a jury decides to acquit him. As far as I’m concerned he’s getting off easy and my only regret is the law doesn’t punish him more severely.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“What do you mean?”

“You seemed to be much more concerned about the defendant when his case came up for appellate review. Have you changed your opinion?”

“No.”

“Why did you argue so strongly against his conviction before if you felt it was a good idea?”

“Well, I’ll explain it to you. I have to be concerned with the manner in which someone is treated when a case comes before us. We are supposed to examine the manner in which someone is treated before the law. It is how these cases come before us that we have to rule; this Court cannot create fictitious examples, it has to take its cases as it gets them. And I see it that our purpose is to protect the rights of the Accused against the government. When there is a conflict, it’s my opinion that we should be more concerned with the rights of the Accused. I’m not thinking of this scumbag sitting on ice in the county jail, I’m thinking about someone in the future who might not be so fortunate as to be protected by a good lawyer and a fair judge, but gets some incompetent, perhaps both are not very good, and gets pushed into taking a bad plea bargain. Or who might be innocent. Or who might be guilty, but is excessively punished. And I think it sets a bad precedent if we allow judges to unilaterally decide to commit a defendant to psychiatric treatment if the decision is made other than by a jury. Besides that, most people think that someone who gives an insanity plea is just trying to get away with it,

rather than someone who is sick and needs treatment as you pointed out.

“I don’t think the man was crazy but I agree he needs his head examined for the reasons you spoke of. But that’s beside the point. I have to look at the big picture, and that says that we do not violate people’s rights in a public manner. Personally, I’m not all that concerned with the rights of this particular defendant, I think he had a fair trial and I think his rights were protected. But I can’t allow, in the abstract, public displays where there is the appearance of anything less than scrupulous attention to the rights of the Accused. I’m not concerned with his rights or over your attempts to put him in the nuthouse for a while but I had to argue against it. Frankly, you should have known better.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that if you were going to alter his sentence from conviction to not guilty by insanity, and do so *sua sponte*, you should have kept your fucking mouth shut and did it anyway, just don’t say anything. Then if he doesn’t like it, he can always come back and have the original sentence reinstated. Which leads me to another thing, a ‘Supervisor 960 Announcement’ indeed. Now every time some judge wants to editorialize about something from the bench he or she figures some way to relate it to his or her biases and makes a ‘Supervisor 960 Announcement.’ I never expected *that* to happen; it’s like we’ve moved the Picketing Zone into the courtrooms to allow judges to make public speeches from the bench. And what kind of damnfool notion told you to just come right out and say what you’re going to do?”

“Because I believe in openness and transparency.”

“Oh really? So what do you do if you get some really guilty slime, he’s done something really horrible, and you come to realize the cop is lying about him but you can tell the guy really is guilty, but if the cop doesn’t lie, this guy is going to walk and probably commit other crimes?”

“Well, if I ever find any cop lies on the stand in a court I’m running for the purpose of giving false evidence to support a conviction, it will be at a minimum the last time he ever testifies in a court I have any control over. And if I can arrange it, it will be last time he wears a police officer’s uniform. And gets some serious punishment.”

“And what do you do about his testimony?”

“I’d tell the jury to ignore it.”

“What about the victim?”

“It’s not my place to be concerned about the victim.”

“So you’re saying you have to think about the effects on society by a rogue cop doing his job, but in the wrong way, as opposed to pulling real criminals off the streets and protecting the victims of crime?”

“I guess you could put it that way.”

“Now you can understand my point of view. I have the luxury of being able to argue in the same fashion as you are, even if I personally disagree with the point I want to make. Three of the other justices didn’t even want to accept this case but I convinced one of the others to hear it and thus we ended up with the ruling we did. His lawyer was smart enough to apply for review here before deciding if he should appeal trial *de novo* to General court. Considering my guess is that if he wasn’t under the Welcoming Department and did that, he’d get a five-year sex change sentence plus community service, like that other rapist Lucas got. The Accused in your case is lucky he’s getting off fairly light. But he doesn’t really deserve a new trial, at least I

don't think. Technically I'd say he should get one, which is what I argued in my dissent. But in terms of his treatment I think he was given about as fair and impartial a decision as one should expect."

"I see."

"246, maybe I'm being just a bit hypocritical, but as I see it there were no true errors on your part, I really think that you should have let the jury decide, then when he was convicted reinstate his insanity plea. By saying you weren't even going to let the jury decide it smacks of going just a little too far in how we should treat the Accused. Or maybe not far enough, I'm not really sure which way I'd phrase it, but in simple terms, if you're going to do something like you, in effect, threatened him with, it would look better if you don't advertise it in advance."

"Oh."

"Another thing. We got a notice from the Chairman's office that we are to allow you to participate in any trial if at any time you choose to do so, and to the extent that it is necessary to ensure there are an odd number of justices participating, to appoint one temporarily in case all 5 of us are hearing a case that you choose to be part of. Jesus, what on earth did you do to get that?"

"We're not on earth, Madam Justice."

"You know what I mean, smarty. What did you do to get that, blow him or something?"

"I don't do bottom. No, it was part of what I asked for in order to come back to work for the Welcoming Department."

"Well, I just hope he knew what he was doing. I worry about my own decisions and the effect they will have on society, and I've been here for years. As a matter of fact, I've been on the court for over a hundred standard years, and I still worry."

"I don't ever expect to use the privilege, I just asked for it figuring he'd turn me down on that or something else and I could use it as a bargaining chip."

"Well, I've heard of a lot of strange requests, but using an appointment to what is the equivalent of the Supreme Court as a negotiating tool takes a lot of *chutzpah*. And maybe some balls, too."

"Maybe. Well, anyway, since you don't really think I need to retry his case, I guess I'll be going." He starts to leave.

"Hmmm. I don't know if I'm relieved or disappointed."

"What do you mean?"

"You didn't try to hit on me, and I've heard you try it to every woman. So either you don't find me attractive or there's some other reason."

"Madam Justice I find you extremely attractive. But as the saying goes, 'I don't shit where I eat.' I do not proposition ladies that are either working for me directly nor do I do so for people I consider either co-workers or superiors. I am still a sitting judge, in effect, so I won't proposition other female judges who might have to rule on appeals of cases I've done."

"Just one thing. I've heard you've fucked the Chief Justice. Did you do that before you became a supervisor?"

"Oh. Sorry. I didn't mention it because I didn't want you to think I was trying to be some sort of slick guy who pretends to be honorable but tells how he'll make exceptions. My rule doesn't apply if the woman propositions me. I'm not going to turn down a nice lady but the ones I have to work with I'm not going to chase them."

“Which means?”

“She asked me first.”

“So say I ask you, then what?”

“Well, we can do one of two things. If you really want to, you don’t need to ask, just teleport us both to your place and we’ll do some things when we get there. Otherwise tell me what’s a good time to see you and I’ll show up.”

“Central Computer, fax me and 246 to my apartment.”

They arrive. “I like how you do your place, Phyllis, it shows some nice touches. Where did you get that phrase, ‘fax me’ from?”

“The guy who runs the psychiatric counseling section for the Welcoming Department. A real fun guy to be with. I think you were trying to be funny, in the case you tried I think you called him Dr. Wacko.”

Chapter 91

“I find your conduct reprehensible, disgusting, and it repulses me...”

“All rise! Welcoming Department Special Court 3 is now in session, the honorable Supervisor 246 presiding.”

“Be seated if you wish and come to order. On the record *In the Matter of Barney 96, Accused*. The case having been returned to this court by the Court of Appeals for final disposition, what I am going to do is ask the Accused whether he wishes to resubmit his plea of Not Guilty by Reason of Inability to Prevent the Offense, the reason being insanity.”

Samuels speaks for Barney. “No, your honor.”

“I would like to try, if at all possible, to make some effort to see to it the Accused gets the treatment I think he needs. I’m willing to offer the following promise: that on the day that Dr. Wacko informs me the Accused is no longer a danger to others, he will be released, even if this is less than six months. Counselor, I would like you to let your client answer this one, if you please. Barney, would you be willing to accept this condition instead? Let the record show the Accused has shook his head ‘no.’ Very well, the Accused having been convicted by a jury of his peers and his conviction has been upheld by the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section I will impose sentence. The defendant will please stand and face me.

“I would like to make a statement to you. I find your conduct reprehensible, disgusting, and it repulses me, the way a mongoose repulses a snake. I love women and the wonderful things they are capable of giving to us.

“I hold here in this binder a complete copy of the entire Legal Code of this society. Here, Barney, I want you to take this. Let the record show that I have just ‘thrown the book’ at the defendant. These are the laws under which you exist. You can search this code all day long and find not one word prohibiting, in any way, shape or form, any form of consensual sex that you can get some woman (or man) to engage in with you. Neither society nor the law sees anything wrong in any consensual form of sex that you or anyone else chooses to engage in as long as you do it in private or don’t expose it to people who don’t want to see it.

“By no stretch of the imagination was anything you did even close to attempting to be consensual. I quote from an editorial published recently, you ‘violently stole something that you probably could have freely gotten without force.’

“In your appeal of your conviction, the Court of Appeals had this to say about what you did: ‘Rape is an unacceptable behavior to be committing upon others.’ For severe understatement, it sure beats the hell out of just about any comment I could make about what you have done. Your behavior shows you are under a severe lack of understanding of how women should expect to be treated. Therefore the answer is to let you discover, first hand, how one feels. Central Computer, for 07062 RM Barney 000096, set sex drive to zero, set gender to female, set sexual sensitivity to zero and lockout changes.”

“Provide authorization for privileged function or cancel to abort.”

“Central Computer, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”

“Central Computer, for 07062 RM Barney 000096, set lower clothing to skirt, length reaching knees, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”

“Central Computer, for 07062 RM Barbara 000096, set skirt length minus 20 centimeters, authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246.”

“I think that’s about right. The court will now order the defendant as follows. First, the defendant shall not, during the period under sentence, obtain or use transport privilege or a transport kiosk or private travel equipment and shall make all movements from one place to another on foot or by public conveyance. In addition to the previous judge’s order to stay away from the complaining witness, you are ordered to appear in public essentially dressed as you are now, in that you will wear a dress which is no longer than what you have on now. You will appear in public so dressed, no less than three hours each day, and you shall appear an average of 5 hours every day computed over each week. If you fail to follow any of these requirements, the court will impose the following penalty, in that, for each one hour or fraction that you fail to comply with this order, your sentence will be extended by an additional one day. Do you understand these requirements? Let the record show the defendant has nodded her head ‘yes.’ Oh, that reminds me. Central Computer, for 07062 RM Barney 000096, change first name on ID from ‘Barney’ to ‘Barbara,’ authorization 00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246. This case is placed on pending for six months, when, presuming the defendant has complied with all the terms of this order, she may obtain restoration of his prior status. Oh, one other thing. As an exception to this order, the defendant may dress in any reasonable manner during such period of time as she attends orientation classes if she chooses to do so, or for up to three hours each week if she chooses to attend divine services or worship in a public facility. The defendant is formally released from custody. This case is adjourned.”

Chapter 92

“Maybe the son-of-a-bitch will get raped.... a few dozen times...”

The Pentagon

The #1 newspaper of the English Language Section and the Afterlife

Editorial

Well, we've finally seen the finishing touches of the Barney case, as the defendant finally got what he deserves. First, he's now a woman. If he didn't respect women before he's really going to hate himself now. Second, he'll have to walk around in public in a dress so short it leaves nothing to the imagination and stimulates fresh ideas of things guys might want to do to her. Maybe the son-of-a-bitch will get raped himself, err, I mean, herself, a few dozen times and discover what it means where people don't respect you.

But I've got a question. We have a perfect opportunity to do exactly that. What I'm curious about is why didn't Supervisor 246 “put her ass on the street” and sentence her to community service as a “guest worker” for the Welcoming Department? Having to service a couple hundred really nasty guys might just give her an understanding of what he did to that poor woman that mere words cannot begin to describe. It would be a “learning experience” unlike anything else we could imagine.

There's no law that prohibits it, and it might be just the right idea for this sort of thing. Maybe it isn't available for this case but maybe we can have it done if it happens again. Or they could always change the laws and make it retroactive in the case of this, well, again mere words cannot begin to describe the level of obscenity that this thing called Barney represents. The Pentagon encourages its readers and anyone they know to call the Administrator's office and suggest it to him. Either call the Welcoming Department or Supervisor 246 directly, whichever you choose.

“Travis, give me today's summary of important news.”

“Okay, you don't want to read today's editorial in the *Pentagon* since it criticizes your decision in the Barney case. I know you try to avoid criticism against you because it might give you a bad impression over someone.”

“Thanks.”

“But it is asking for people to call us and recommend worse punishment for him retroactively, so we're getting a heavy volume of calls already. It's almost uniform in people think having the guy punished twice is a good idea.”

“That figures. I think someone once said that you'd never have gotten the Bill of Rights approved if the American public had anything to do with it, most people like to be protected against government action, but not when it's someone else who does something they don't like. People who appreciate being able to go to their church on Sunday have no problem if the government closed down some other religion, like Wiccans, Satanists, or Jehovah's Witnesses,

or any small and tiny religion they don't agree with. And people think *I'm* hypocritical. If you get much in the way of someone who sounds intelligent who seriously disagrees, let me hear them. If I have to argue my side in public it might help to get some good points I might not have thought of."

"Okay. Actually, though, Barney, err, I mean Barbara kind of figured a way around your order."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, we know the reason the person has to be out in public dressed provocatively is so guys will hit on her, some will get fresh, might even try something, and because she has no interest in sex, plus still thinks of herself as a man, will find the responses intolerable."

"Yeah, right, that's the whole idea."

"Well, what I've found out from some people who called in who have been watching her, what she's been doing is hiding out in public by sitting in the audience in various courtrooms, because guys that would hit on her in court wouldn't be able to do so or they'd get tossed out by the bailiff for being disruptive."

"I never thought of that. Oh well, maybe she'll learn something. Actually, that's not a bad idea."

"Anyway, we'll keep count and let you know what the total is. Though we're having problems keeping up with the extra load. "

"If you need more people to answer my phone then call Job Service, I've got lots of people who owe me favors."

"Yeah. There are people who think the phone company should just publish your list instead of the telephone directory, it's probably more comprehensive."

Chapter 92

“... I think maybe we can do payback on him...”

“So, Diane, how did it turn out?”

“Lynn, I’ve interviewed the top twenty women that he’s been seeing and got all of them to keep quiet. I also interviewed a bunch of guys who know him to learn a few things about his character and how he acts. I’m just thinking if he finds out he might guess, but even if he does he won’t necessarily know that I also got it for you.”

“Okay, so what did you find out?”

“Well, first, this should be good for you, his favorite position is man on top. He also likes it more if you move. And he doesn’t like to use condoms. Not that one would use them in the Afterlife, but he didn’t like it when he was alive.”

“Well, sounds like this might just work, and it looks like it will be fun, then.”

“He also apparently finds it exciting if a woman is explicit about telling him she wants him, and he likes a bit of mystery, if you keep him guessing a little about what you want, but give him encouragement when he does do something you like. That, I can deal with.”

”Do you really think it needs to be kept quiet from him?”

“Well, we’re really close on doing a clone transfer of an existing person without them having to lose all of their memory. We’ve discovered that we have to pick and choose what parts of their memory for them to keep if someone has been around for a long time because there’s only so much room available. But in any case we want to wait until Maria is past the *Point of No Return* so that if he meets her on earth, it’s guaranteed she is going to become an incoming and he doesn’t have to fight to save another infant from automatic recycling, like he did the last time. Also, in view of what 246 did with that rapist, I’m going to want to thank him. Since I’m not there to offer him a really sincere thank you, I’ll have to do it down here once he shows up.”

“Are there other things you learned about him that might be useful to us?”

“Well, I think I figured out something about his character, from something George told me. I spoke to David, a friend of his who was his boss before he talked George into appointing him Administrator literally over the dead body of George’s old secretary. David got 246 so mad he blew his stack.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah. If it wasn’t for the fact 246 was really depressed over Tom deciding to go back to earth, I don’t think it would have affected him as much. Anyway, George had to protect David against 246 getting mad at him again, so George gave 246 complete immunity from criminal prosecution for anything he’d do to David.”

“Wait a minute, George giving 246 immunity is *protecting* David?”

“Sounds weird, doesn’t it. But it makes sense. 246 isn’t above, say, taking someone on or maybe fighting with them. But 246 isn’t a bully; he doesn’t have that kind of mentality. If he was going to take on someone it’s either someone who can defend themselves or it’s a battle of equals. Since there’s nothing to stop 246 from doing anything he wants to David, 246 has to restrain himself. Now, it would only work because 246 likes David; he wouldn’t have allowed someone he doesn’t care about to affect him, thus since 246 likes David, and wouldn’t want to hurt him, 246 won’t use the privilege. I think it’s part of his character. If he didn’t have

immunity, and he hit David, he'd have to take responsibility for his actions. That, he wouldn't have a problem with. But given unlimited freedom to do anything without consequences scares 246, and that's probably why he turned down the appointment George offered him.

"From what I've seen he is very generous to his friends and likes to do nice things for them. But he likes pulling stunts or making people the butt of his jokes when he can. I did some research on the computer. Did you know that there was a second guy who popped him one?"

"No, I didn't."

"Some guy was holding a sign in the Zone that said 246 was a racist who should be strung up. 246 pretended to be upset, while he was standing in front of the guy, he used the pretend anger he was showing to do a query search in his head on the guy's record including what happened, so the guy wouldn't know that 246 knew anything about him. Turns out the guy was a closet queer, and when he was Welcomed he ran off because he couldn't be with a woman but didn't want to admit he was gay. 246 tricked the guy into doing a no-holds barred insult fight, threw all of the guy's bad points at him until he baited the guy into popping him one. Just like he did on TV. It was a nice trick. I mean, I have to say this: I like him, I like him a lot. I think he can be very sneaky at times, no, wait, I think 'mischievous' is a better word, he likes to play games on people when he can get away with it, but he never crosses the line."

"So you think we can pull one on him?"

"Yeah, I think maybe we can do payback on him for once for all the stunts he pulled, and we'll both have fun doing it."

"So will he."

"Yeah, we're all going to enjoy this, if he's even half as good as his reputation says he is."

Chapter 93

“Lather, Rinse, Repeat, or until the guy passes out, whichever comes first.”

“Good Afternoon, Wilfred.”

“Morning, 246, you look like you’ve had a huge weight lifted off your shoulders.”

“Is it that obvious?”

“Yeah, it is. You find someone to take your old position?”

“Yes, I did. But that’s not why I’m relieved. To quote from someone I actually met once, ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, I’m free at last!’”

“What happened?”

“Did you see the contest I had with Willis 309?”

“No, I was busy.”

“Willis becomes the first person *ever* to beat me in the contest I have, where I and someone else see who can be first to make a woman come 1,000 times through plain sex. So now I can retire and leave him to have to be the one who fights to retain his title. With his girlfriend Rose, I suspect that competitors to him are going to have it just as difficult as they did with me.”

“You think she’s that good?”

“Yeah. In fact, he’s also done something I never thought anyone would ever accomplish. You know how good Joan is?”

“Oh yes.”

“Me and Willis, oh wait, is it I and... oh never mind! Anyway the two of us got Joan and Rose to swap with us. Willis’ girlfriend Rose is absolutely fantastic in terms of her capacity, and she is really great in bed, really exciting. But when Willis was with Joan, he got her to admit he overloaded her, that he wore her out. She won’t even admit that to me.”

“Wow.”

“Well, anyway, Willis made that bet with me and won, but he still agreed to take over as lead even though that was only the requirement if he lost. So, anyway, he’s given us the information on how he is able to trigger women into having huge multi-orgasm capacity, and I think it’s going to tie into what you’re working on. So here’s his description of what he does and how he does it.”

Wilfred begins reading the papers he has. “Well, this is great news. If anything, I...” at that moment the buzzer went off.

“Yes, Travis?”

“246, you said that if any of the people who report to you want to see you, you can be interrupted.”

“Yeah sure.”

“The new Lead Male Supervisor is here and wants to speak with you.”

“Oh, send him in.” 246 looks up. “Yes, Willis?”

“Uh, 246, one other thing. This isn’t a requirement and I’m not asking you for anything else. I think you were trying to find women you could use to test this properly once you figure out how, and yet at the same time you want them to keep their mouths shut.”

“Yeah.”

“Well, my former boss, Sherry, she went into management from being a supervisor. She’s the

type that she not only was really good as a supervisor, but I understand she was a top-notch Welcomer before that. So she's not only good from a standpoint of being really good at having sex, but since she's in management she'd probably understand better about what you want, from a management standpoint. So I'm sure she'd want to participate, but more than that, she might be able to help you with making sure the girls you do pick to participate know what you want."

"Hmm, that's not a bad idea, thanks for the suggestion."

"You're welcome." Willis leaves.

"So, anyway, Wilfred, what do you think about what we got from Willis?"

"I never imagined this. I don't know what it's done to help this, six months, a year, maybe more."

"It's going to take you that long to figure it out?"

"No, I think it's shortened the amount of time I'd need to get it to work by at least six months, maybe a year or more. In fact, I think we'll have a chance to test it very soon. It's given me clues I never thought of. Well, anyway, I can tell you what happened."

"Go ahead."

"You developed Antirape as a system to allow a woman to come even if a guy forces her, it prevents her from being traumatized and produces about 1/3 to 1/2 of the normal effect of intercourse, correct?"

"Yeah, I didn't want women exploited but I also didn't want them to get addicted to the idea of allowing themselves to be raped either, this way consensual sex is much more fun for them than being raped but if she is, it completely destroys the rapist's power trip since he can't hurt her."

"I see. Well, anyway, what I believe happened is, because Marie was slightly scared when she was having sex with Wilson because she hadn't really gotten permission from him, the Antirape technology detected this and presumed because of her fears, that it was rape, since normally a Welcomer wouldn't be afraid when having sex, correct?"

"Right."

"Well, it gave her an orgasm anyway, then because it was consensual she had a regular one as a result of Wilson fucking her at the time, so she was having two of them simultaneously. She gave him one and he kept going. Well, the Antirape wanted to give her another. What it usually does is, in effect, repeats the last action occurring, which is to trigger an orgasm in the woman. But, in this case, what was the last action that occurred?"

"She gave him an orgasm. And so, the conflict caused Antirape to give him an orgasm instead of giving her one. But he kept moving so he gave her another one."

"Exactly. Then it detected the orgasm that it ordered had not occurred in her, so it issued a separate request to grant her an orgasm. This worked, so it reverted back to a request to repeat the original instruction, which was to give *him* yet another orgasm. And here we go again with her getting double orgasm and him getting it automatically. Lather, Rinse, Repeat, or until the guy passes out, whichever comes first. The only way it would stop otherwise is for a guy who is getting orgasms to decide he doesn't want them any more and stops himself."

"Something which is extremely unlikely. Okay, so now that we know what happened, how do we replicate it?"

"We can encapsulate the behavior as a specific request or command macro, such as enabling it under some circumstances, along with an indication to tell the monitoring facility to ignore it for metering purposes so any time a woman tries this she doesn't blow up the meter again. Also,

because of what Willis showed us, the woman doesn't have to be scared for it to work, she can just have regular sex and trigger it when she wants it to happen. And I've got a great name for it."

"What?"

"Endless Orgasm."

"Hey, that is a great name."

"246, I have a suggestion about the original behavior: let's not remove it."

"Oh? Why?"

"If some other Welcome Woman does this and trips overload, you can probably use it as a detector of her potentially breaking the rules. She gets to have loads of fun but the system turns her in for it if that's what happens."

"'Welcome Woman', that's an interesting name. Okay, that's not a bad idea, Wilfred, I think we'll do that, then."

Chapter 94

“Even the judges trying cases in court are not above the law.”

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
In the Matter of Barbara 96, Accused.
7104 App. 6415
Appeal on behalf of the Accused.

Unanimous Opinion, Authored by Norma 144:

This is the second time this Accused has filed an appeal to this court. This second appeal arises indirectly as a result of the first, it turns out, although the cases have nothing to do with one another.

Barbara 96 was a visitor in one of the Common Courts, was sitting in the audience watching, and got up to leave. Apparently the state of dress of the Accused was quite provocative and left very little to the imagination. The Court, Robert 86409, failing to turn off his microphone, said in open court, “Jesus, I wish broads like that would stop dressing like hookers.” As the witness on the stand in the other case was a man, the Accused apparently realized the Court was not talking about him, so she turned around and looked at the judge, and called out, “Excuse me, your honor, I beg your pardon, were you using that remark about me?”

The Court then replied, “Well, if the dress fits, or doesn’t as in this case...” whereupon the audience broke up into laughter. The Accused was not so amused. She walked up to the judge and slapped him across the face, then turned around and started to walk away. The Court instructed the bailiff to violate the Accused and arrest her. The Court suspended the then current trial and held a Show Cause hearing to determine whether the Accused should be found in contempt of court. The Accused stated that she felt his remarks were “maliciously insulting and uncalled for, I should be able to claim your insulting remarks to me as a defense,” that she would have done it again, wouldn’t apologize and wasn’t sorry she did it.

The Court found the Accused guilty of contempt, stating that her remarks during the Show Cause hearing also constituted contempt, and sentenced the Defendant to six months Community Service in the Recycling Department. Accused then filed an appeal. Normally a Court has the power to punish for contempt and we believe that the actions of the Accused clearly appear as contempt committed before the Court. The ability of a Court to punish for contempt is to allow it to maintain order, and to prevent disrespect shown to the Court by anyone within its presence or under its jurisdiction if not in its presence. This ability to punish for contempt applies where the person committed an unjustified contempt against the Court. Where a judge of a court is themselves unjustifiably insulting to a person in its presence, then makes no effort to even correct its mistake and compounds additional insult upon prior insult, the Court should be treated the same as any other person who makes an unjustified or unsolicited insulting or degrading comment about another. Even the judges trying cases in court are not above the law.

The Accused was not amused by the comments of the Trial Court. Neither is this Appeals Court Nor am I. Specifically upsetting to me in particular is the response made by the Court to the Accused. We expect the judiciary to act in a responsible or even exemplary manner and

to encourage decorum. Where the courts act in ways which are less than professional, they will, by example, lessen the respect to which a court in session should expect to be given. We cannot expect a judge in Court to act irresponsibly, then expect the public to think of that Court - and possibly other Courts - as being anything but a joke.

We can accept that a Court may, from time to time, make an occasional mistake; judges are human and sometimes forget themselves, or might get caught up in the matter of something that occurs in Court; for example, when a witness says something funny, we can expect the judge may laugh at the remark or might make a correction to someone's remarks that is funny. But intentional rudeness on top of rudeness is clearly irresponsible and uncalled for.

Even so, we might ask whether the Accused was, in some other fashion, disrespectful to the court.

If the Accused's appearance or dress were so out of line of what would be considered reasonable, we suspect the Court personnel would have refused her admittance to the building. Or if it was disruptive to the operations of the Court, we suspect the Court would have asked the Accused to remove herself until she presented a less distracting mode of attire. Therefore we cannot conclude that the Accused's state of dress constituted contempt. Nor is there anything in the record that the Accused did or said anything contemptuous in Court except for slapping the judge. Therefore the only act of contempt by the Accused that this Court is capable of determining to have occurred was the assault by the Accused upon the judge of the Trial Court.

It may be asked whether the comment of the Accused at the Show Cause hearing could constitute a part of the contempt. We think not.

First, a Show Cause hearing is held for events which occurred prior to the hearing; had there been no alleged contempt in the first place, there would have been no Show Cause hearing.

Now we ask whether the Accused's comments during the Show Cause hearing constituted contempt. We also think this not to be the case.

The purpose of a Show Cause hearing is to provide the Accused the right to enter into the record the reasons why they believe their actions in Court are not contemptuous and has the right, if not the duty, to forcefully argue any legitimate reason. First, it may allow the Accused to show the Court how it has misunderstood the actions of the Accused and allow them to purge the contempt at that time. Second, as in this case, it provides the Accused the opportunity to provide their reasons on the record to use in a subsequent appeal in the event they are convicted of the crime to which they have been accused.

It is never contempt for an individual to forcefully raise all legitimate defenses at a trial. There is clear precedent on this issue, even from the courts on earth. While the issue raised in the example shown below referred to the privilege against self incrimination, this Court feels the example is clearly obvious that it equally applies to other privileges or defenses under law. The Court in *U.S. vs. Johnson*, 76 Fed, Supp. 538 stated:

The privilege... is neither accorded to the passive resistant, not to the person who is ignorant of his rights, nor to one who is indifferent thereto. It is a fighting clause. Its benefits can be retained only by sustained combat. It cannot be claimed by attorney or solicitor. It is valid only when insisted upon by a belligerent claimant in person. *McAlister v. Henkle*, 201 U.S. 90, 26 S.Ct. 385, 50 L. Ed. 671; *Commonwealth vs. Shaw*, 4 Cush. 594, 50 Am. Dec. 813; *Orum vs. State*, 38 Ohio App. 171, 175 N.E.

The words 'fighting', 'combat' and 'belligerent' clearly indicate that one's rights under the law are not obtained by playing 'nice-nice.'

The statute law on assault permits an individual to raise insult as a defense to an accusation of assault (Section 702). Now, we would hold that sometimes judges might say something insulting in court, either as a result of observing or in addressing a person appearing before them. In the absence of malice, we would hold that a judge should be able to do this, and that an individual would have no right to assault a judge sitting in open court even where they made an insulting remark. They do have every right to file a formal complaint over the judge's remarks, however.

But a second intentionally insulting remark by a judge in addition to the previous one, especially where the Accused in question was not even before the court, but was merely a spectator in the audience, was clearly uncalled for, as the Accused noted.

I note also in the remark by the Accused before the second comment by the Court - especially since the Accused did refer to the Court as 'your honor' - showed that she was willing to grant the court respect until it showed that it had lost the expectation that it should receive respect. We believe this action by the Accused showed that there was no Contempt shown to the court, that all of the disrespect shown in this issue was by the Court to the Accused, not the other way around.. As the law permits a person the right to invoke the insult defense to an accusation of assault, we rule that such defense should also be afforded to a person accused of Contempt of Court.

Had the Court excused itself after the Accused's question, or otherwise apologized and the accused had still assaulted the judge, we would have upheld the Court's penalty.

We therefore unanimously agree with the Accused's comments and actions in this case, and hold her actions not to be in contempt. We need not continue with any of the other questions raised in accused's appeal as we have completely granted all the relief that she could have asked for. The penalty imposed by the Trial Court is hereby vacated. The case is remanded back to the Trial Court which is hereby ordered to expunge and destroy the finding of contempt against the Accused and to issue a directed verdict of not guilty by reason of innocence.

The order of the Trial Court finding the Accused in contempt is
REVERSED.

Norma 144, Chief Appeals Justice #17
Wilson 2109, Appeals Justice #103
Frederica 17, Appeals Justice #405
Donald 10322, Appeals Justice #710
Phyllis 22, Appeals Justice #120

Cite this case: *In the Matter of Barbara 96, Accused*, 7104 Appellate 6415.

Chapter 95

"I feel like I've been caught with my pants down..."

A man, reading the newspaper, decides to respond to an article.

"Central Computer, call Supervisor 246."

"Office of Supervisor 246, this is Operator 51654."

"I want to call to recommend that you have that guy who raped that woman punished, the way the newspaper said."

"So you're in favor of what the newspaper said?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, your vote has been recorded. Is that it?"

"Yeah."

"Very well, then, have a nice day."

And yet, another caller registers their opinion:

"Central Computer, call Welcoming Department."

"Welcoming Department of the English Language Section of the Afterlife, what can I do you for?"

"I'd like to make a recommendation about that article in the paper..."

"Is this about the Barney case?"

"Yes."

"Please hold."

"Office of Supervisor 246, this is Operator 18902."

"I want to tell you guys that I think it's a great idea to have future rapists punished like it said in the newspaper."

"Would you approve of that being done to persons already convicted?"

"Uh, no, while I like the idea, I don't think we should punish people for a law that came along after they've done it."

"Okay, your vote has been recorded. Thank you."

Other people give their comments:

"Yeah, I think they should rape the son of a bitch until he wish he was dead."

"As far as I'm concerned, they should have recycled him, like that guy on TV wanted to do. Having him raped to death might not be a bad idea."

"Hey, when you guys schedule guys to get to rape the shit out of that rapist, count me in!"

"Central Computer, call the Welcoming Department."

"Welcoming Department of the English Language Section of the Afterlife, what can I do you for?"

"I'd like to speak to the Administrator."

“Is this about that editorial in the newspaper?”

“Yes.”

“Please hold.”

“Office of Supervisor 246, this is Operator 1317.”

“I don’t know if it means much, but I saw that editorial in the newspaper, and I wanted to call and say that I think it’s wrong. I hope he doesn’t bow to pressure and try to do such a thing. Torturing people isn’t the answer, it makes us look as bad as the people who did it.”

“Please hold a moment.”

“Hello?”

“Is this Supervisor 246?”

“Yes.”

“I’m surprised that I’d actually get to speak to you.”

“Uh huh, so, what were you calling about?”

“I just wanted to tell you not to go doing that thing about having that guy raped for what he did. I don’t think an eye-for-an-eye is a good idea. Hurting people isn’t right. I kind of think when you do that it makes you look as bad as the people who you think did things which were wrong. And beyond that, I think it’s a bad idea to have the law changed retroactively. I mean, I don’t like what he did and I think he should have gotten punished more than he did, but if you can change the law after what someone did, how long is it before they create some law to make something illegal that wasn’t, then punish people for doing something that broke a law that didn’t exist when they did whatever it is they did?”

“Thank you.”

“I guess that’s essentially it. I mean, I’m just afraid that you might change the law in the future, after all, as it said, it’s not illegal to sentence people to be sex slaves for the Welcoming Department and ...”

“What?!”

“The editorial said that Barney should have been sentenced to be a sex slave, well, actually ‘guest worker’ for your department, but everyone knows what you guys do there, and if they can’t do it to him, do it to the next rapist.”

“You’re kidding!”

“No. Didn’t you read his editorial?”

“I have a policy to avoid articles that are critical of this department, so I don’t get mad at other people. But I will read it. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, sir.”

“Son of a fucking bitch! I can’t believe this article. I feel like I’ve been caught with my pants down, and not when it’s with a woman, either! You know, Travis was right, I did *not* want to read this article! But in any case, we need to do something about this. Central Computer, call Watch Commander.”

“Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line.”

“Knit 2 Pearl 4”

“One moment please.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Joan, I’m going to call a meeting of the Legislative Counsel. Did you read the editorial

in the *Pentagram*?”

“Yeah. I’m kind of tempted to agree with him, it might not be a bad idea, at least for future vicious rapists, anyway.”

“Well, we might have another method we can use instead of that, that might be more effective. In fact, next time you catch a rapist that isn’t an Incoming let me know, I might want to try something. But I need to do something about this suggestion, I feel like an imbecile for not having thought of this myself. I can’t believe I was that stupid. Anyway, I think we’ll subpoena him and get his opinion about his suggestion. Do you want to go get him yourself?”

“Yeah, I’ll do it. I’d rather ask him than have one of my officers drag him.”

Chapter 96

“In simple terms, we screwed up and missed this.”

“Hi, is he in?”

“Oh sure, I’ll announce you. Royce, the Watch Commander is here to see you.”

“Send her in.” She enters his office. “Hi Joan, how are you today? Last night was fun, wasn’t it?”

She smiled for a moment. “Yes, it was.” She sighed, then frowned. “Royce, I’m afraid this isn’t a social call. I’m here on official business.”

“Oh. One of my reporters get into trouble again?”

“No, actually it’s not about one of your employees.”

“Oh, so you have something for me, like a legal notice to publish?”

“Not exactly. I need to know officially who wrote this editorial about Barney.”

“I’m sorry, Joan, but I’m not going to tell you. I believe our people should be able to express opinions without fear of reprisal.”

“Very well then.” She reads from a piece of paper. “Royce 9959, Under the authority of the Legislative Council you are hereby requested, pursuant to Section 1410 of the Legal Code, as editor of *The Pentagram*, to supply the name of the author of the editorial I have described and it has been ordered for me to immediately detain and summon that person, or in the alternative, I am ordered to immediately detain and summon *you*, before the Legislative Counsel, without delay, to be questioned. Here is a copy of the order; you have been served. Now, Royce, if you’ll promise to come with me we can walk over there, or else I’m instructed if necessary to handcuff you and drag you by force.”

”Jesus are you serious?”

“As serious as Involuntary Recycling.”

“Okay, I’ll go.” They walk out of his office. “Joan, why don’t we just teleport wherever we’re going?”

“Legal Code Section 602 specifically prohibits the police from teleporting people without their consent, which I would think you would have known. I have a policy beyond that not to use teleportation on people who have been detained unless they specifically ask for it. If you want I will.”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Central Computer, transport me and Royce to office of the Legislative Counsel.”

They arrive in front of an office where a receptionist leads Royce to a chair. “Please have a seat there.”

As he does so, the chair abruptly hooks around him holding him in place, then moves through a doorway into a darkened room. “Royce, the reason you’re locked in that chair is that the Legislative Counsel is here as well as the Chairman, and they do not wish to be seen. When…”

“Yeah, right.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Come off it, 246, everyone knows this ‘Chairman’ thing is just a smokescreen so you and your friends can duck responsibility for what you’ve decided. I mean it’s basically well known and long established that *you* are running things, with a few other people helping. You just pretend that there is a Chairman so you can hide.”

“Royce, I’m going to say something here, very serious. Are you paying attention?”

“Yeah.”

“I give you my solemn promise as the Administrator of the Welcoming Department, and my word as a human being that there really is someone who is the Chairman of the Afterlife, and that I am not that individual.”

“Oh, I am kind of surprised, I guess I’ll take your word for it.”

“Fair enough. Anyway, once we are finished you will be moved out of the room and you will be able to get up and leave. Do you understand?”

“Yeah. 246, what is the point of this?”

“I’m sure Joan explained why you were summoned here. We want to know who wrote this editorial that appeared in your paper regarding Barney so we can ask them about it.”

“As I told Joan, I’m not going to say.”

“Okay, fine. If you don’t want to tell me, I can’t make you.”

“And that’s it?”

“Yes.”

“That’s silly, I know you have mind reading capability.”

“Correct. And I will not use it. You were brought here essentially by force. You’ve been ordered to show up here. We had no choice in that matter; we needed to ask you a question. But we do have a choice on whether or not to force you to answer, or to take the answer from you by force. And that is something we will not do.

“On the front of my building is a motto, ‘We accept what is given; we shall never take anything.’ Now, what I am going to do next is call in each of the people on your editorial board, and ask them the same question, basically either are they or do they know who wrote this editorial. If they can give me their solemn promise they do not know, they will be free to go. If they can’t or won’t, then the same thing is going to happen to them as what we are going to do to you.

“The law makes it very clear that we cannot require you to give us the answer because subsection 1(c) of Article 9920 gives reporters very broad protection from being forced to disclose unpublished information about their articles. Now, the question you’d probably want to ask, but wouldn’t because you don’t want to give us ideas, is why we simply don’t repeal that section. Am I right, so far?”

“Uh, well, yeah, and you’re right, I wouldn’t have asked because I don’t want the thought to even be brought up.”

“Well, very simply, because we believe in a free press. It’s been said that ‘in a free society, one of the most important aspects is a vigorous and open examination of ideas, and investigation and exposure of official misconduct.’ We can’t encourage investigation and exposure of official misconduct unless reporters are able to protect their sources without fear of reprisal. Since we have taken that stand, we have to live within those rules. And that means, if you won’t respond, we cannot - and we will not - punish you for refusing to respond.

“However, while we can’t punish you for refusing to respond, we can make it inconvenient for you to do so. We can’t take away your privileges but we can modify them. First, you will not be able to get any new privileges. And from now on, nobody will be able to teleport into your building. They can teleport out but in order to cross the public sidewalk from outside it will have to be on foot. And we will have someone monitoring your building so that anyone who enters your building will be denied any access to any government building except the courthouse

or the police, and nobody from any government agency will accept or return phone calls from your newspaper or anyone working at it, everything they have to do they will have to do in person. And no government employee will do anything for you except what is absolutely mandated. Except for the people who can solemnly promise they do not know. And if we find out they're lying we will put them on trial and if they're convicted we will impose involuntary recycling. Now if you can solemnly promise to me and this counsel that you do not know who wrote it then we will take no action against you personally and other than not being able to teleport into your building there will be no penalties against you. But we will find the person who did write the editorial."

"You'd do all that?"

"The Chairman is here, I can have him write an order to that effect. You see, we're not going to force you to tell us, nor will we take what you know. But since you refuse to cooperate, we will from this day forward refuse to cooperate with you or any of your people."

"Ah hell, I'll admit it, I wrote it."

"Are you solemnly promising to me, the counsel and the Chairman, on pain of involuntary recycling if you're lying, that is true?"

"Yes."

"Very well. You recommended having Barbara be ordered and forced to work as a sex slave for the Welcoming Department. Why would you believe we would consider such a thing?"

"I thought it would be a great idea to punish him for what he's done."

"We have never worked that way. This department has an unbroken record going back hundreds, if not thousands of years, of only taking volunteers. Your article angered me."

"Considering how you wanted to come after me for not telling you what you wanted to know, that's kind of obvious."

"No, you misunderstand me. Your article angered me against myself."

"Huh?"

"It was what you said. 'There's no law against it'. That's when I realized that we'd never had a law against such a thing because we wouldn't even consider it, we'd simply never thought of doing such a thing. But after what you said, I realize now that we need a law for this purpose. Actually, two laws. So you're going to be the first to see them:"

§440 Assignment of community service to Welcoming Department by its courts prohibited

It is the policy of the Welcoming Department not to accept any person for employment or any form of work except by volunteers. The assignment of any form of community service or other forced work in the Welcoming Department by any court of the Welcoming Department upon any person convicted of a crime is absolutely prohibited. No court of the Welcoming Department shall have any authority to assign any person to community service in that department, and any such order doing so shall be void and of no effect. A violation of this section by any trial court shall be irreparable error. Any person so assigned community service to the Welcoming Department shall have an automatic appeal by right to the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section.

The provisions of this statute relating to courts not of the Welcoming Department is provided in Section 540 of this code.

§540 Assignment of community service to Welcoming Department by any other courts prohibited

It is the policy of the Welcoming Department not to accept any person for employment or any form of work except by volunteers. The assignment of any form of community service or other forced work in the Welcoming Department by any court not of the Welcoming Department upon any person convicted of a crime is absolutely prohibited. No court which is not part of the Welcoming Department shall have any authority to assign any person to community service in that department, and any such order doing so shall be void and of no effect. A violation of this section by any trial court shall be irreparable error. Any person so assigned community service to the Welcoming Department shall have an automatic appeal by right to the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section.

The provisions of this statute relating to courts of the Welcoming Department is provided in Section 440 of this code.

“You mean this whole thing was just to tell me that you’re adding two new laws to prohibit people from being assigned community service to the Welcoming Department?”

“More or less.”

“Well, couldn’t you have just come by and told me?”

“No, I don’t think you would have understood. We can say that we respect people’s rights, and make all the claims we want. The only way that what we say has any value is to prove, by our actions, that we mean what we say and we say what we mean. Consider this, when you first were put in that chair, you had the impression you were going to be punished for what you wrote, true?”

“Yeah.”

“Which surprised you because the law says you’re supposed to have freedom of speech, correct?”

“Yeah, it kind of surprised me.”

“This is why we did this to you, so you could understand what it would mean if the laws that were on the books were subject to sudden change, or could be changed retroactively. Barney was violated, arrested, prosecuted, tried and convicted under the *rule of law*. We subpoenaed you to come here under the *rule of law*. And if it turned out we had to restrict your privileges, we would have done so based on the *rule of law*: a fixed set of requirements established in writing, in advance of the circumstances to which they are invoked, which are binding upon the government, which it must follow and cannot evade. One of the important points of the rule of law is that it is invariant, it does not change without warning, and if the penalty for violation of law is increased, that it cannot be applied to a crime committed prior to

its enactment. But what you are asking for is the exact opposite of the rule of law: arbitrary and capricious whims which may be applied at any time, changed in any manner at will, or retroactively.

“Then, whether you have committed a crime, and if convicted, the punishment to be applied for such crime, is not based on a *rule of law* fixed and established in advance, instead what you have is the *rule of men*, who arbitrarily decide your fate based either on how politically bad your crime is, or on what the public thinks is a good idea. And I wanted to give you just a taste of what it might mean when people’s rights aren’t respected. All I threatened you with was making your job extremely inconvenient and a lot harder to do. You weren’t risking being tortured, or jailed, or even being forced to do anything. But I don’t think I could have shown you how seriously we take protecting people’s rights except by giving you an example.”

“Yeah, well, if you didn’t like my editorial you could have told me.”

“Royce, if it hadn’t been for the fact you pointed out that we didn’t put a law against this on the books, we would probably have ignored your editorial. In simple terms, we screwed up and missed this.”

“I see.”

“Not only that, we’ve been running something like 80,000 phone calls an hour from people wanting us to have Barbara gang raped. And, surprisingly enough, a number of calls telling us not to do so.”

“Huh, that’s amazing.”

“Well, anyway, you can go back to your office.”

“That’s it?”

“That’s it, no penalties, no special restrictions. As I said, the only reason I threatened you with loss of ability to teleport into your building and access to most government services was to give you just a taste of what we could have done if we chose to violate your rights. And yet, we wouldn’t have really been violating your rights, just making things inconvenient for you. Or let me ask you this, do you believe what I threatened you with was excessively harsh or in any form cruel?”

“Well, admittedly, no. I actually expected worse.”

“That was exactly the point. It was, to the best of my ability, the least invasive and most respectful of your rights I could think of which might get you to respond positively. Actually, although I probably wouldn’t have admitted it that blatantly, I would most likely have offered you a bribe first if I could have thought of one you’d be interested in.”

“Really?”

“Really, really. I’ve found that over the long run you get better results and less resentment from rewards rather than punishment. That’s also why we sent Joan herself over there personally because we thought it would be more respectful of you to send a close friend over instead of some faceless police officer to drag you over here.”

“Oh.”

“I mean, seriously, I could simply have invited you over here by promising you a private interview and an exclusive until press time. If I had done that would you have come over?”

“Hell, yes!”

“Well, I did it this way for the same reason. I wanted to give you just the least example of the sort of crap they use on earth, the kind of thing your article was demanding we go back to. You

didn't like it much when I pulled it on you, did you?"

"No, I didn't."

"Well, now, maybe you'll understand why we have tried, whenever possible, to look first at respecting people's rights over the use of force except as a last result. "

"Oh."

"Well, anyway, that's essentially it unless you have some questions."

"No, not really."

"Okay, then, I'll send you back. What's your office number?"

"1032."

"Central Computer, one-way teleport Royce to room 1032 in the Pentagon Building."

Royce vanishes. David asks, "246, what's a one-way teleport?"

"It means that he can't reverse teleport back into this room, and possibly see you, or George, or anyone else we might appoint to the Counsel. It's again, strictly for privacy reasons."

"So, what do you think, 246?"

"Well, George, with luck it will be a while before he writes another editorial recommending we violate people's civil rights. I think he got the point when I showed him that even in his case, we wouldn't do it. But as I said, the real reason was he pointed out something we should have realized. Hell, *I* should have realized it."

"You can't think of everything, 246. Besides, realize that people who are innately good are not likely to be thinking of ways to violate other people's rights in order to know what not to do."

"Hmm, I see your point."

Chapter 97

“... 246 has screwed up on something.”

“Office of Supervisor 246, this is Operator 29.”

“This is Andrea 528, I’d like to speak to 246’s secretary.”

“May I inquire as to what reason?”

“Yeah, 246 has screwed up on something.”

“Please hold.”

“This is Travis.”

“Hi, Travis, this is Andrea 528, I’d like to get an appointment to see 246. He’s made a mistake about something and I’d like to talk to him privately about it.”

“Let’s see, if you can get here right now I can get you two minutes, do you think that’s enough time?”

“Yeah sure. Central Computer fax me to this phone call.” She arrives. “Okay.”

“Have a seat, his current appointment is supposed to be out in a moment.” Shortly thereafter, someone walks out of 246’s office. “Go right in.”

She does, and closes the door behind her. “Hi, 246.”

“Hi, Andrea, what can I do for?”

“Okay, I’d like to make a deal with you.”

“I already offered you one before.”

“I want one on better terms.”

“Okay, what’s the deal?”

“If I convince you, that you’ve made a mistake on something important, you drop the charges against me.”

“And if I win?”

“You won’t so I can offer outrageous terms. If you win I’ll agree to be publicly recycled in a live event at the amusement park.”

“Kinky. Well, I wouldn’t ask for that much, but, go ahead.”

“Do you want me to just tell you what the mistake is or would you prefer to work it out yourself?”

“I do this because I want to learn, so let’s see if I get it.”

“Okay, fine. I noticed this when I read the article in the paper about what happened when the editor of the *Pentagram* suggested the wholesale violation of people’s rights and you showed him why his opinion was wrong. What’s the usual penalty when one of the employees here uses privilege on someone, then has sex with them without the incoming starting it?”

“Typically, we turn the person over to the victim and let them have their way with them. Since the incoming typically isn’t mad at the Welcomer, they just simply have the person do some really fun things.”

“So you’ll have the Welcomer simply ordered by the court to go back to their job and perform whatever the incoming wants?”

“Yeah.”

“And what does Section 440 say? Or its companion, 540?”

“Well, let’s see. Oh shit.”

She smiled. "And?"

"We're assigning them work in this department."

"Which then means that they can now claim the penalty was an assignment of community service to the department, which is now unlawful."

"Okay, you won, I'll drop the charges."

She smiled. "I read the transcripts from the Barney case and what you said when you disciplined the first judge and you happened to mention I'd won two cases against him at the Court of Appeals. Since you're head of the Department I guess that means I've won three in a row from you, then."

"Yeah, I guess you could say that."

"In fact, I'll throw you a bonus, here's the suggested text of the new statute."

§440 Assignment of community service to Welcoming Department by its courts prohibited; exception with respect to its own employees

It is the policy of the Welcoming Department not to accept any person for employment or any form of work except by volunteers. The assignment of any form of community service or other forced work in the Welcoming Department by any court of the Welcoming Department upon any person convicted of a crime (excepting work assignments of persons who were already working for the Welcoming Department, i.e. prior to and at the time of the commission of the offense they were an employee, manager or officer of the Welcoming Department) is absolutely prohibited. No court of the Welcoming Department shall have any authority to assign any person not already working for the Welcoming Department (as stated in this section) to community service in that Department, and any such order doing so shall be void and of no effect. This section also does not apply to settlements of issues between a Welcomer and any person(s) with whom they are or would have been having overt sex act(s) (as defined in §8100). A violation of this section by any trial court shall be irreparable error. Any person so assigned community service to the Welcoming Department other than by an explicit exemption to the provisions of this section shall have an automatic appeal by right to the Court of Appeals of the English Language Section.

The provisions of this statute relating to courts not of the Welcoming Department is provided in Section 540 of this code.

"What makes it even better is that you already divided up the statute into the provisions covering courts of the Welcoming Department and other courts. By not adding the extra provision to the part dealing with non-Department courts, it means that courts of the Welcoming Department can sentence their own employees to service in the Department, but if they, for example, appeal trial *de novo* to the Common or General courts, those courts are not of the Department and can't assign them to it. It also doesn't apply to Incomings and Welcomers so you don't have any problems with the decision in a case like *Laura 154731*. So if a Department employee appeals that completely takes them out of the Department as far as any further punishment is concerned. You get the advantage that if they feel whatever the punishment is, is

too harsh, they can appeal and not have to worry about it being reinstated if they lose. ”

“Not bad, I’ll submit it to the legislative counsel at the next meeting.”

“I also have one other suggestion for both sections.”

“What’s that?”

“You know where in both parts it says, ‘A violation of this section by any trial court shall be irreparable error.’”

“Yeah.”

“Well, here’s another sentence you can put in after that in both sections: ‘No court of the English Language Section of the Afterlife and no government agency or officer may make, execute, or enforce any order or process in violation of this section.’”

“Damn you’re good. I’ll definitely put that in too.”

Chapter 98

“...I’m sorry I didn’t die a lot sooner.”

“I wanted to thank you for showing up.”

“Well, it was nice of you to invite me. I wasn’t sure what to make of it from what you were telling me, what you wanted to do sounded, well, a little weird, I think, and I’m not exactly settled on what it is you’re trying to do.”

“What I want to do is this: I want to put you back in the exact place you were before it happened, let him have you, then, we’re going to try an experiment where you give him automatic pleasure as a result of him giving it to you. I think we can get him to do that much, just by a little adjustment, and then we can go from there. We might just be able to bring him back.”

“Okay. I’m curious, I’ve heard some things about you.”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah. You apparently have a big reputation as being some kind of ‘super stud’ or something like that. But you don’t seem to act that way.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve met lots of guys that had the impression they were ‘God’s greatest gift to women’ and if it came down to it, they probably wouldn’t have been very good in bed anyway. In any case, what I notice is that they tend to be, well, like they have this attitude that they’re doing a girl a favor by having sex with her. You don’t seem to act that way.”

“Well, I don’t have to. As you pointed out, I have a huge reputation, such that I don’t have to claim anything. But, since you mention it, are you interested in me ‘doing you a favor’?”

She laughed. “Now why did I think you would say that? Okay.”

“Central Computer, teleport me and Joanna to my apartment.”

A few minutes later, she looks over at him. “I think I want to say I’m amazed, we haven’t even had sex yet and you’ve done some, well, amazing things to me. I feel funny saying it, but I’m sorry I didn’t die a lot sooner.”

“That’s a common thought. I’m going to try some things on you to see how you react, what you like and what you don’t like. So let’s start.”

“Oooh, wow!”

“I have to tell you, you’re pretty good yourself, Joanna.”

“Thank you.”

“It’s not very often I find a woman who basically does just about everything right. I could tell from the way you acted that every time you got a good orgasm you gave me one. Too often I have to remind women to do that because they don’t realize they should.”

“246, I have to admit, I went to one of your women’s seminars.”

“Well, I’m glad to see someone has learned something. Well, while obviously this has been fun, we need to get back.”

“So, anyway, you understand what we’re trying to do.”

“Yeah, considering we just did it, I guess I’m going to give ‘sloppy seconds’ to him, and see what happens. If it’s even close to what we just did, or what me and Ed did before, it should

really be terrific.”

“I suppose it might, but while that’s a nice side effect, it’s not really what we’re trying to do here. But if you enjoy it, that’s what’s most important. Anyway, Dr. Wacko is going to be recording and watching what happens, if you don’t mind.”

“No, not at all. It’s funny, back on earth I would have been shocked to consider letting someone else watch me having sex, but now, I think it’s kind of exciting. Does that make me sound like a slut or something?” she giggled.

“I think you need to consider why you feel that way. Basically, that’s the held-over thoughts of a sexually-repressed society that considers sex something bad. On earth, men wanted to make women sexually subservient to them, or wanted to make women deny that they had sexual desires of their own, or the thought didn’t even occur to a lot of men. So, they criticized and degraded women if they acted the way men do. Consider this, if some woman was having sex with ten different guys in one week, people would think she’s something unusual, but if a guy bangs ten women in one week, he’s just ‘macho’ and there’s nothing wrong with that.”

“Hmm. I never thought of that.”

“It’s part of the old ‘double standard’ about how a guy wants a woman that’s practically a whore for a girlfriend but when he wants to get married he wants a virgin. I mean, if you think it’s wrong or looks bad if a woman does something, you have to assign the same label to a man who does the same thing. Unless, of course, you can give some compelling reason to declare male sexuality somehow different from female sexuality, in such a way that for some logical reason large quantity sex for males is acceptable but the same thing in females is not.”

”You know, I want to be able to say that there’s some reason but I can’t really think of any.”

“Well, here at least, I can’t think of any reason. I mean, you can decide not to have sex with someone even if you’re sexually active, because you don’t like them, or you don’t find them attractive, or you have certain standards, or for any number of reasons. But other than that, since you can’t get pregnant, there’s no diseases here, and generally there’s no social stigma for having sex with multiple partners, if you find some guy attractive, there’s no real reason you can’t if you want to.”

“I never thought of it that way.”

“Anyway, I probably talk too much. What we want to do is recreate what happened as close as possible, put you two together and see if we can’t bring him out of it. Sound good to you?”

“Yeah.”

“Hi, Joanna, I’m Dr. Wacko.”

“Hi.”

“What we’re going to do is give him just a little bit of a push so that he can have sex with you, then, I think, once we start him he’ll keep going. Or, at least, we’re going to try.”

“Doc, I’m curious, where did you get the idea to try this?”

“Well, on earth, electric shock has an effect on the brain very similar to that experienced by orgasm. So, I got thinking, why not try using orgasm for the same purpose? Down on earth, they’re too stuffy and sexually repressed to try that, but I thought it might not be a bad idea to try here.”

“Oh, I see.”

“Anyway, also, it’s something new we’re trying and 246 wants to try it on someone, so we

wanted to see what would happen.”

“Oh. Is there some kind of risk involved with this?”

“About the only risk is that once we start him doing this we can’t get his basic reflexes to work and he stops. But you’ll still come so there’s no real risk to you.”

“Oh. Okay.”

“Well, anyway, you’re going to lie here, I’m going to position him in the way he was when you were with him, then we’re going to start him, or at least try, and what you need to do is to give him an orgasm as soon as he gives you one, and once you do we’ll let him go and see if he keeps going. Okay, here we go.”

“Oh, oh, oh, yeah! Oh, wow!”

“Well, 246, it looks like at least that part works, he kept going.”

“Yeah, so far, so good. Anyway, I’m going back to my office, he can cream pie her as long as it takes, and you can let me know if anything changes.”

“‘Creampie’?”

“Yeah, it’s a term for porno flicks where the man has intercourse and actually climaxes into the woman, as opposed to, say, pulling out and coming on her face or something. I mean, you are recording this, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I never thought about it.”

“246, I just wanted to call you and tell you I’m a bit amazed. It’s been five and a half standard hours and he’s still at it.”

“Well, let’s see what happens. Remember what happened to Leroy? He was on her for three days before he was sated enough to pass out.”

“Yeah, but there’s a difference, Leroy was conscious. I don’t know what state we can say poor old Ed is in.”

“Well, if he comes out of it let me know, or call me again in a couple of hours.”

“246, this is incredible. Seven and a half standard hours.”

“How’s Joanna doing?”

“Well, from what I gather she’s enjoying it. She’s been moaning and thumping him back the whole time.”

246 answers his phone. “Yeah.”

“He just came out of it. Nine hours, seventy two minutes and eighty six seconds. It was at that point that he kind of came to, and jumped up out of her, and said, ‘What the hell?’”

“So, how is he?”

“Okay, but a little shaken, which isn’t bad considering how he was.”

“And Joanna?”

“I’ll ask her.” He turns to her and his voice can be heard in the background “How are you feeling? I see. Okay, she says that it was fantastic, it was like she was in continuous orgasm for hours and hours on end. She can’t wait to try it again.”

“Well, anyway, have him come up and see me, if you need to, let him know that he hasn’t done anything wrong, and I’ll see him in a few minutes. On second thought, why not have them both come up.”

“So, anyway, Ed, what I wanted to tell you was that you never did anything wrong. Basically you scared yourself silly, to put it bluntly. So we tried to find a way to bring you out of it, and it worked.”

“Uh, I don’t know what to say, except maybe, thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Anyway, since you were with Joanna before, maybe you’d like to go back and finish what you started?”

“Uh yeah, if it’s alright with you, Joanna.”

“Absolutely. That was fantastic.”

246 turns to her. “Joanna, in view of the circumstances you’ll just be having plain, ordinary sex with Ed here. I don’t want him to go crazy again anytime soon, okay?”

“Oh yeah, sure. But I want to try that again sometime.”

“No problem, we’ll arrange something so you can.”

”Okay!”

“So anyway, you two can go back to having fun with each other like you were doing a few months ago.”

As soon as they leave, Dr. Wacko speaks. “246, I am going to hold a press conference, after what just happened, I have to keep a promise I made a long time ago. I need to use the podium out front, if that’s okay.”

“Sure.”

Chapter 99

“...Dr. Wacko will no longer be in charge...”

“Good day, ladies and gentlemen of the press, I have an announcement to make. A number of you probably know me, I refer to myself as Dr. Wacko of the Looney Bin for the Welcoming Department. I have said this because I was of the opinion that it was possible I was not really dead and was imagining everything here, and thus, perhaps, I might be crazy or an unreasonable facsimile thereof.

“I have seen something today that has completely astonished me. I have, in effect, seen a woman have sex with a mentally unbalanced man long enough to make him sane. In short, she literally *screwed* his head back on

“I have decided that as Dr. Wacko, I can no longer carry around a pretense as to where I am, what is going on and what is happening here. I once said that when I came to the conclusion that it was impossible for me to be experiencing a delusion I would have to admit that I was no longer alive and what is happening around me is real and substantial.

“I therefore announce that Dr. Wacko will no longer be in charge of this section dealing with the treatment of persons under the jurisdiction of the Welcoming Department.

“When I was on earth, I was Dr. Walt Coleman. You can probably guess that’s where I got the nickname I was using when I wasn’t sure if I was still alive. I am now dead, and I admit it.

“I will now introduce my successor.

“I am now Dr. Walt 613, head of the Psychiatric intervention office of the Welcoming Department of the English Language Section of the Afterlife.”

Chapter 100

“...Diane McCloud is appointed ... Deputy Chairman...”

“There is a load of aluminum siding from the Chairman.”

“Central Computer, answer telephone. Okay, George, I’ve thrown the electronic lock, it’s secure in here.”

“Have Joan come by, and do so formally as an Article 99 confirmation. I’ll call back in two minutes.” He hangs up.

246 releases the lock. “Central Computer, telephone Watch Commander.”

“Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line.”

“Knit 2 Pearl 4”

“One moment please.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Madam Watch Commander, this is Supervisor 246, Administrator of the Welcoming Department, I request and require you to appear before me in a formal meeting with the Chairman of the Afterlife.”

Joan teleports in. “246, what’s happening?”

“I don’t know, George called and told me to have you show up, formally, for Article 99. Go throw the lock.”

“There is a load of aluminum siding from the Chairman.”

“Central Computer, answer telephone. This is the Administrator of the Welcoming department, to the party on the telephone, who alleges to be the Chairman of the Afterlife. I formally request of you such information as may be necessary to identify you.”

“Acknowledged. Please state beforehand whom else is present.”

“The Watch Commander of the Department of Police of the English Language Section.”

“Central Computer, who am I?”

“00001 AP George 000003.”

George speaks. “Mr. Administrator, you are authorized to request authentication.”

“Central Computer, authenticate the party on the other end of the telephone.”

“00001 AP George 000003 is authenticated as the Chairman of the Afterlife. Confirmed.”

“Madam Watch Commander, identify yourself for formal authentication.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Hi Joan, this is the Chairman.”

“Mike, how are you doing?”

“Authenticated. Get real broad, my name is George. Madam Watch Commander you authenticate correctly to my satisfaction; do I authenticate correctly to your satisfaction?”

“You do, Mr. Chairman.”

“Mr. Administrator, do I authenticate correctly to your satisfaction?”

“You do, Dr. Green.”

“I hereby inform you that I and another person will be teleporting into the room.”

“Understood.”

George and Diane teleport in. “Mr. Administrator, I request and require you to identify, and to authenticate the persons standing before you.”

“I will tentatively identify the persons in front of me as the Chairman, Dr. George Green, and Dr.

Diane McCloud, a member of the Board of Directors. Central Computer, list all persons in this room by ID.”

“00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246. 00001 AP George 000003. 00001 XF Diane 000014. 30306 KX Joan 020319.”

“I formally accept the identification of the two persons in front of me as that which is claimed. Madam Watch Commander, do you concur?”

“Mr. Administrator, I concur.”

“Mr. Chairman, I hereby do instruct you that two department heads of a Language Section which is bound to, and required to comply with, the provisions of Article 99 of the Legal Code of the Afterlife, and do hereby confirm formally that you and the person standing next to you are whom they claim to be.”

“I understand and accept that you have instructed me on this matter. Pursuant to Section 10104 of the Legal Code of the Afterlife, you are hereby informed that the position of Deputy Chairman is established, and that Board Member Dr. Diane McCloud is appointed to the position. The Deputy Chairman is authorized to act in the absence of the Chairman as if she were the Chairman, for all intents and purposes. Central Computer, grant all privileges with grant option to 00001 XF Diane 000014 and confirm.”

“Priority message to the Chairman: Someone claiming to be you is attempting to assign all privileges to another party. Provide confirmation.”

“Authorization 00001 AP George 000003.”

“Secondary authentication is required by a different member of the Board of Directors.”

“Authorization 00001 XF Diane 000014.”

“Secondary authentication is required by a department head.”

“Authorization 00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246.”

“Additional authentication is required by a different department head.”

“Authorization 30306 KX Joan 020319.”

“Assignment of all privileges with grant option to 00001 XF Diane 000014 completed.”

“Congratulations, Diane.”

“Thanks, 246. George found out I was doing research on the meeting, and decided that if I was that interested he might as well make me Chairman if anything happens to him. I mean, if anything happens to him and he’s not dead. If he’s dead he’d show up here, but if he becomes, say, brain damaged or something and we can’t find him, we don’t have to wait. Or if he wants to take time off. Or if he dies, and we need something done outside, we have someone else.”

“Diane is the first member of the board ever to show any interest in the place. So if something happens and you can’t reach me, she’s available. Or if she’s here and you need a command decision, she can do it.”

“The only thing I’m not sure about is whether this is a reward for being curious or a punishment for sticking my nose in. I will probably find out, eventually. Well, it could have been worse, couldn’t it, 246?”

“Uh, yeah, I guess so, come to think of it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“She doesn’t know, does she?”

“No.”

“Joan, there is one person who was offered a seat on the Board of Directors. They were the

first person in the Afterlife to be offered it. And they also became the only person offered a position who turned it down. Guess who?"

"You're kidding."

"Nope. Congratulations, 246, aren't you glad that you didn't take the job? You could be in my place."

"True."

"Joan, I did quite a bit of investigating and I think I know why he turned it down."

"Really?"

"Yeah. 246 doesn't want to have the responsibility. As Administrator, if he messes up, there's always the Chairman or the Board or the Courts to correct him if he does something wrong. If he's top boss, and he screws up, there's nobody else to appeal to. This gives him a power and a privilege he wouldn't have if he were on the board."

"What's that?"

"The freedom to make mistakes or be wrong, and allow them to be corrected."

Chapter 101

“One piece of pie is delicious, fourteen pieces are obviously nauseating.”

“Hi Wilfred, you have news for me?”

“Yeah, I figured out how to do two things. I took a look at how you implemented Antirape, and I know one of the reasons for having it is to offer an incentive for female Welcomers to take on guys who might be nasty. But we could set up something for ordinary women.”

“Like what?”

“Well, going back to earth, in some places there is a Rape Shield Law that prohibits the woman’s name to be released in the papers, or the rapist can’t use her past history in court, something like that?”

“Yeah. It means an accused rapist can’t use her prior sexual history. Laws prohibiting revealing a woman’s name were generally struck down as unconstitutional.”

“Well, I could have a modification of Antirape to have a Rape Shield, in that if a guy doesn’t get her excited, and tries to stick it in her, she doesn’t feel anything at all.”

“Hey, that’s a great idea.”

“The other thing is, on the Endless Orgasm, we can adjust how strong it is. You know, I just thought of something. You know how it can really be powerful, that is, let it go full strength, or cut back on how much of it the guy gets so that it isn’t overloading?”

“Yeah.”

“You know, if you prevented the guy from passing out, you could really make a guy awfully uncomfortable with this. Now, I’m thinking of something else, it might be possible to make it such that he can’t get out of her. Sort of like the way a boy dog gets stuck in a bitch when two dogs fuck. And if the guy can’t stop fucking her, she can make him continue to do that to however she wants it. One thing, though.”

“Yeah?”

“You’d better make damn sure whatever women you give this capability to are nice. I can imagine some broad that is mad at a guy and forces him to bang her for a couple of hours and either won’t let him come, or makes him come more than he can stand. On the other hand, that might be useful for someone who’s bad. That would be different, say some guy was a rapist or something, instead of torturing him with pain, you could let him think he got to come, then let him come over and over until he can’t stand it, and force him to take it. Payback for what he’s done to women.”

“George told me, he read a quote in *TV Guide* by Chuck Barris about getting too much of a good thing.”

“What’s that?”

“One piece of pie is delicious, fourteen pieces are obviously nauseating.”

“Well, speaking of too much of a good thing, I wanted to tell you thanks for taking on Terry as another one of your regular girlfriends. I found that since you started seeing her more she doesn’t have to see me as much. She’s cut me back to once a day.”

Chapter 102

“Human beings know how to ... cure ... people... and yet God can't...”

He stood up and shook hands. “Hi, I’m Supervisor 246, Administrator of the Welcoming Department. Literally everyone in this world calls me 246 so you can if you’d like. I think they said you’re new here, uh,” he looked down at the code - 13047 NV Akers 780126 - and decided to go on a first name basis. “Akers, and you wanted to talk on a complicated subject. Have a seat if you’d like.” He sat down. Unnecessary, but a long force of habit.

“I’ve had some questions about religion and I can’t find anyone else who can seriously answer them. They said you could.”

“They’ve probably been trying for several thousand years, but I’d like to try. Well, first, what brand of religion do you use?”

“Brand of religion?”

“All religions are pretty much the same: they don’t tolerate other brands of religion and they claim to be the only right one. Basically there are seven brands: Agnostic, Atheist, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Asian and Other. Other represents the minor religions, like the Norse gods, or cargo cult religions and so on, the ones that aren’t very popular. I figure you’re not a member of one of the Asian religions, and I don’t think you’re a Muslim because you’re willing to ask questions, so my guess is you’re in one of the top four for what goes for Western Civilization. I’m guessing you’re not Jewish, and since you’re asking me about religion you’re probably not Agnostic or Atheist, so that basically leaves one of the various Christian religions, how does that sound?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Well, the first thing is, if this place is here, doesn’t that mean that everything the Bible tells us about God is wrong, otherwise, shouldn’t we be going to some place like that instead of a weak clone version of Earth?”

“‘Weak clone,’ I like that term. But what do you mean ‘some place like that?’ You mean something like a kind of heaven with pearly gates, people having halos and wings, and so on?”

“Uh yeah, I guess so.”

“Well, let me tell you something, most people don’t realize it, but all of the images people have of what they think Heaven or Hell is, are simply visual images from various propaganda that someone made up. The Bible never says anything one way or another about what either looks like. Actually you could give the Bible the same claim as ‘propaganda that someone made up’, but I’m going to ignore it for the moment. So there’s no reason Heaven - or Hell - couldn’t look like this. Whichever one it was would depend on your point of view as to which you thought it was. Don’t you like it here?”

“Actually I don’t like to admit it but I love it here, but I think a lot of my friends would believe I’m crazy to say that since we didn’t make it to Heaven. The real one, that is, if there is one.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean. Well, let me tell you something, I would say basically, whether they want to admit it almost everyone loves it here. How long have you been here?”

“Three standard years.”

“Then you must love the place or you’re deathly afraid to go back.”

“I’m never going back, there’s too many things to do here and lots of things you can’t do on earth. But there’s another issue, when I was alive, it kind of worried me, because I couldn’t answer it at the time.”

“Go ahead.”

“There’s this really good atheist back on earth, his name is Christopher Hitchens, and he pointed out that he didn’t like the idea of what Heaven, at least as I think the Bible claims it would be, because it would be a horrible place. First he points out how we’re supposed to both love God with all our heart and at the same time we’re supposed to fear him. I got that point; the two are contradictory. If you love your mom and dad, you’re not afraid of them, or at least, only when you’re a little kid and you did something wrong. But you’re not thinking that you love them when you’re scared of what they could do to you.”

“Uh huh. Go on.”

“Same thing for, say, someone you’re emotionally involved with. If you’re in love with a boyfriend, a girlfriend or a husband or wife, when you fight with them or if you’re afraid they’re going to leave you, or if you’re afraid because they’re abusive, you’re not thinking about how much you love them. Or when someone says it, the statement is so obviously ridiculous as to be laughable, you know, like the scenes in a movie of some guy who just whipped his wife with his belt, telling her how mad he is at her, *because of what she did* to him to make him mad, and then the line that is both horribly ironic and almost gut busting funny, where he says that he had to hurt her *because he loves her so much!*”

“Yeah, it is kind of obviously ridiculous, come to think of it.”

“So now, anyway, you’re placed in a constant state of being expected to have two contradictory emotions for someone, or some thing, whatever you think God is, at the same time. Then there’s the point of what Heaven would be like, in which our whole existence is devoted to praying to God for thanks for what we’ve been given. Hitchens says that basically it would be like an eternal version of North Korea - and he’s actually been there, so he knows what it’s like - where your entire existence is supposed to be to offer prayer and thanks to the current leader for all that he has so graciously granted to you. And a Heaven like that would be worse than North Korea, at least you can die or maybe try to escape if you’re lucky, you can’t ever get out of Heaven. You’re stuck there forever; you can’t even *die* to escape. And the worst thing would be supposedly it would be for your own good. At least if you’re in Hell you can curse your tormentors, how do you curse those who are supposedly doing what is best for you?”

“Yeah, it does sound kind of weird.”

“I used to have a problem with the way things are here, that sometimes people do bad things to other people, and I’d wonder why they didn’t monitor people to keep them from doing that. But then, I thought, if you monitored people’s thoughts to see who was about to do something to someone else, then you’d have to stop them from doing something wrong. So either you would catch them as soon as they thought about something bad, and then it’s that ‘Eternal North Korea thing’ all over again; your very thoughts would be used against you. Or you have to wait until they are about to commit the crime. Either you catch them just before they do it, in which case you have the sort of thing like they did in the movie *Minority Report* where they arrested and imprisoned people, not for what they did, but for what they were *going to do*. Or if you wait until they actually do commit the crime, then arrest them on the spot, it’s eventually going to get out that you knew that they were going to hurt someone but you let them, how can you allow such a thing? You know what I mean?”

“Yeah, a *Catch 22*. Stop people before they actually commit a crime and you’re basically

punishing them for something they haven't done yet, stop them the instant it happened and you've got to answer for the fact that you knew they were going to do it and you allowed it to happen. In either case, it's a no-win scenario and a big mess."

"Exactly. So when I called this place a weak clone of earth, I wasn't being, uh, what's the word when you call something a name as a way of criticizing it?"

"Pejorative?"

"Thank you. I wasn't being pejorative when I called this place a 'weak clone' of earth, I meant that it reminded me so much of earth it was strange, while at the same time a lot of the petty little crap that is so irritating on earth isn't here. Not just the stuff that is available with magic, like being able to immediately transport, but the fact that where you think of places on earth where supposedly the government is very light handed or nice, this place makes them look like, well, North Korea, or, oh yeah, the Mexican Federales here by comparison. And of course, well, ah, you know how the women are here."

"Yeah. They are wonderful, the most magic things on the face of the Afterlife and I love every one of them. And as often as I can. About how many women have you had sex with since you've been here?"

He looks down at his shoes. "Well, ah, I'm kind of embarrassed about it..."

"Well, let's see. You're a fairly cute looking young man if I have an idea of what women like, you've been here three standard years, based on the kid-in-a-candy-store theory of lots at first then settling down, plus the usual number of accepted propositions from women, I'd guess you've had sex with something in the neighborhood of a couple thousand women, possibly more than that, would that be about right?"

Akers looked at him. "A couple *thousand*? I was thinking more like two or three *hundred*."

"You've been here three standard years and you've only seen a couple hundred women? Oh that's not much, I had more than that many in the first six standard months I was here. A fairly nice looking guy like you has had sex with only a couple hundred women over three standard years, in a city with over a billion women, most of whom are totally uninhibited, horny all the time and realize there's no shame to having sex with lots of men, my, my. Either you've got a lot more willpower to resist when they proposition you or you don't get out very often. But we can discuss sex some other time, I love to talk about sex, but I'll try and work on your religious questions right now, since that's what you're here for, okay?"

"Yeah, that's what I really came here to talk about."

"Okay, then, now, this is one possible answer to your question. Let's say that those who are really, really good and really, really special, got to go to Heaven and be with God as they say. And they have no problem living in the so-called 'Eternal North Korea' as you referred to it. Now, maybe what happened is that the rest of us would have been destroyed automatically but the people who set this system up captured us and as a result, we're here instead of going out of existence. And since God thinks we no longer exist, He's not looking for us and so we've slipped under His radar screen. Let's say He set the system up automatically, checked that it worked then forgot about it and doesn't know we're being intercepted. Or let's say He's decided to allow this place to operate for a while and is just allowing it to continue for the time being while He's busy with something else. Or perhaps this is the Hell people go to when they die, and what they would have gotten in Heaven is so much better than what we can imagine

here that this place is a world of torture by comparison. Or maybe this is the Purgatory you go to after you die before you go either to Heaven or Hell and we're being judged first. How do you like those answers?"

"Huh. Okay, at least I feel better about it now that you've given me some answers."

"Okay, here's another possibility. Have you ever played the game of 'Telephone'?"

"No. What is it?"

"I've seen it done and it's hilarious. You write down a phrase, a message like you want to give someone. Now, you whisper it, exactly as you wrote it, to someone, and have them whisper what you told them to a friend, and have them whisper it to a friend, and so on, then the last person says out loud what they heard, and you then show everyone the original message. So you do this with eight or ten people and you discover the result. Usually the final message has absolutely no relationship to the original message. What's more interesting if you can get to hear each person as they relay it and see how it changes, sometimes the errors and omissions in the process can be absolutely stunning.

"So, anyway, perhaps this is what Heaven is supposed to be, and God told those on earth exactly what it was. Well, remember that the Bible is a written collection of stories that were told for thousands of years before people developed writing, stories passed down from the memories of those who heard them before. So you have an oral history repeated umpteen thousand times over hundreds, or more likely thousands of years, by illiterate shepherds and farmers, and by the time it was written down, it had been embellished and changed so much that you couldn't recognize it from the original. Maybe when someone told some of the important stories God corrected them if necessary, but allowed the stories of Heaven to change because first, it wouldn't matter what they said, they'll never find out until they died, and second, while He wanted people to know it was a pleasant place, He didn't necessarily want them to think it was so pleasant that it would encourage them to commit suicide *en masse* to get here. Or maybe He just told the truth and left it as is, and everything else was some embellishment by people of what they were told because they felt their version of what they had heard was better than the one that they got second-hand and thought God probably told the person who told them something different and decided to correct it."

"Well, since apparently everyone who dies gets in here, okay, then, if that's the case, have you ever wondered where some of these myths come from?"

"Like which ones?"

"Well, I'm thinking of the concept of Hell, and damnation and so on. This place, for example. Or what this place would have been if God was running it. Well they say He is but you know what I mean."

246 Smiled. "Yeah, I happen to know God personally - here they call him The Chairman - so I know what you mean. Probably some minister needed some way to keep the money rolling in, so he sold his services as 'fire insurance.' Same reason a lot of people become Christians. Probably all of them. At least it was in my case. Fat lot of good it did me."

"'Fire insurance'?"

"Yeah, according to the Bible, you learn you're a sinner and will die, ending up in Hell and burning forever, or at least that's what a lot of people believe the Bible says, anyway. About like getting violated six-ways-from-Sunday. But you find out there's a way to avoid that. If you believe that Christ died for your sins, and will save you from that horrible fate, if you

confess your belief in him, you become a Christian - or Born-Again Christian if you like - and thus you don't end up in the fires of Hell."

"Oh, I see. But, anyway, I mean, I've never really understood the idea that if there was a God, that if someone was bad, He would make that person suffer forever, torture them for eternity, give them no chance to repair what had been done wrong if it was at all possible, and to top it off, punish them in such a way that it doesn't give anyone else a chance to learn from the poor bastard's misery. It just seemed so... so... well if not cruel and heartless, at least terribly *bad*, some how. Maybe as bad as whatever the person did; it would seem so... pointless, ahh, that's the word I'm thinking of, it seems like such a pointless exercise in futility."

"Not bad. Most people can't see the whole logic of the entire argument. Especially when it's a religious argument. Most of those are 'hands off'."

"I think you're right."

"I'll tell you something, Akers. With most men who have a religious system of beliefs, and a woman that they loved very deeply, would do what Lot did and sacrifice her, first before his religion."

"What do you mean?"

"Lot was in the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah looking for a few honest men, and he has a couple of VIPs from Heaven with him, when the local no-longer-boys choir come by looking for some backdoor action, and want to try the VIPs out for size. So Lot brings out his two beautiful, frightened virgin daughters, and offers them to the crowd, telling them to do anything they want to them, violate them six-ways-from-Sunday, if they'll take the girls, go away and stop bothering him and his two VIPs. You can find it in Genesis 19:8."

"Uh, I've heard that before, I think you're borrowing that from a book somewhere."

"I'll admit I didn't think of the reference. The idea for it is from *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert A. Heinlein."

"Oh. The reason I noticed it was that I happened to read up on it later and discovered they're not really virgins."

"Really, really?"

"Yeah. I remember that later on it says that Lot, his daughters and his sons in law husbands of theirs left."

"Hey, you're not too bad at this! Well anyway, if you found a contradiction in most men's religious beliefs, and gave the man the choice to accept that those beliefs were wrong, or let you use his beautiful wife as the vessel of your desires, for acting out your choice of scenes from any ten porno flicks, he'd say, 'here, take her and do with her as you will, just go away and leave my religion alone.' Most people won't look too closely at their religion for fear they will find out what's wrong with it."

"Man, you're pretty good with this. Let's say you're a minister..."

"Actually, I once owned a religion when I was back on earth. Incorporated it and everything. I appointed myself Demigod. I think that's three steps above Pope. But go on."

"Well anyway, you're a minister, and you tell people that if they do wrong there is a Hell in which they suffer forever, and I mean, *forever*, a billion, trillion years of suffering and torment for something they might do here and now during the measly 70 or 80 years that they are on earth. Now, there might be justification for some people to be tortured like that, provided it was to teach someone else a lesson, you know, how Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* comes back

to tell Ebenezer Scrooge that he's got the same fate coming to him if he doesn't get his shit together?"

"Gotcha."

"In that sort of case, I can see where it makes sense. He comes back to tell people what they're doing wrong. But you can see where, ah, who wrote that book?"

"Charles Dickens."

"You can see where Dickens is subscribing to the same theory as Christianity is doing, if you make a mistake you suffer for it *forever*, and you can't ever do anything to fix it. All Marley's Ghost can do is warn of the consequences but he can't ever get himself out of the pickle he's in. And why is it that if he's able to warn Scrooge, wasn't he ever given any warning?"

"Dramatic license. The story really works quire well the way it's written. Or maybe he was and the story doesn't tell it. Or maybe he got a warning but ignored it."

"Well, anyway, when you think about punishing people for enormous, unimaginably long periods of time, it seems ridiculous when you talk about some ordinary guy who does a few bad things in his life. Maybe Chairman Mao, or what's-his-name, I think it was Pol Pot, who ran the *Khmer Rouge* in Cambodia, or Stalin, or Hitler, or some of those guys in Africa who got together and murdered or ordered the murder of millions of people..."

"The Hutus in Rwanda killed 800,000 Tutsis in only 100 days, they probably paid overtime bonuses to get the job done faster, like that contractor in Los Angeles, who got the earthquake damaged freeway rebuilt 60 days early by running three shifts and all the overtime anyone wanted, and made 16 million dollars in extra profit. Indonesia's President Suharto - with the tacit approval of U.S. President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger - ordered the invasion of East Timor where over 200,000 died; at least 100,000 of them were murdered in the first year alone. As I understand it, the incident was so bad that Kissinger can't even visit Europe any more because he'd be arrested for War Crimes and almost certainly convicted. Ismail Enver, Ahmed Jemal and Mehmet Talaat ran Turkey over Armenia to the tune of 1.5 million Armenians back in 1916, they probably gave the Nazis ideas."

"Uh, no 'probably' about it."

"What do you mean?"

"I once did a report on it for a class, and I remember reading somewhere how those who questioned if the world would let Hitler get away with murdering the Jews were met with his response: 'No one remembers the Armenians.'"

"Looks like you're pretty good too, Akers. Sometimes I think Genocide must be like one of those really great TV shows because it constantly keeps coming back in reruns."

"Well, anyway, I can see where scumbags like them deserve to burn in Hell forever. And some of these really bad people, ones who hurt others, I can see where maybe that might be appropriate, but still, if all they do is rot in torture, and *nobody knows about it*, what is the point?"

"Maybe there isn't any point."

"But some minister is going to tell me that a guy who cheats on his wife, or embezzles a few thousand Euros, and doesn't get to God, or Jesus, or whatever it is, deserves as much endless torture and suffering, as some unforgivable bastards like them?"

"On earth we - as in humans - put people in jail for life, without possibility of parole."

“That’s just to keep them away from everyone else, mostly because either they did something really bad that they can’t come back to society and continue to practice their trade, and also because we don’t know how to fix them so they *don’t* come back and continue to practice their trade. Or because they don’t qualify for the death penalty. Or they don’t have a death penalty where they did it. I don’t see the point of sentencing someone to ‘eternity in torture, without possibility of parole.’”

“Maybe that’s because they have to be kept out of the general population of souls in Heaven and the people running the place don’t know how to cure them.”

“That doesn’t make much sense either. Human beings know how to use certain drugs to treat the symptoms of, or even cure many mental problems and fix people who would otherwise be a threat, and yet God can’t fix bad people, other than treating them like used tires in a tire fire or tossing them from a landfill into an endless incinerator and washing his hands of them? He doesn’t have as much smarts as we do?”

“Again, maybe it’s because they need to keep really bad people, like those who kill, murderers, for example, out of Heaven. Well, the Heaven as depicted by the Bible, anyway.”

“Keep murderers out of Heaven? If there’s any place that has lots of those, it’s Heaven! Not counting those people who became born-again Christians on death row and then got, uh, what was that term you used on TV for an execution?”

“A seat on ol’ sparky and a 10,000 volt suppository.”

“Yeah that. Then there are those who turned over in prison and eventually got out. They are apparently changed people but they killed others and when they die they get to go to Heaven.”

“Uh huh.”

“So saying that mere murderers need to be kept out of Heaven is ridiculous. Or something that might be worse can still get into Heaven. Look, I can run an abortion mill, stick a drill into a fetus then insert a vacuum and suck the brains out of babies that hadn’t had the luck to be born...”

“And maybe even a few that were born, but the parents don’t want it, so you don’t say anything, Dr. Akers, M.D., you just insert the needle full of formaldehyde into the skull, squeeze the trigger, pumping the poison through the spinal cord, where it reaches the cortex and dissolves the brain into jelly. The parallel to sex gets me excited just thinking about it. So after you’ve raped the brain to death, you put the head in a vice and crush the skull, then dump the garbage in a trash bag. Neat, clean, send the ex-parents a bill, and send in the next soon to be no longer a woman in trouble in, so you can scrape and rip out her problem. Regular assembly line of death, and a nice profit. I’ve heard even the Nazis at the death camps were slackers compared to a good abortuary running at full tilt.”

“You are sick, Supervisor 246, sick.”

“So as half of our world tells me. Hey, babe, I’m just admitting what’s going on.”

“Well, anyway, I do that, day in, day out, at a couple hundred bucks a pop, butcher 50,000 or 200,000 fetuses for profit until I’ve made a few million, then decide I shouldn’t do that, because I’ve become a Christian, so I’m forgiven, and one day when I’m 86 I drop dead on a golf course, go to Heaven and get to stay there in paradise forever.”

246 Smiles, sardonically. “You really think Heaven would be paradise? I hope I get the chance to see it.”

“You know what I mean. But a guy who steals a TV set to feed his heroin addiction and is shot

by the cops, but dies before he gets the chance to discover, ah, Christ is it?”

“For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten son, that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ John 3:16, the world’s most translated phrase in all literature.”

“Okay, so anyway, the guy stealing a TV dies before he gets that, and as a result, he gets eternal torture, uh, what did you call it?”

“Being violated six-ways-to-Sunday.”

“He gets that. Going back to me being a doctor who decided to stop doing abortions and become a born-again Christian, I’m a baby-slaughterer par excellence, but still a welcome member of Heaven, he’s a minor thief and an everlasting member of the damned.”

246 smiles. “Yeah. Ain’t that wonderful?”

“Wonderful?”

“Yeah. It’s a really great way to run a universe. The confessed, no matter how bad their crimes, never get any punishment and get to go free forever, while those who didn’t confess, no matter how tiny theirs, are punished forever and can’t ever get free. Exact inverse. Or, let’s put it in our terms: Those who confess, we ‘love ‘em back into the world’, those who didn’t confess we ‘violate ‘em six-ways-to-Sunday’. Some people say it’s how I think, backward. Maybe they’re right, at least about me, anyway.”

“I think it’s a fucking stupid way to run things. And what do you mean, you think backward? You dyslexic or something?”

“No, not exactly. Did you hear about that incident a few months ago at the Picketing Zone near the Main Entrance?”

“Yeah, the riot, I saw it on *ANN*, the *Afterlife News Network*. That was sort of strange. But I still don’t understand what you mean by backward.”

“If you remember the TV show, I came out in public saying that it was correct, for the police to leave the guy holding the anti-Semitic poster to be able to continue to show it, while the cops violated all the other people who were fighting, many of whom were victims of German Concentration camps, hauled them off to jail in handcuffs, for breaking Rule #1 by hitting people. They had suffered horrible things, some we wouldn’t want to imagine; he had cruelly and viciously insulted their suffering. I said that he’s a law abiding citizen, they’re criminals. Backward.”

“But you forgot what happens to the aborted fetuses and murdered babies. If you take theology literally, the doctor who becomes a Christian, and any of the women who had their fetuses destroyed who also do, get into Heaven but because the fetuses were unable to confess their sins to Christ, they can’t make it and they too, get to ride that highway to Hell.”

“I would have thought that babies and children who don’t know any better would go to Heaven automatically.”

246 shook his head. “A nice idea not supported by scripture. I think the line which Jesus uses, is something like, ‘There is no way to the Father, none, not any, except through Me.’”

Akers frowns, “Oh yeah, John 14:6, you’re right.”

“Jesus is the gatekeeper to salvation, either you get it from him or you don’t get it at all. The concept of babies and children automatically going to Heaven is from the ‘kinder, gentler’ school of Christianity that also believe in what you feel about the unfairness of eternal torture, so they solved the problem by saying that when people are really bad, they are destroyed. But that’s

not a good solution, either.”

“Why not? It sounds a whole lot more reasonable and kind than endless torture.”

“Yeah, but then it loses the hold on people through future punishment.”

“You’ve lost me somewhere.”

“Religion uses the idea of damnation - eternal burning in Hell - as a punishment to keep people from going nihilistic and doing anything they damn well please to anyone. Okay for this example, we’ve decided that there is no Hell when you die, if you’re bad you just cease to exist. So, let’s go under the knife and go back to life on earth.”

“Nice place, interesting to visit, wouldn’t want to stay there, though.”

“I like that! You’re catching on! Well, anyway, you’re this really bad guy, oh something really, really, *bad*, let’s say, hmm, tax collector.”

“Get serious.”

“You want it serious? I’ll give you *serious*. Okay, you’re a professional baby raper. A child molester specializing in really young girls. The really precious ones that break your heart, you know, the adorable ones that are so cute.”

“Uh huh. I don’t like where you’re going here.”

“Bear with me. So you see this nice, juicy looking little girl, turns out she’s a beautiful little 7-year old, pixie face, blond hair, she’s so cute, so sweet and innocent. So you get the mother out of the store on a pretext, say her car’s been damaged by an accident, or maybe you wait until she comes out, then knock her out and take her keys. Grab the 7-year old, whose name is Margaret, by the way, who would some day grow up to be a lovely young lady and break a bunch of men’s hearts, and drive off in her mother’s car to yours, which is two blocks away so nobody gets your license plate. By now you’ve given Maggie something to knock her out. Dump the car there, wipe the steering wheel, get in yours and drive off. So the police have no leads, you get away clean and they’ll never find you. You take our little girl home and tie her to the bed, spread eagled and naked. Once Maggie wakes up, you get into bed...”

“I really don’t think I want to hear this.”

“Oh come on, you’ll like the results.”

“I doubt it strongly.”

“So, anyway, beautiful little Margaret, blue eyes, 7 years old, is lying naked and spread eagled on the bed, scared to death, and rightfully so. You tell her that in a moment she’s going to feel something slide between her legs and inside of her and it’s going to hurt, *a lot*. This will make her tense up, which is exactly what you want as it will make her vagina even tighter. You’ve got this really stiff hard on, so you get on top of her, aim yourself, then arch your back as high as you can, and give a mighty plunge, aiming straight for her twat. In one second, BOOM! Your dick hits the opening, slides into her, as you hear her scream in agonizing pain and perhaps arch her back as a result. But unfortunately for her, she does it the wrong way which makes it even better for you, as your dick continues scraping against her extremely tight vagina, hits the hymen, shatters it as she screams again, then your cock plunges into her tightness until you bottom out, giving her an agonizing bang on the cervix.

“Then you back up and start pounding on her like you’re trying to match the cadence of the 78 rpm phonorecord of the *Anvil Chorus* for maybe a couple minutes, in her tight pussy which is now well lubricated. With blood. Hers. Then you come, a really, really good satisfying orgasm to reward you for all the work you’ve done, and you pour the pork into her. You’ve

just had a whale of a good time while this kid is in really horrible pain and if Maggie will ever be normal again it's sweepstakes odds she can never have children. That doesn't matter much as you wait until your dick is hungry again, but her twat is pretty much wasted now. But she's got *another* opening."

"Oh please."

"All right, I'll skip the details. Suffice to say you rip her a new one - literally - and you've finished with her down there. So you put her on her knees facing you, a block in her mouth so she can't bite down, stand in front of her, grab her by the back of the head, then run your dick in until it hits the back of the throat and the gag reflex hits, and you ride that dick milker until you come again and spurt it in her."

"This is even worse."

"Oh I haven't even come - no pun intended - *close* to worse. You've only had her for the better part of a couple of hours. You haven't ruined her mouth as you have down below, you could probably sell her to some other pervert for the same thing. But it's too risky, so you decide you want to feed your need one more time. This time you look at lovely Maggie with those beautiful blue eyes, now clouded in a miasma of pain and betrayal, and decide to *really* have some fun with her! This time you step over her shoulders so you're riding her face like a bicycle, ram your dick into her again, to get her throat to milk you again, but this time you start pumping it in and out so you can get even more pleasure! Then finally you hold her head tightly against you so that her nose is blocked by the pudendum at the base of your penis, so she can't breathe. You leave it in her throat as she chokes and gags until she passes out, struggling, which also feels good, and finally dies, so the last thing she ever feels in that world is your dick cutting off her airway. You then dump the body in a lime pit and sell the pictures of her and maybe of what you've been doing to her."

"I think I'm going to be sick. You scare me. You sound like you've had considerable experience in this line of work."

"Never. The closest I ever did was sentence a woman to be raped, or rather, almost raped, as punishment of a conviction for the equivalent of a rape that she did, of someone else. And it wasn't that bad for her. You can read about it in the case reports if you're interested."

"So, anyway, there's a point to the story about the child molester?"

"Yeah. You do this maybe 40, 50 times and you finally get caught. You go to prison and you get the Jeffrey Dahmer treatment, and you're lying crumpled up on the floor of a prison shower with a shiv up your ass and your own blood coagulating on the floor. I told you that you'd like the ending. The guy, you, gets what he deserves, a nice messy death."

"I don't think I like it much. And wasn't Dahmer beaten to death?"

"Doesn't matter. Dahmer was murdered in prison by another inmate, the method is irrelevant. That's what I mean when I say 'the Jeffrey Dahmer treatment:' to be violently murdered in prison by some other inmate who didn't like your crime. Actually, I met Jeffrey Dahmer shortly after he died. Was such a mild mannered guy, you wouldn't think he had it in him to do what he did. In view of how many people didn't like him, he decided to do a u-turn, to immediately go under the knife and go back to earth to try again as a baby, but to prevent the same thing from happening again he chose to get a Real Sex Change and start over as a woman this time.

"But anyway, while you don't like my story, you'll like this even less. If, before you, the

multiple child molester, died, you learned about Christ and confessed your sins to him, and accept him as your savior, then you go to Heaven anyway despite all that you did to those lovely little girls - like poor little Margaret - that you brutalized to death. If you didn't accept Christ, then ..."

"Well deserved eternal damnation?"

Supervisor 246 smiled. "No. *Nothing!*"

"Huh?"

"Remember, in this example we're saying there is no Hell to be eternally damned to, so if you don't make it to Heaven you are destroyed. Or as they say in the computer business, *expunged*. Since you didn't get saved, you die, dead, your soul disintegrates and you never know anything. You don't get punished at all. And the 50 little girls you raped, sodomized and horribly murdered, like poor little Margaret, don't get into Heaven either - they just cease to exist too - because they didn't know Christ.

"Now let's put Hell and eternal damnation back on the table for a moment.

"I'll even grant you the premise that little kids get into Heaven if they're below the age to understand right from wrong, which is probably 6 or so. Whoops! Sorry, Maggie, you knew when you stole those pieces of candy at the store the week before this incident happened that it was wrong and you did it anyway. When the kiddie raper got you, that was just too bad. You died, you were old enough to know what you were doing, you failed to accept Christ as your savior, you're going to Hell for eternity babe! Watch our friend the child molester and wave as he goes by as you pass him on his way to Heaven.

"It doesn't matter what age you assign that we let people in because of innocence, sooner or later I'm going to get you with some sick story about some poor unfortunate who is above the age limit, didn't do much of anything wrong, got brutalized to death, did not know Christ, and went to Hell forever and the guy - or girl, but it's usually a guy - who brutalized her, did know Christ, and went to Heaven forever."

"So the idea of no Hell if you die and mere destruction is an unsatisfactory solution too, while it gets rid of the problem of the concept of unlimited pointless torture of burning in eternal damnation, but now you don't have anything after people die to threaten them with if they don't do right and act nice while on earth. If you are saved you get Heaven, you're bad you get nonexistence.

"Actually, if Existence was a game it wouldn't be too bad. If you win, you win big, if you lose, you'll never know. Someone once said that you had to have immortality in order to be able to have a reason for morality. If this Afterlife that people talk about so much wasn't around, what reason is there to do anything nice and decent? In that case..."

"Well, wait a minute, so you're saying that basically if you don't have God then you can just choose to do anything you want?"

"Yeah. If you have no innate controls on your behavior, and no punishment for doing wrong, then anything is permitted. It's not an old idea, I think it first came out with Dostoevski, if not earlier."

"But, uh, well, you could have the same thing if one did believe in God."

"What do you mean?"

"Think about it for a moment. Convince someone that some course of action is specifically... What would be a word for being seriously approved by an authority figure?"

“Sanctioned?”

“Thank you. So let’s say you convince someone that something you want to do is approved and sanctioned by God. If they believe that, they can get away with anything because if God approves it, it is okay. If I want to use your nasty sex examples, it’s like a guy who knows he has a sexually transmitted disease, and he gets some woman to let him have unprotected sex, he gets twice the fun, he not only gets to infect her, but the reason she gets infected is because he came inside her.

“If someone believes what they’re doing is part of God’s plan, *anything is permitted* too. Some of the stories in the Bible make that utterly clear, with the things God’s chosen got to do to the losers in some of those wars they had. So I don’t think you can say that if someone doesn’t have religion that they would go that way. They can still go that way even if they are a devoutly religious person. All those guys - and even some women - who commit suicide bombings provide lots of proof of that. I remember when I was alive once hearing a news story on *BBC World Service* where they interviewed a guy they caught before he could blow himself up, and he said he did it for his God.”

“And the ones who do succeed usually get pissed off when they get here and discover, because of the Language Section they wind up in, that they don’t get 72 virgins, they don’t get any nookie at all. You know, Akers, I think I misjudged you a little. You have done a lot of thinking about it. And I agree, if you convince people what they’re doing is sanctioned by God, they can get away with anything. But first, they’ve got to believe in God, which if they have any intelligence they might realize there’s no good reason to believe other than it’s because someone told them there is some sort of God. I seem to think that religious faith tends to be inversely proportional to intelligence levels; stupid people tend to be more likely to believe and intelligent people are less likely. As much as I personally dislike the bad things religion has done, at least it’s usually been a means to control people and to some extent has kept a lot of them from going off the deep end.

“But if you don’t have some sort of reason to be moral - and it’s pretty hard to argue for restraint when you’ve come to realize that no matter what you do, the end of your life results in annihilation, that is, nonexistence forever - then it stands to reason if you follow it forward, in such a case, the only true reason to live your life is to practice nihilism.

“What you really should do in that case, is have all the fun you can have, be even worse than our good buddy and well respected member of Heaven, the man who raped Margaret to death, and be sure to kill anyone that gets in your way, plus don’t forget to steal, plunder and pillage too, every crime you commit is free, no extra charge and don’t forget to kill a few cops the next time you rob a donut shop by the way, we appreciate your business!

“Now that I think about it, it would be pretty hard to distinguish between a religious zealot doing that because they were convinced it was approved by God as part of his plan and they’re going to heaven for their good works, or some nihilist who did it because there wasn’t any reason to be moral since they die dead and ain’t never coming back. At least in the case of the religious guy, he’s got some comfort in believing in his future life in heaven. The poor bastard who figures there’s nothing to die for has simply reached the logical conclusion of having nothing to believe in.

“So if there is nothing beyond life, it doesn’t matter, whether you’re good or bad, once you die you still die dead and you never get any extra punishment - in fact you get no punishment at all -

for your crimes. Whether you're the holiest of holy people or the worst scumbag on the face of the earth, nothing happens to you after you die, you just cease to exist.

"So the choice is up to you, either you have some form of Afterlife for those who meet the criteria, which probably ain't that hard to do, and if there is any punishment, really serious torture for eternity for those who don't, or nothing at all and no punishment for the wicked, and maybe no reward for the virtuous either. You pays your money and you takes your chances but you never know how the game will end until it does. And maybe you never find out after all."

"Something about this - at least as far as the idea of torturing people forever - doesn't make any sense, or seem right."

"None of it does. If there was a God and you had to do something about people who committed wrongdoing, it would make more sense to excise out the bad in someone who made a mistake, get rid of whatever was wrong in them, and then put the rest - who wasn't responsible for what the bad part made them do - back into productive society. Either that, or, if they are really double-plus ungood, like our child molester above and you can't fix them, find a use for them."

"Find a *use* for child molesters?"

"Yeah. I'm actually working on a use for child molesters and rapists, if it works I expect to have a whole lot of fun with a few of them. Maybe a lot of them if I'm right."

"What, make them victims of what they did?"

"No, worse."

"I think maybe I don't want to know what's worse than being a victim of a child molester, just from the sickening examples you gave, or what kind of punishment you could do that's worse than what they did. And if you can, I'm kind of worried. Of you."

"Oh it's not that bad. Just give them what they want. And lots of it."

"Giving a child molester lots of victims is *punishment* to the molester?"

"Yeah. If I'm right we're going to have unbelievable gratification at the expense of some of these scumbags. Let me say I'm going to really enjoy it when they get exactly what they want."

"What, you plan to be the molester?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I plan to be the *victim*, the one like our precious Maggie, who is being raped. I'm going to be the one who *really* gets to have fun. See, I told you: I think backwards."

"And you think *that* is going to be a lot of fun?"

He smiled "Yeah. Let's just say that those child raping bastards are really going to be taken for a ride."

Chapter 103

“All you get from women out at the Frontier is very low grade sex.”

“There is a load of aluminum siding from Joan 20319.”

“Central Computer, answer telephone. Hi, what can I do you for?”

“246, we caught another rapist.”

“Again? They just never seem to learn. You’d think after Barney and especially Lucas they’d know there’s no profit in it. Let me guess, it’s another guy who wasn’t from civilization?”

“Yeah, this one came in from the Frontier, grabbed a woman, took her back, and held her for a few days, and raped her a lot, until the son of a bitch discovered he still couldn’t come, and she escaped. We’ve got him as a road molester because he dragged her into the Frontier and off the road. You asked me to let you know if we caught a rapist who wasn’t an incoming so you could test Endless Orgasm.”

“So where is he?”

“Detention Room 71. Nobody has spoken to him at all, so you can have first crack at him.”

“Central Computer, transport me to One Police Plaza and disconnect call.” He arrives, walks in, goes into the back and walks into Detention Room 71. “I’m Supervisor 246, what is your name?” The man says, in Spanish, that he doesn’t understand. 246 speaks to the man, in Spanish. “As it turns out, I speak Spanish, or I’d have to have the computer translate. My name is Supervisor 246, what is your name?”

”Cesar Chavez. No relation to the guy who helped migrant workers.”

“Do you know why you’re here?”

Silence.

In a somewhat angry tone, 246 confronts the man, “Look, asswipe, if I don’t get some answers out of you, you’re going to be on the next birth back to earth. You’ll lose all your memories and start over as a baby, you might as well never have been born, because you won’t remember anything from your past life. You’ll die all over again.”

The man started to cry.

“Now I want to know what happened and why you did it. And I want all of it.”

“I tried to find a woman but I was unable to perform with any of them. So someone said you could find them in a place called the Frontier, and that you could just have any of them, there were no laws against doing anything you wanted, so I did. It wasn’t very good, but it was better than nothing, and someone told me that the American women were even better, so I grabbed one, but it was even worse than the local girls, I couldn’t even come, nothing would happen.”

“Uh huh. Did you ever consider trying to find a woman who would consent to sex with you?”

“Even the ones that claim it’s okay, they’re doing something, so I can’t. I tried, and I still can’t come. Only out in that Frontier place. Those bitches don’t like me, and I show them.”

“Let me explain something to you. When you died, they put a thing in your head. You can’t come with a woman unless she lets you. And she can’t let you unless she knows how to release climax privilege to you. And to do that, she has to be able to access the computer. Where you came from, they refuse to be bound by the terms of our legal code, so they don’t get computer services. And unless a woman comes here or the French section to learn how, she can’t release

climax privilege to you. And the thing is, if you grab a woman out of this section, she can refuse to release climax privilege. The only way you can do anything is if you go after some woman who voluntarily entered the Frontier. Once she does so, climax privilege is turned off and it is possible to come, even if you rape her. And had you stayed in the Frontier, you wouldn't be in trouble.

"You made the serious mistake of grabbing a woman here and taking her back with you. Why did you do that?"

"I had heard that you can only get something from a woman out in the Frontier that you can't get anywhere else."

"Actually, it's the other way around. If you had come here openly, you could have gone over to a place called the Welcoming Department, and some woman would have willingly gone to bed with you, and you would have come like a hound dog. All you get from women out at the Frontier is very low grade sex. It's not even as good as that on earth.

"The thing is, there's a fence separating the Frontier from the English Language Section. The only openings to the fence are at The Road. In order to get out of this section and into the Frontier you have to use The Road. Now, had you just come here and raped her, it would be a serious crime and you'd have been punished. But, when you dragged her back, you crossed The Road. When you then pulled her into the Frontier, you removed someone involuntarily off The Road. That's Road Molesting and it's a Capital Crime. We're gonna throw your ass back in the world. Or maybe not. Do you want to make a deal and not have to die again?"

"Yeah, sure."

"I'll see what I can do. I'll be back in a few minutes." He leaves and goes down the hall to another office.

"Joan, did you explain to her what we're thinking of doing?"

"No, I figured you'd better do it."

"May I sit here, Ma'am?"

"Oh, yeah, sure."

"What's your name, ma'am?"

"Melanie Tomkins."

"Do you mind if I call you Melanie?"

"No, not at all."

"Okay, My name is Supervisor 246, but you can just call me 246 like everyone does. I'd like to ask you something, and I don't want you to think you did anything wrong, but I'm curious why you didn't call the police when he grabbed you."

"Um, I don't have a phone. I don't have any money. I don't even know how to get any. I tried to find a job, but nobody pays anything, so I can't figure out how to buy one."

"Okay, first of all, you do realize you died?"

"Yeah. This must be the hell everyone warned me about."

"Usually it's quire pleasant. Can you tell me what happened from when you died until you got back here?"

"Well, I remember driving in my car across the bridge, and I guess it failed or something, I saw the bridge in front of me fall apart, and my car fell off and fell into the water.^{xviii} I thought I was going to either drown or have this huge crash when I hit, but I don't remember it. I saw this *Tunnel of Light*, and I wound up in a room. I saw this guy come over to me, and he asked

me to come with him. We went to a room, and he told me he wanted to show me a movie. I got the creeps, I felt like he was gonna hit on me, and the worst thing about it was, he was so hot I knew if he asked me I'd let him. So I got out of there fast before I did, I didn't want to get into trouble. I started wandering the streets trying to figure out what to do, when that bastard grabbed me, and dragged me back to some place and raped me for three days before I was able to get away."

("And so we have two victims because one didn't know any better and the other didn't know enough"), 246 thought. ("Had the authorities in the other section been more concerned with human rights and less with protecting their turf this never would have happened. No wonder the Arabs and the Israelites fight in the Frontier for each other's land, both think the other has access to women they can get sex out of, since both sides use... oh hell, they don't just 'use', they rape the shit out of the women they capture from each other, but it doesn't work for their own women back home.") "How do you feel?"

"Well, it's not as bad as I thought it would be. I must have gone into shock. I know he was doing something to me, but it didn't hurt. He kept getting mad about it, and finally there was a point where I had an opportunity, I ran, I got to the road, flagged a car and told the guy. He got out, went back and got him, and stuffed him in the trunk of his car. Then he drove me here."

"Okay, Melanie, I have a few things to explain to you. So I want you to listen carefully."

"Okay."

"When you died, we put a thing in your head. It's called a climax privilege, and what it does, is that, if you choose to have sex with a man, it prevents him from coming."

"Oh really. This must be hell then."

"Well, all it does is prevent him from coming, *unless* someone gives him permission to do so. It also does something else. Unless and until you give someone else approval to touch you, you can't be hurt by being raped. You don't feel anything."

"Oh."

"It's a protection against having to suffer rape trauma if you're grabbed without warning."

"I see."

"But it is possible, if you were interested and the guy didn't force you, to be able to feel something, and you would get to have an orgasm same as back on earth, or rather, actually, a lot better than on earth. Do you understand?"

"Yeah."

"Now, if you met a guy, and liked him, and decided to go home with him, he might want to have sex with you. Now, first, do you think he'd probably want to come?"

"Yeah, I suppose."

"Okay, so let's say he wants to. Someone other than him has to give him permission to come when he's having sex with you. Now, it is possible for someone else to do this. But, the thing is, the only people who will know that he's having sex with, are you and him, now, since he can't give himself permission, and nobody else knows, who else do you think could give him permission?"

"Me?"

"Yes. A man can't come inside you when he's having sex unless you grant him permission. The guy who grabbed you didn't know about it either. Now, seriously, think about it. If a guy knows that to be able to come, he has to get your permission, and he knows that unless you give

him permission to come, he won't. Is he likely to mistreat or rape you?"

"He could force me, say, at knife point or threaten to kill me if I didn't."

"Well, it's kind of hard to explain, so I think I'd better start at the beginning. You remember the first guy you met, who you thought was going to ask you for sex?"

"Yeah."

"That man is what we call a Welcomer. He goes to find a woman like you, and then offers to do exactly that. It's allowed, and you could have if you wanted to. And you would have had a really great time. Did you ever have sex when you were alive?"

"Well, uh, yeah. I figured that was what got me sent here."

"That's not the case. Everyone that dies comes here. And you don't get punished for what you did on earth. You start over with a clean slate."

"Really?"

"Really, really. Do you believe in magic?"

"No."

"Okay, well, we're dead here. We have the capacity to do things similar to magic."

"Are you serious?"

"Yes, would you like me to show you?"

"Yeah."

"Central Computer, instantiate one twenty centimeter butcher knife." It appears on the table.

"Wow!"

"Now, you can't be killed again, there is no way you can die a second time, did you know that?"

"No, I didn't."

"Also, we don't have any diseases up here. Not even the common cold. Also, everyone who got here is here because they died. Women can't reproduce, and neither can men. So you can't get pregnant from sex and you can't catch any disease. And it's permitted to have consensual sex with someone if you want. And the sex here is a lot better than it is on earth. Now, if you had known this, would you have had sex with the hot guy you first met?"

"Well, yeah, sure."

"Well, anyway, if you had allowed that really hot guy to have sex with you, he would have showed you how to release climax privilege so that he could come. But you would have learned something else. As part of the ability to release climax privilege, you get the equivalent of the ability to call 9-1-1 from the inside of your head. What do you think of that?"

"You're kidding me!"

"No. You remember how I just magically created that knife there?"

"Yeah."

"What happens is, if you issue an emergency call that you're being raped, it will transport you and the guy trying to rape you to the front room of this police station."

"Wow!"

"So if a guy can't come unless you let him, and you can instantly transport him here in the event he tries to force you, how likely is it that a guy normally would rape you?"

"I would think it almost never happens, but it did this time."

"The guy didn't know this. He came from what, for lack of a better term, is another country. Had he grabbed a normal woman, she would have brought him here before he could do anything, and then he would have found out. The problem is, he kidnaped you and took you out of the

country, and for that, we have the equivalent of the death penalty.”

“Good enough for him.”

“I’d like to try something else. If we just get rid of him, nobody else is going to learn not to do this. If we can see that he’s punished in such a way that he won’t ever do this again, and will tell other guys not to, do you think that might be a better alternative?”

“Yeah.”

“Good. Wait here a moment.” 246 walks back to the other room where Chavez was waiting. 246 resumes speaking in Spanish. “Okay, here’s a form. It’s a confession and agreement for administrative punishment. You sign it and agree to accept substitute punishment in place of Involuntary Recycling.” He signs the form. 246 goes back to the other room. “Melanie, I want to have you confront the guy that did this to you. Bring that knife with you.” They both go into the room. “Señor Chavez, you are to allow her to do anything she wants to you. You can’t die, and this part isn’t going to hurt. You are not to try to stop her, is that clear?”

“Si, Señor.”

246 turns to Melanie, and in English, says, “You’re afraid someone could capture you at knife point, well, they can’t. Well, go ahead and try it, nothing will happen. Go ahead and stab him, any place you want.”

She stabs him in the shoulder, or at least tries. It won’t go in. “Go ahead, try and cut his arm, or slit his throat.” She runs the knife across his throat. Nothing happens.

“Is this a real knife?”

“Here, watch.” He picks up a piece of paper, draws it across the blade, and it slices right through it. He tries to cut his own hand off, and fails. He holds up another piece of paper, and slices across his hand. The only thing that happens is the rest of the page below where he sliced across falls, leaving his hand undamaged. “Knives and cutting instruments are not sharp enough to cut people here, without special permission.” 246 reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a pair of handcuffs. He reaches over and cuffs Chavez. “Now here’s the part where we torture him. Do you want to watch or participate?”

“No. I just want to be sure he suffers.”

“Ma’am, when my people get finished with him he’s going to wish he’d stayed in the Frontier. Or maybe wish he’d never been born. Come with me, please.” She leaves with 246. “Anyway, I’ll let you talk to Joan, if you think you need counseling, we can arrange it, and if you ever decide you’re willing to have sex again, we can arrange that with someone who will be nice to you.”

“Thank you.”

246 goes back to Chavez. “Central Computer, telephone Laticia 17.”

“Yeah?”

“Lat, you wanted to try Endless Orgasm out?”

“Oh yeah, you got someone for me?”

“Yes. This guy raped a woman, and we want to let you use him.”

“Oh really? How long?”

“Well, if he treats you decently I’ll give you half an hour. Otherwise the full period.”

“Wonderful! Bring him up.”

“Central Computer, transport all persons in this room to the other end of this call and hang up.”

The two of them arrive in a room where a woman is lying, naked, on a bed. She smiles when

they show up. 246 speaks to Chavez. "Okay, here we are. Turn around so I can uncuff you." He does and Chavez looks at him. "Okay, you wanted to have a woman and be able to come, here's one, go ahead and make love to her."

Like a starving man released at a buffet, he immediately went for her, and without any preliminaries, drops his pants, pulls her legs apart, sticks it in and starts pounding on her. After about 30 seconds, he lets out an enormous yell and then speaks. "My God, this feels so good! I can't believe it! And it's, Oh God this feels so good again!"

In English, 246 says, "Central Computer, disable overload safety interlock for all male persons in this room except me, authorization 00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246."

Chavez yells out again, "Holy mother of God! This is unbelievable! If only I'd known it would be so good I'd...Oh! Again! Oh!" This continues for two or three minutes, at which point Chavez starts to realize he can't stop. "Again! Oh! This is too much! Make it Stooooop! Oh God, oh God oh God I can't stand it!"

"Lat, how is he?"

She looks over. "This is fantastic, 246!"

"Anyway, when he starts to cry, you can just put on headphones and close your eyes."

"Oh yeah, what are you doing, crushing his balls or something?"

"No, we never use pain on people, that's illegal. He's having the same thing happening to you as him. Only it's even stronger for him."

"You're torturing him with pleasure? That's a new one."

"Not only that, he can't pass out when he's overloaded. Just think of him as an automatic dildo that's going to pound you for the whole time."

"This is fantastic 246, it's even better than you said it would be!"

Chavez cries out, "Oh please! Please make it stop! I'll never do anything like this again."

"Chavez, why are you complaining?"

"This is too strong, my God it's just too much, please, please make it stop, I'll do anything!"

"Hey, babe, you wanted to rape a woman for three days and be able to come. I'm just giving you what you wanted, only lots more. You'll get to come about every 15 seconds or so. I'll be back again in three weeks. In the meantime, have fun."

"No! Please!"

Back in English, 246 says, "Lat, you want to try something even more fun?"

"Yeah."

"Try moving with him, I think you'll find it's even more pleasurable."

"Hey, yeah! Thanks. This really feels good."

Chavez, however, is not so pleased. "Oh God, this is even worse! Oh, oh, oh, make it stop, please, I'm begging you!"

"Anyway, Lat, he's all yours. Enjoy."

"This is wonderful, 246, thanks."

"Central Computer, transport me to my office."

Chapter 104

“...the rides don't always work right...”

246 pokes his head in the door. “David, you want to come see one of the research and development facilities?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Central Computer, transport me and David to Park Research entrance.” They materialize in front of a gateway to what looks like a cross between a shopping center, an office complex and an amusement park.^{xix} “Well, anyway, here we are.”

“It looks like a typical amusement park from back on earth.”

“Yes, it does, doesn't it? That's what a lot of people think. Well, anyway, let's go in.” They approach the entrance where a series of turnstiles block access. Above them is a sign.

WELCOME TO AFTERLIFE AMUSEMENT PARK.

NOTICE: TO GAIN ADMISSION SAY “CENTRAL COMPUTER, TRANSFER TEN FAVORS TO AFTERLIFE AMUSEMENT PARK.” AND THE TURNSTILE WILL OPEN. YOU MAY LEAVE AND RETURN AS MANY TIMES AS YOU LIKE FOR THE NEXT TEN HOURS FOR THE ONE FEE, AND MAY STAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE. IN THE ALTERNATIVE YOU MAY GO TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE, BE ASSIGNED AND PERFORM 5 HOURS LABOR FOR AN ADMISSIONS PASS GOOD FOR TWO VISITS.

PURSUANT TO THE STATUTORY PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 10 OF THE LEGAL CODE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SECTION OF THE AFTERLIFE YOU ARE INFORMED OF THE FOLLOWING:

WARNING: DO NOT JUMP THE TURNSTILE WITHOUT PAYING. THE PARK WON'T LIKE YOU AND MAY RETALIATE. YOU ARE HEREBY INFORMED PURSUANT TO LEGAL CODE, SECTION 1017, THAT THIS PARK INVOKES THE PRIVILEGE OF SELF-HELP RETALIATION PURSUANT TO SECTION 1018, IN LIEU OF PROSECUTION FOR TRESPASSING FOR TURNSTILE JUMPERS ENTERING THE PARK IN VIOLATION OF SECTION 1006. YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY DOUBLE LATER TO COMPENSATE FOR SUCH VIOLATION.

As they watch, a number of people do exactly what the sign tells them not to do, and jump over the turnstile. David turns to 246, “Doesn't anyone stop them? And isn't the sign likely to give them the idea of doing that?”

246 grins. “Yes, it does. That's the fun part, which is why we don't stop them. Entering without paying means you don't get any right to protection against injury. Nor does it mean you are allowed to have any fun. It's sometimes fun to watch what happens when someone discovers what it means when they sneak in here. I suspect the rate is about the same as the New York City Subway system.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m not sure how many people take the trains there, let’s say it’s probably three million rides a day. Well the estimate is that something like 100,000 people jump the subway turnstiles there every day, or at least they did when the turnstiles were like these are, low and unprotected. I think we get even more because we don’t really monitor the gates, say, 3 million visitors a day and of that a million who jump the turnstiles. Actually, that’s the reason we don’t monitor them; the last time we did and actually arrested everybody who snuck in, in a month, we basically single-handedly would have locked up the court system for years until we got the law changed. Let’s go in.”

246 walks up to the turnstile and it opens for him. A speaker chimes out, “Why, hello, 246, nice to see you here, please come in, boss.”

David walks up to the turnstile and it remains closed. David speaks, “Cen…” when 246 interrupts him.

“Stop! David, would you like to get an idea of why we don’t bother chasing down turnstile jumpers?”

“Okay, I guess.”

“You do it, then. Jump the turnstile without transferring any favors.”

“Is it safe for me to do that?”

“We’re only going to demonstrate this for a few minutes and you’re not going to get into trouble.”

“Oh, okay.” David jumps over the turnstile and stands next to 246.

“Come this way and take a look at the mirror.” They pass by a huge mirror, roughly 8 meters tall and twenty meters wide. As they walk by, David notices that all of the people have a colored glow to them. Most are blue, a few have a green glow, a small number are yellow; 246 has a white glow. David notices that he is glowing red.

“I see. Someone who sneaks in glows red. But what do all the other colors mean?”

“Blue is someone who has a regular admission. Green is someone who works here. Yellow indicates that the person is here on an admission pass because they worked here. And white is reserved for the owners and anyone having VIP admission. Now, I’ll show you why sneaking in here isn’t much good.” They walk over to a vending machine. 246 presses a button on a machine, which dispenses a roll of pink cotton candy. “David, without touching this, take a bite.” David does so, and notices that it tastes like the cotton candy he remembers from earth. “Now, you get one.” David pushes the button, the machine dispenses a roll of brown cotton candy. “David, I do not recommend you try that, you won’t like it.”

“What is it?”

“Shit flavored.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“Nope. If you don’t have permission to be here, all the foods taste terrible, the rides don’t always work right and some things hurt you. Here, take my roll.” As David touches the roll, the cotton candy changes from pink to brown. 246 grins. “You also contaminate whatever you touch. Normally, the only way you can get around it is to go back to the entrance and pay twice. But I said I’ll take care of it.” 246 points at the mirror they were looking at before. “Watch the mirror over there. Central Computer, grant amusement park admission to all persons within two meters of me.” At this point, David’s glow changes from red to blue, and the two rolls of cotton candy turn from brown to pink. “Let’s go see if we can watch some of the fun.” They

continue on until they get to one of the roller coasters, which has a very long line. They walk past and over to a gate in the fence with a sign next to it that says, "COASTER 73 - AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY."

"Go on in, David." David pushes on the gate and nothing happens. "Well, that's funny, it worked fine the last time I tried it." 246 pushes on the gate and it opens.

David looks at him. "246, you're being silly. Obviously, it's coded to let certain people in."

"Yep, but it's still fun to see how many people figure it out." The gate closes behind them as they walk over to an open manlift. "As the step comes by step on, and grab the handles." He does so and 246 follows. The lift takes them up to the top of the coaster. "When you get to the top, jump off onto the platform on your left." David does so and 246 follows. "This is one of the best places to see the whole park. Take a look." David looks out over a huge park complex, apparently stretching for kilometers. Off in the distance he sees office buildings, trains, spires, monorails, what appear to be flying cars, and other things he's not even sure about. "Now, let's see if we can catch a live one. Central Computer, activate amusement park color viewer." A light comes on over the track in front of where they are standing. A coaster train approaches, and all of the people in the train glow blue. On the next train, they are mostly blue but some of the people have yellow glows; another train passes with all blue people except one guy in red glowing next to someone in blue, and the next one has nobody in it except one man, who is glowing green. The man notices them, and as the train approaches, he jumps out onto the platform where 246 and David are standing.

"Hi, 246, how are you today?"

"Oh not bad, George, how is the ride?"

"Okay, so far. Had to readjust the wooden coaster, didn't have enough wobble."

"Well, good to know you're keeping track."

"If I had known you were going to inspect I wouldn't have wasted a car, we're running very heavy on the wait for this ride."

"I'm not doing an inspection, I'm just showing David here some things. Oh, yeah, David, this is George 7723, he's one of the technical people here. George, did you get off because I was here?"

"No, not completely. Actually I'd just taken a whole ride around the regular circuit. I was planning to get off anyway when I got up here in order to do an inspection. I was going to get off at the half-way and check the stairs but I saw the inspection light was on, I thought I might have left it on by mistake, so I stayed until I got here and saw it was you."

"Why didn't you just get off at the end of the ride and come up normally?"

"Well, to be honest I got distracted when I started the first inspection and wasn't paying attention, so I decided to redo that part over again." Another train with people on it roars by.

"246, why did he come up with the train empty?"

"In order to be able to jump out to do an inspection, the bars have to be up. These cars cannot operate partially open, either all the cars on the train are bar up or all of them are closed. So he has to ride in an empty train because we obviously can't risk injury to customers."

"That's why I was doing the inspection on this part over. Can't do a half-assed inspection, it has to be done right. As you said, safety comes first."

"Right. Can't be hurting people unnecessarily. Or at least paying customers, anyway. That gives me an idea. Give me your walkie talkie." He hands it to him. "Coaster 73 to Main

Dispatch.”

“Dispatch to Coaster 73, go.”

“This is 246, can you have them release the next train with a TJ alone in the last car?”

“You want to dump them at the lift?”

“Affirmative, I’m doing a demonstration.”

“Okay, we’ll tell them to let one on.”

“Thanks. Out.” 246 hands the radio back. “Oh, here we go, here comes one!” A coaster rolls by mostly with blue glowing people except someone glowing red is sitting alone in the last car of the train. David watches in horrid fascination as the train reaches the top, the last car detaches as the rest of the train roars on towards the drop while the single car veers off to the right, continues on about 10 meters before coming to the end of the track and flying off into space. The occupant screams out in terror as the car falls.

George looks at 246. “I’ll bet that’s gotta hurt.”

“Yeah, a real *Wilhelm Scream* moment. You know, sometimes it takes them an hour or more to come to after they hit bottom. Some of them pass out, forgetting that they’re already dead and can’t die again, but that doesn’t mean that they can’t hurt if they fall off something.”

“246, first, isn’t that kind of drastic? And what about the person who went over, how is it going to affect them, aren’t they going to be seriously injured?”

“Well, first, anyone who sneaks in gives up any right to protection against injury or any services of this park. Second, David, we’re dead, remember, these bodies are just simulations. All that happens is they hurt for a while. You can’t get injured because there’s nothing to injure. And it only does that if you’re alone; if you’re with someone who didn’t sneak in, nothing will happen. And it doesn’t always happen, it’s random so that about once every five to twenty times it catches someone alone it will toss them off the ride or otherwise eject them. Plus there is the other reason.”

“What’s that?”

“Some people sneak in *intentionally* to see what ways they get thrown off. Some of them think it’s fun. If they have immunity from assault privilege it’s not even going to hurt. Sometimes we’ll get a whole group of sneakers who get on a ride *en masse* just to see the whole ride get ejected. There are people who like the thrill of the agony of defeat. Sometimes they don’t get that, we give them the ‘boredom’ option instead.”

“‘The boredom option’?”

“Yeah, I’ll show it to you later. First, I’ll show you why we call this a research and development facility.”

Chapter 105

“Olympic-sized swimming pool? In a hotel room?”

After David and 246 get back on the ground, they walk over to an entrance with a sign that says (QUIET) SUBWAY FROM/TO WEST CENTER. They enter, and come upon a platform. About a minute later a subway train approaches, totally silent. The only noise it makes is a bell that rings once when the doors open. They step on, a few seconds later a tone sounds twice and the doors close. The train moves forward, again with no sound.

“So, what do you think of this train?”

David turns to 246. “How do they do that, get a train to be quiet like this?”

246 looks at him. “It’s the other way around, David. Remember, we’re in a computer program. Everything that happens does so because someone put it in. Things make noise here because someone added the noise. Notice how empty this train is. People are frightened of machinery that does not act the way they expect it to do back on earth. Because you have motorized equipment running wheels on rails, it is going to make noise. But it’s all simulated here so it doesn’t have to. You watch when we get to the other station.”

A few minutes later the train arrives, it comes to a stop, there is a single ping, the doors open and they exit. On the other side of the platform is a sign hanging above an empty track.

“SUBWAY FROM/TO AFTERLIFE AMUSEMENT PARK.” With a typical sound of an approaching train, it arrives, the doors open with a tone, a clank and people pour out. The train quickly fills, the bell rings twice, the doors close, with a clanking sound, then the train pulls out with a huge roar. The quiet train, with an almost identical sign above it - except it indicates it’s quiet - leaves, almost empty as people stand and wait for the next train on the “noisy” side.

“I leave the quiet train running even though almost nobody rides it, in order to show people why this is called the research and development facility. We can develop interesting technology and even stuff that is much better, but if people won’t use it, it doesn’t matter. The only difference between these trains is that one makes noise like ones on earth and this one doesn’t. This is why we don’t put a lot of ‘gee whiz’ technology in town. People are so used to what they have seen on earth that if something operates in a completely different manner, it frightens a lot of them. That’s why with a few exceptions very little of what we have developed in new technology ever gets used here, because it’s too radical compared with what was done back on earth. Only the stuff that is really, really popular and gets a lot of favorable attention gets put into service. Also, this is where we work the bugs out before it actually gets used by the general public. We’ll be going over to an area called ‘World of the Future’ and it’s where we test the ‘far out’ stuff that might fail when put into service. For example, this you will probably recognize.”

“Oh yes, a bounce tube.”

“This was where we first tried them. They were so popular that we implemented them in place of some elevators in most buildings. But we still have to leave at least one elevator in any building that has more than two floors because some people couldn’t figure out how to use them or were afraid of them. Anyway, let’s go.” He jumps in and is catapulted upward. David follows.

They arrive on what appears to be another train platform only this one has a single center rail. They get in and the train departs as 246 explains. “This is the monorail system. We were going

to use it for public transit until we found people were willing to use teleportation kiosks, which are much more efficient. Actually, most people will use a kiosk the way people will use public transportation, that is, until they get enough favors to afford teleportation privilege themselves, then they go anywhere they want simply by asking. But sometimes there's fun in the trip, not just in how you get there. This way allows people to see the park better since it allows them to ride along the track and see various things. Unless all the occupants snuck in and their car falls off the track to the ground below, that is."

"Does everything here attack people who sneak in?"

"No. Elevators, escalators, manlifts, stairs and ladders are prohibited by law from being booby trapped. They're also placarded to say that too, I'll show you next time we pass one. Here's the next stop, it's as good a place as any to visit."

They get off at a platform marked "WEST CENTER HOTEL"

They walk into an entrance of what looks like an expensive hotel. At the front desk where it says REGISTRATION is a vending machine. On the front of the machine, is a sign saying, "To dispense a room, press button, state your name and number staying in same party. Have each state their name or otherwise identify themselves. You will then be told your room number. Any member of your party will then be allowed to enter that room by simply speaking into the microphone at the door. To allow others to enter, press 'dispense key card' button or say 'dispense card' and give them the card for admission."

246 presses the button. "John Doe, 328 people, dispense card"

"A maximum of five cards may be dispensed at any one time, try again."

"Darn, they fixed it since the last time I was here. That was fun though. It created a room big enough for 300 people and locked up six floors when I did it the last time. And covered the floor hip deep in access cards." He presses the button again. "Nobody, one person"

"Room 6710." They walk over to the elevator where there is a sign:

IN CASE OF FIRE, ELEVATORS ARE UNAVAILABLE, USE STAIRS OR YOUR ASS IS BURNT TOAST. YOU ARE ADVISED THAT ELEVATORS AND STAIRS ARE FORBIDDEN TO RETALIATE AGAINST TURNSTILE JUMPERS AND MUST OPERATE NORMALLY AT ALL TIMES. LEGAL CODE SEC. 1061.

They get off at the 67th floor, and walk over to room 6710. "Open Sesame."

The door opens into a typical large hotel suite only no bed is present. 246 points at a series of buttons on the wall. He presses one and a steaming hot tub appears. He presses another, the tub disappears and a living room suite of couch and chairs appears. "Here on the wall they have all the different furnishings you can ask for. King size bed, Jacuzzi, bathtub, Olympic-size swimming pool..."

"Olympic-sized swimming pool? In a hotel room?"

"Why not? It isn't like we actually use real space. And here at the bottom is 'check-out' where you can tell the system that you're finished with the room and they can rent it to the next customer, so it cleans the place up. There was one guy, he was a turnstile jumper, he was in a room and he selected 'check-out,' and the place washed, starched and ironed him."

Chapter 106

“I want that man arrested, he tried to drown me!”

246 and David were back on the monorail. This time it wound around the park and stopped at a station named DESSERT CENTER. 246 signaled for David to get off. David looked at the sign, then said, “I’ve heard of ‘Desert Center,’ I think it’s a small town in California. Is that sign misspelled, or something?”

246 smiled. “No, not exactly. Let’s go inside and you’ll see why.”

They walk up to a building which looks like it is deteriorating, as pieces of it appear to have broken off, and holes appear on the walls. They walk up to the entrance, and 246 stops in the middle of the corridor. Suddenly, he hauls off and puts his fist through the wall. He then pulls out a piece of the wall, and hands it to David. “Here, try this. Taste it.”

He does. “It tastes like a vanilla wafer.”

“This particular wall is made of vanilla wafer. Other walls are made of different things. The whole building except for the support equipment - floors, elevators, stairs, etc. - is made of different kinds of candy, cakes, pies, and so on. Once a month, or when a wall is ½ eaten, we repair the holes in the walls and the outside. It’s how we assign labor for people who aren’t qualified to do anything else, we have them do reconstruction.”

They approach another corridor that has a sign above it. SWIMMING POOLS.

“Oh this should be interesting, let’s go in.” They pass by several pool entrances with different signs:

7Up	Coke	Dr. Pepper	Mtn. Dew	Jell-O (Strawberry)
Jell-O (Orange)	Jell-O (Black Cherry)	Chocolate	Peanut Butter	
Light Beer (Amber)	Medium Beer	Dark Beer	Root Beer	Kalua
Champagne	White Wine	Red Wine	Apple Juice	Orange Juice
Grape Juice	Tomato Soup	Cream of Mushroom Soup	Cream of Wheat	

For Ice Cream in 31 flavors use pools one floor up

David Looks at 246. “Am I to believe that each of those has a swimming pool full of that?”

246 smiled. “Yeah, you got it. People will drink the pool or eat it, depending on what kind it is.”

“Isn’t that kind of messy?”

“That’s part of the fun. But we have a regular pool. Here it is.” The sign above this entrance reads ‘Water’. They enter and see a typical swimming pool room as you would expect, including diving boards, chaise lounges, and a concrete floor above the edge. Only the pool is about ten times as large as one you would expect.

“246, the mark at this end says ‘75’. Is this pool actually 75 feet deep at this end?”

246 smiles. “No, David, we do almost everything in metric here. This end is 75 *meters* deep here. Almost 250 feet. We originally...” He does not get to finish as two people near them are arguing, loudly.

“I don’t want to!”

“Aww, come on, try it, it will be fun.”

“I’m telling you I don’t want to try it, I’m scared.”

“Excuse me.”

“Oh, Supervisor 246, I didn’t know you visited the Amusement Park, it’s nice to meet you.”

“Let me ask your lady friend here what’s wrong.”

“He wants me to jump in the pool and I don’t want to.”

“Is there some reason?”

“Well, I didn’t want to admit it, but I never learned how to swim before I died so I don’t know how.”

“So if you can learn in a way that you won’t get hurt, would you be interested?”

“Yeah, I really would.”

“Okay.” 246 pushes her into the pool. She screams.

“Help! I can’t swim!”

“There’s no better time to learn.”

“Somebody help me!” She starts to go under.

David looks at 246. “Are you out of your mind?”

“Either she’ll learn to swim or she’ll sink, no biggie either way.”

“Someone, please help me!” She starts to go under for a second time.

David looks at 246, who is simply standing there watching the screaming woman. “I can’t go along with this,” he says, kicks off his shoes, and jumps into the pool to save her. He brings her back up to the surface and pulls her along to a ladder, where she climbs out. David follows her.

Clearly very upset, she starts complaining, “I want that man arrested, he tried to drown me!”

246 brings his hand to his face, then shakes his head. “Oh please.”

David looks at him. “246, that was very strange, even for you.”

“You don’t understand, do you, David?”

“No, I don’t.”

246 looks at the other man next to him. “Do you get it?”

“Yeah, I thought about it only I didn’t want her mad at me.”

“Why don’t you jump in the pool for about five or ten minutes to show them.”

“Sure.” He dives in and goes underwater. His hand remains above the surface, but the rest of his body is below the water line. They watch for about 30 seconds. He waves every so often.

“Do you get it now, David?”

“No, not really.”

“Where are we, what is this world?”

“You asked me that, you said it’s called the Afterlife.”

“How did we get here?”

“We died.”

“So everyone here is dead, including that woman, correct?”

“Yeah, and... Oh shit.”

246 smiles. “So, what is it?”

“She can’t drown because she’s already dead.”

“Exactly. And my guess is she didn’t take orientation courses, which is why she didn’t realize it.” He turns to her. “Madam, look at that man in the water. He’s been under for over a minute and hasn’t had a problem. You don’t seem to realize, you’re already dead, you can’t die again. Weren’t you told this at orientation?”

“What’s orientation?”

246's eyes rolled in his head. “It’s the class you can take when you arrive here that tells you how to manage here. And they give you the free phone service for taking the class.”

“Oh wow! I’ll have to look into that. But I see what you mean, he’s been down there a long time and he’s waving at us. We can’t drown here?”

“That’s right.”

“I didn’t realize it.”

“So now you do?”

“Yeah.”

“Good.” 246 pushes her into the water with both hands again.

Chapter 107

“So that’s why you call this the ‘boredom option’...”

“David, there’s a drying room through the exit on the other side of the showers, you can get dry there and I’ll meet you outside.” He walks outside and over to the exit. “Ah, there you are. Interested in seeing some of the other things?”

“Yeah, sure. That was a strange shower.”

“In what way?”

“I felt like I was going through an instant car wash. It doused me with water, then it spun me around, dried me with some thing that reminded me of a laser, then pushed me out into the corridor here.”

“Most people who are here want to get on to other things so the drying system is very fast and efficient. Those who want long showers usually take a room in one of the hotels for that.”

“Oh, I see.”

“So, anyway, I guess I can show you the ‘boredom option’ if you’d like.”

“Yeah, sure. But what exactly is it for?”

“Sometimes when a turnstile jumper is dumped off a ride, they are teleported to a boredom option instead of simply dumping them into, say, a pit of thorns or something painful. This is a sample of one of the places they get dumped into.”

They went back to the monorail and got off at a stop with a sign that reads:

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

They walk up to a series of doors. A sign above them says

UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT
PURSUANT TO LEGAL CODE SECTION 1015 YOU ARE INFORMED
THIS DEVICE MAY RETALIATE AGAINST TURNSTILE JUMPERS.

One door has a sign that says ENTER HERE. The other has a more ominous note:

DANGER: DO NOT OPEN THIS DOOR. IF YOU GO THROUGH THIS
DOOR, YOU WILL DIE.

David turns to 246. “I think I get it. We’re already dead, so the warning doesn’t mean anything.” 246 just smiled. David opens the door, to discover that both doors go into the same place. He steps in, and at that point the floor collapses out from under him. He falls for several seconds, then lands on something soft, like a trampoline. The only place he can go is to jump down. He does. He is now standing in a room, about a 10 meter cube, with the trampoline suspended from the ceiling. On every wall and on the floor are hundreds of push buttons. The place makes him think of a doorbell factory. There is a sign on one of the walls.

PRESS BUTTON TO EXIT.

David presses one of the buttons on the wall and a doorbell rings. 246 calls out, "You rang?"

"How do I get out of here?"

"Just think for a while. Read the sign."

David tries a few more buttons, each giving off a doorbell sound. "So that's why you call this the 'boredom option' because people have to try and figure out how to get out, and they could spend hours in here."

"Exactly."

"So how do I get out?"

"Read the sign, David."

"You're telling me I have to try all the buttons in here to find the one that allows me to exit."

"If you think that's the answer."

"Well, let me try this. Central Computer, instantiate a ten-foot long ladder."

"Unable to comply. Local instantiation is disabled here."

"Nice try David, but that would be too easy."

"So how do I get out?"

"Oh, but that would be telling!"

"246, this isn't funny. How do I get out?"

"You already know the answer. Think."

After about 30 seconds, a buzzer sounds. The floor rises and out steps David. "I got thinking about it. You like to think backward, so the simplest answer is 'Press Button to Exit' and I did. I pushed on the word 'button' on the sign."

Chapter 108

“This is to show ... the individual is much more important than the State.”

David and 246 are back on the Monorail again. “I’ve got one more place to show you. Actually, it’s two more places, but they’re next to each other.” They get off at a stop marked “The Chairman’s House.”

“The Chairman has his huge mansion over here, and it’s open to the public. As far as anyone knows, he never uses it, it’s just for display. Ahh, here’s the sign:”

The Chairman’s Mansion ⇨

“You know the way to the place...” - John 14:4

They arrive at what appears to be a huge 3-story colonial-style front, large columns in the front, a brick and wood façade, extending for perhaps half a kilometer in the front. Above the entrance, carved in stone, is yet another Biblical quote:

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you.^{xx}
- John 14:2

“That was my idea. I wanted to tie it in to the belief a lot of people have that the Chairman is God. I was once telling him that it doesn’t hurt to get good publicity.”

“That’s funny.”

“Then you’ll find this probably even funnier. We’ll go see another place. Let’s take a shortcut through so you can see some of this. You’ll have to come back later to see all of it.” They walk into the main hall, where you would find a typical mansion interior, polished marble floors, chandelier, antique-looking furniture, etc. “This place has exactly 1554 rooms, and it’s located on a square kilometer of land. There’s a very nice garden out back. And there’s another place. We were going to thumb our nose at some people’s prejudices and have 1332 rooms instead, but we decided to take advantage of the free advertising the other way.”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you understand the significance of the two numbers?”

“No.”

“1554 is 777 times two. 1332 is 666 times two. Some people believe 777 is the favorite number of God, and some believe 666 is the number of Satan. Actually we were thinking of doing a satanic one but didn’t get around to it. Anyway, here’s the shuttle to the other side of the complex.”

They get in and the tram takes off. “That’s part of the reason why I invited you out here. I’ve been playing with this place for close to ten years and I’m getting tired of it. I think it’s time to let someone who has better ideas take a crack at it.”

“Are you trying to offer me a job?”

“Yeah, I wanted to hire you to be janitor.”

“Are you kidding?”

“Of course I’m kidding, David, you should know me by now.”

“What are you talking about, General Manager?”

“Yeah. And I can pay you twice as much as the Welcoming Department.”

“But the Welcoming Department isn’t paying me anything.”

“Yeah, I know. They don’t pay me anything either. That’s why I can offer you three times as much.”

“Very funny.”

“Look, David, I think this is more related to what you did on earth and I think you can have a lot more fun reshaping this place than you can pushing papers. But I’ll show you one more thing.” They come out in front of an even larger mansion, at least ten stories tall, and extending around for some distance. A sign in front identifies it:

246's House

“Your place?”

“Yeah, but the same thing, I’m almost never here. I decided to be funny. This place has 15,540 rooms and is on ten kilometers of land. It’s ten times as big as the Chairman’s mansion.”

“Say I agree, how much authority do I have?”

“As far as I’m concerned, you can bulldoze the whole park down and start over if you want. The only thing is, anything you put into the Chairman’s house, you have to make ten times as much in mine. There is a reason for that.”

“What’s that?”

“This is to show that even the entity that has the ultimate power over this world has less than a private individual. It is intended to represent that the individual is much more important than the State.”

“I see. I will think about it.”

“Thank you. Let’s drive back. Central Computer, instantiate one Blue Cadillac Eldorado.”

An automobile appears before them. 246 and David get in, 246 getting into the passenger seat. David reaches down but doesn’t find keys.

“How am I going to drive this?”

“David, you’re still thinking like you’re on earth. Central Computer, drive this automobile to Chairman’s House train station.” The engine starts up, the automobile puts itself in gear and roars down the highway. The car changes lanes automatically to pass slower traffic, slows down when it can’t, and speeds up when the road is clear. “David, nobody bothers to drive unless they want to practice handling the car, but it can be fun to just ride along when you have nothing better to do.”

They arrive next to the train station, the car pulls into a parking space, stops and the engine quits.

They get out and proceed to walk away. A man runs up, runs to the car two in front of theirs, looks in, then runs to the next car, looks in, then runs over to theirs, gets in, and drives off.

David looks at 246 and says, “People just steal cars like that?”

“He wasn’t stealing it, David. Go look at the two cars that were in front, and tell me what you notice about them.”

He does. “Uh, both of them have keys in the ignition. So people here steal cars that have no keys and leave the ones with the keys left in the ignition?”

“As I said, David, they’re not stealing but essentially you’re correct. Do you understand why?”

“No.”

“If you have the capacity to instantiate objects directly, you really have no need to keep a car around, you can always make one any time you need it, right?”

“Yeah, right.”

“So if you leave a car with no keys in it, it must be because you made it without keys, because you can just make a car and have it drive itself. Since you can make a new one any time you want, what do you care if someone takes the one you just made once you finished it. Right?”

“Oh yeah, I never thought of it.”

“But, now, if you don’t have instantiation privilege, then you have to use keys to start the car because you can’t ask the computer to drive it for you. Which means, to let people know that you cannot simply make a new car when you need one, you leave the keys in the ignition. It wouldn’t matter much, anyway, do you remember when I fixed the truck of the guy that tried to run you down?”

“Yeah.”

“Remember how I said, ‘Your keys will fit the new one’?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, except for a few people who’ve bothered to check, most people don’t know that in the Afterlife, all car keys, truck keys, motorcycle keys are the same. Every lock on a vehicle will work with any key. The key is just for show, it’s a symbol to warn people that the vehicle is in use by someone. It’s unlike it is on earth, since you can make a car any time you want, if the keys aren’t there, you’re saying it’s abandoned, by leaving keys in it, you’re saying that you need them to use it.”

Chapter 109

“Let’s see how long before he realizes he’s trapped again.”

“Central Computer, transport me to room of Laticia 17.”

Chavez sees 246 teleport in, and screams, “Oh please, oh please make it stop, I promise I’ll do anything, please make it stop!”

“Central Computer, enable overload safety interlock for all male persons in this room.”

Chavez passes out and stops.

“246 that was the best three days I’ve had in my entire life, err, I mean death. What about him?”

“Oh, I’ll have him on a string from now on. I’ll just threaten to turn him over to you again, but for even longer. Anyway, unlock him and let him go.”

Chavez groans, and comes to. “Chavez, pull your pants up, and stand.” He does so.

“Central Computer, begin translation Spanish to English.” Then, in Spanish, he says, “Chavez, First I want you to apologize, as nicely as you can, to Laticia, for raping her, too. The computer will translate what you say into English for her.”

“Señorita Laticia, I am so very, very sorry for what I have done, I’ll never do that again, I promise.”

“Now, you are going to tell her how much you appreciated her allowing you to come, and you would be delighted to repeat that last performance or even longer.” Laticia snickers when she hears this.

“Oh please, I don’t ever want that again! I’ll accept being Recycled, I can’t stand what happened! I promise, I’ll never want sex again.”

“Did you really mean that you’d never want sex again?”

“Yes, yes, I promise!”

“You’re really certain about that?”

“Yes, yes, I promise I’ll never want sex again after that!”

“And if it would happen again you really mean that you’re rather be recycled?”

“Yes, yes, I’d rather be Recycled than have to do that again!”

“Chavez, when you signed that confession you gave up the privilege of being recycled until I say it’s okay. If you try to have yourself recycled I will have you back in her again for her to do whatever she wants to you. Do you think you would have learned something if you had only had to go through that for half an hour?”

“Si, si, señor.”

“I said to you that you could make love to her, and if you had, all that you would have suffered was half an hour. Because any normal man would know after half an hour that something was wrong if he couldn’t come, and that’s what should have happened with that first woman. And if you hadn’t done it a second time, that’s all that would have happened. But no, you had to go and rape again. As I see it, you can’t be trusted. Can I believe you if you say you’ll do something?”

“Si, si!”

“Can I believe you’ll tell me the truth if I ask you questions?”

“Si, Señor.”

“Are you sure you’ll tell me the truth?”

“Yes, yes, I’ll tell you the truth!”

“Now, given the choice, between being able to have ordinary sex without being overloaded, and never having sex again, which would you choose?”

He started crying, “Señor, I can’t answer it right, I did it wrong!”

“Just go ahead and say the truth.”

“I said I promised I’d never want sex again, but if I have to tell the truth I would want it if it wasn’t going to do that to me again.”

“Very good, Chavez. If you had forgotten your first promise or lied to me, I would have punished you again. Since you didn’t lie to me, I’m going to give you what you want. “ He resumes in English, “Lat, I presume you wouldn’t mind doing him again?”

“After what I just went through, I’ll do anything you want. Will I get to try that again?”

“For probably shorter periods but I’ll see about it. And please, don’t tell anyone, I have too many people wanting to try it as is, okay?”

“Sure.”

“Hmm. That gives me an idea.” Then he begins again in Spanish. “Chavez, do you actually know how to make love to a woman so that she receives pleasure, do you just guess or did you even care?”

“I was just so wanting sex and could never get any except when I went to the Frontier, and the women there were so lousy that I didn’t care, I figured they had to be doing something to me so that I didn’t get much.”

“Lat, I’m going to see what he does. But I want him to learn honestly. If he does you right, we’ll let him have a couple of orgasms. If he’s lousy or doesn’t care, I’ll put him through another ½ hour and you can have that, and if he does the last thing he did over again, well, you’re going to be enjoying his company for several weeks.” Again, in Spanish, “Chavez, What we’re going to do is give you an opportunity to show what you are able to do. Now, you’ve got three possible choices. One, you will get something nice, the second is you’ll be overloaded for a half an hour, and the other is that you’ll be overloaded for the three weeks I spoke of. Now, what you’re going to do is make love to Laticia again, and we’re going to see how you act. And that’s going to determine what happens again. So go ahead.”

“Señor, Please, I... I’ll not go near any women again! Please don’t do that to me again!”

“Chavez, you have two choices. You can do this and prove you can be nice to a woman in bed, Or I’ll invite 4 more women to repeat what just happened. You didn’t give that other woman a choice when you forced her to go through something much worse.. So either show us that you can do a woman nice, or be forced to have some women do something to you.”

“Señorita Laticia, I do not know, what would you want me to do?”

“Well, what you can do is kiss me, and maybe eat me.”

“Chavez, what she wants is passionate kisses, and then she wants you to perform oral sex on her.”

He does. Both. “That’s not bad, he can have me again now.”

“Chavez, she says you can have sex with her again.”

Very slowly and timidly, he enters her and begins moving. “Is this okay?”

“Yeah. I’m coming.”

“Okay, lock him in and pop him once.”

“Oh god it feels so good!”

“Let’s see how long before he realizes he’s trapped again.”

“I can’t get out of her! No, not again, please! Oh no, you’re not going to punish me again? I did everything you said!”

“Did you come again?”

“Yeah. Twice.”

“Give him about ten more seconds or until you’ve come a couple more times, then pop him and let him loose.”

“Oh, oh, oh oh!” He jumped out of her.

“Chavez?”

“Si, Señor?”

“Pull your pants up. Then listen, okay?”

“Si, Señor.”

“Now you see what it means when someone else uses you for sex whether you want it or not?”

“Oh yes, I understand.”

“Now, you remember what you first felt, and what we let you have the last two times?”

“Yes.”

“Would you have liked that if that was what you were offered? Or to be able to have that and not be overloaded?”

“Yes.”

“If the Spanish Language Section accepts the same Legal Code as the English and French sections have done, you and other guys there can have that sort of thing from your women.”

“Do you mean that, Señor?”

“Yes. Now, we’re going to let you go, but you’re going to do some things for us.”

“I.. I’ll do anything you want.”

“First, you’re going to go back and find anyone you know in the Frontier. You’re going to tell them that they are not to rape any more women out there. Because if they use women for sex without the woman’s permission, we’re going to allow some women to do the same to them, just like we did to you. If you don’t think they’ll believe what we did to you, just tell them we’re going to start torturing rapists.”

“Ah, yes, I’ll go tell them.”

“And tell them that kidnaping women from here doesn’t mean involuntary recycling if they’re caught. It means the kind of torture we did to you and then maybe we’ll let them go, but we’ll do it even longer than we did to you, or we might sexually torture them *and* recycle them. You got that?”

“Yes.”

“Also, I believe there are a number of other guys who’ve boasted of doing rapes there. I want them. Tell everyone that there is a bounty of 40 points karma for every rapist they turn in to the nearest wizard. Sixty points if the guy has 10 or more confirmed rapes. And if a guy is one and turns in at least two, we let him go.”

“Okay.”

“You tell them 246 says so. You got that?”

“Yes.”

“Central Computer, transport Chavez to intersection of The Road and The Other Road in the Frontier.” Chavez disappears.

Chapter 110

“...the next sound you hear, will be the voice of God.”

At the entrance to the auditorium, two people are greeting those who enter, saying the same thing, “Welcome to Orientation, thank you for coming,” and shaking people’s hands. As people take a seat they find a bag with some books and other materials inside, along with pens and paper at each seat.

As soon as the hall fills, they tell people that the show is full, and issue them tickets saying if they come back to another one they can go right to the head of the line. The auditorium goes dark

An announcer speaks in a booming voice: “Ladies and gentlemen, the next sound you hear, will be the voice of God.”

In a very high pitched squeak is heard the words, “Hi there.” The audience laughs.

A spotlight comes on and shows 246 standing on stage.

“My name is Supervisor 246. I am God. It’s only a temporary position, I hope someday to move up to something with a little more responsibility.” More laughter. “How do I know I am God? Someone once defined what is God. He who can do as he pleases to you, and you have to take it. On the earth where you came from, that sort of power existed in the hands of the people who run the government. Here, it also exists in the hands of the people who run the government, but it also exists in the hands of private individuals, people just like you. So what makes me God? Because I can force you to do something against your will and you can’t touch me. A one sided condition. I’m telling you this because I want no misunderstandings about what is going on. I can do anything I want to you and you can’t do a damn thing about it, or to me. And what’s preventing me from doing so? My respect for your existence. As I want my existence respected, I respect yours.

“That’s all. My self restraint is the only thing protecting you from being destroyed by me. Or used for anything I want. And that’s what defines God. He who can do with you as he pleases and you can’t do anything about it or respond. To a dog, his owner is God.

“In front of you is a bag containing books, a pen and paper. All of that is yours to take with you when you leave. There is also another reason it is there. I’m going to give you a great deal of information in this seminar, so you may wish to take notes. Quite a bit of what you are going to learn here is complicated, so I’m going to try and make it as simple as I can without making it too simple. So if I explain a little too much, please bear with me. If there is something you do not understand, write a note about it and at the end, you’ll have a chance to ask questions. We give you this orientation because we want you to unlearn some things that you’ve spent all your life on earth learning. Because almost everything you know, is *wrong*.”

“A few people like me put together these seminars for Orientation in order to teach all of you some of what you needed to learn when you got here. But make no mistake about it; we didn’t do this because we’re altruistic, or because we wanted to be nice to you. We did it because we got sick and tired of people like you, who don’t know anything about this society, doing something stupid and getting yourself into trouble because you didn’t know any better. In fact, we have a name for you. It’s the same name we had when we were in the position you are in right now, in which you’re freshly dead and don’t know anything about the world you’ve just arrived into. We call you an *Incoming*. Some people use that as a swear word, and sometimes

I do, but it is a statement of the state you are in.

“You arrived here and know nothing about this place. When someone is in a war zone and sees bullets heading in his direction, he yells out ‘*Incoming!*’ and so that’s where the term came from. You’re a new arrival here, nothing more complicated than that, and you have no power to do anything about it. Whether you dropped dead, were murdered, killed yourself or died in an accident, you had no power or ability to stop yourself from arriving here, any more than a bullet fired from a rifle has any power to stop itself from arriving at the place it is aimed.

“We decided to tell you Incomings these things so maybe you won’t be so clueless and irritating to others. And maybe you won’t be so likely as to make a fool of yourself in our world. In fact, until you take this course, most people would refer to you as a Clueless Incoming. That probably should be considered an insult but it’s also a statement of fact. You don’t know anything about this society and will make a lot of mistakes. Innocent might be a better term, but Clueless is the phrase that got stuck on you people. But at least, after you take this seminar and some of the rest of them, you won’t be Clueless any longer.

“Actually, the reason they started these orientation courses was because of me, Supervisor 246. Did they start them because they wanted to honor me or say thanks for what I did? No, they started them basically to protect the public, that is you Clueless Incomings, *from* me.

“I’ll tell you about myself much later. First, I want to talk about you. Or rather, I want to tell you about your place in this world.

“You might want to ask, what is your relationship to society? You *are* society, you’re just as much a part of it as me. Which is why you need to know these things. Because you can’t really be a functioning part of society if you don’t know them.

“Now I’d like to tell you something about this country, this government, this society, that hopefully you will be able to be a part of, this world. We could do anything we wanted to you and there’s not a damn thing you could have done about it. We are God, as far as you are concerned.

“And so what could we do when people like you Clueless Incomings came into our world? We who are already here and a part of it could have mistreated you. Tortured you. Punished you for what you did on earth. Acted capriciously and with malice. Exploited you mercilessly as ‘fodder for the sadistic pleasures of the reprobates who infest this world’ as a member of our highest court referred to some really bad people. Those are some of the things we could have done to you and all the ones like you who came here before. We chose not to. We went in the opposite direction. We looked at human existence in this world and decided to do only what was absolutely necessary.

“Since we chose to go in that direction, what should we do when people like you came into our world? Let me explain to you what we did do. You needed to know a few things. We decided we wanted you to at least know a little bit about the world you’ve just been forced into when you arrived as an Incoming, same as you were forced into the world you just died in when you arrived and were born. So we created a video to tell you some of these things. The first person you met in this world, your Welcomer, showed that video to you. So what was it about? “Some of you might not have seen it so I’ll briefly summarize what was on the tape. We had to let you understand that yes, you’re dead. Yes, you’ve died and gone to Heaven, as the saying goes. That there are things you knew on earth that are now totally wrong, and that you need to

unlearn them. Also, some information about this world, where the information center is, how to get around, about this orientation, and why you should take it, and a few other things.

“This orientation is designed to tell you a whole lot more about what happened to you after you died. There are more questions. Let’s try the typical who, what, when, where and why. Who are you? What are you? When will you have to face up to what you did on earth? Where are you? How does society feel about you? Why are you here? So let me take a look at one of the questions.

“For example, what is this place? Well, that’s one of the questions I’m going to try and answer. I’m not going to answer the questions in the exact order I gave them, but I will eventually answer all of them. Or at least I hope I will. You’ll be able to ask questions later on if you have any.

“So let’s start with ‘Where are you?’ While I did say you’ve died and gone to heaven, most of us here don’t say that because we’re not really sure if it is heaven.

“We call this place the Afterlife because a lot of people disagree as to what Heaven really is. Some people think this is the Purgatory that you go to while you’re waiting to get in to Heaven or Hell, depending on which of those you’re headed for. Some think this is Hell, that we are the ones that didn’t make it, and the real Heaven is something so much better that this place is torture by comparison. Well, that’s their opinion and they’re entitled to it. They may well be right.

“Let me also make one thing clear. You’re dead. Nothing that happens here nor anything you or anyone else does can in any way ever cause you to die again. This is it, you’re here forever and can’t die any further unless you go back to earth and be born, then you’ll die there and come back here again.

“What are you? In simple terms, you are energy, a soul, or a spirit, because you are dead and no longer have a body.

“So you are dead. What does that mean? Think about it for a moment. You left your body on earth and became a spirit again, as you were before you were born, a free spirit, an entity of pure energy.

“Remember that. You are, in effect, an entity of pure energy, a spirit as it were, you don’t really have a physical body. I will explain that in great detail a little later. Because you don’t really have a body, you don’t have to eat, or drink, or sleep, or a lot of the other things you had to do on earth to survive. You don’t even have to go to the bathroom. We have no bacteria here. So you don’t get old. You don’t decay. You don’t have bad breath, or body odor, or athlete’s foot. You’re not even here.

“You’re not really inside that body that you think you are in, sitting there listening to me. What you have that you think you are sitting inside of is something that we made you think you have because it’s easier for you to understand what is going on around you if you have something similar to what you had on earth. It was easier for you if we simply made things similar to earth. Because it was easier for us when we got here.

“Oh we could have done lots of other things. Put up a representation of heaven, have all the things people expect, pearly gates, clouds, painted the entrance all white, have people wear wings, etc., and most of you would accept it as heaven.

“We could have implemented a very hot environment, put rocks and flowing lava out, painted the place in shades of red, implemented the smell of brimstone, have people walk around with

pointy tails, red suits and carrying pitchforks, and most of you would accept it as hell.

“We didn’t go either of these routes because they weren’t necessary. Actually, since most of us liked the way things were on earth, and by duplicating it to a certain degree, it makes it easier for you to manage when you get here, we decided to stick with a world with a format similar to earth, but with a number of differences as we saw fit.

“If you don’t like the way things are, or think they should be changed, then you have every right to come forward and propose they be changed. We’re always looking for ways to improve our world, and maybe you’ve got some. Or maybe you’re wrong. But we will listen to good ideas even if we don’t agree with them. But I’ll make a suggestion. Take some time to learn about this world before you start making suggestions about why you think we’re wrong on something. Learn about why things are here first, before you propose changing them, or you’re liable to get laughed at when you propose some silly change to the way things are only to discover that we changed *from* whatever you’re suggesting to our present system because the way we are doing is a better idea.

“But don’t let me scare you away from proposing changes, there’s enough inertia around that unless your idea is a really good one, and a real improvement, it’s probably not going to make a whole lot of difference unless *you* are willing to make a serious effort to show other people why they should change things..

“We may be dead, but our society isn’t, and a living society is going to change. You are a member of society - or will be, once you learn how to manage in this world - and we welcome your input in perhaps making it better. If you can’t make it better, please at least try not to make things worse.

“What do I mean by that? Well, one thing that some people ask is what we do about what people did when they were on earth, and how we punish them for their mistakes. Before you say that we need to change what we do, you need to understand why we do what we do. Before you say we should change the manner in which we make people face up to what they’ve done on earth, you should ask yourself why we act the way we do. So let me ask that question. When are you going to have to face up to what you did on earth? The answer is: you don’t.

“Yes, everybody take a sigh of relief. Whatever stupid things you did on earth, once you died they died with you. You start over from zero, from scratch. Whether you were the nicest person who almost wore a halo, all the way through to the worst piece of slime on the face of the earth, you start over here from scratch.

“You don’t get any special rewards for having been a nice person while on earth, and you don’t get punished for anything you did there. You start over here with a clean slate.

“In the operation of this government, this society, this world, we decided that, as far as treatment of you Incomings was concerned, whatever you did on earth, dying was punishment enough for everything.

“Besides that, why should we be punishing you here, for something you did on earth? You didn’t do anything to us, we have no business getting involved in making what you did somewhere else, something that we have any authority to take action over.

“What we did decide to do was only to do that which was absolutely necessary to respond to your arriving here.

“I want you to remember that when you think about how we, as a people, as a society, as a government, have chosen to act. To do only that which is absolutely necessary for our

continued survival. Those are the only things which we have made mandatory. Everything else is done on a voluntary basis because someone decided that they thought it was necessary and chose to volunteer to offer it to other people. If you think something is necessary that requires the government to do it, you're going to have to do an awful lot of convincing of the people that run it that it is necessary. If it's not that hard to do, just start doing it yourself and if you're right, other people will help you with it. Or you can convince some other people that it's necessary and start doing it yourselves.

"But the government isn't going to get involved in what you think is necessary unless you show those of us in the government why it is that you propose we start doing is absolutely necessary. Because that is the direction to which our government and our society has chosen to go.

"And so, if we as a government, as a society, are only going to do what is absolutely necessary, what should we do when people came into our world? Let them know what was necessary to manage because we got sick and tired of their ignorance. Why they're wrong. We have to decide how to do that because while there are things we can do, they're dead so there are things we can't do. What can and can't we do to you and the other dead Clueless Incomings that have arrived at our doorstep, so to speak?

"Can't feed them. Can't water them. Could talk to them. Could listen to them. And, we could love them.

"And that's something to think about, ladies and gentlemen. What do we as a society do to you Clueless Incomings? I think a society or a country or a government shows its character by how it treats the weakest and most vulnerable members of that society. And who is weaker and more vulnerable than someone who has just arrived here, flat broke, bare handed, freshly dead and probably scared to the very core of their being that they are going to be punished for whatever stupid mistakes they made in life?

"We thought about that for a long time. What can we do about all those millions of people who die and expect Judgement Day once they got here, and expect some sort of punishment for their mistakes and errors they made down on earth?

"We're not on earth, so why should we care about what happened in that society down there? Instead, let's give them a reason to care about this society here. By showing them that this society cares about them. That we even *love* them. And we do, in every way possible that we could think of.

"But what is love? Well, they've been trying to answer *that* question for thousands of years. But I think we have a couple of good definitions. The writer of one of the books in your bag, Robert A. Heinlein, defined in another one of his books, *Time Enough For Love*, the two basic definitions of love. If you exclude where someone uses 'love' in place of 'like' such as 'I love apple pie,' we basically have two definitions for love: *agape* and *eros*.

"That first word, *agape*, it's pronounced ah-gah-pay and spelled a-g-a-p-e. It refers to something akin to what a mother feels toward its child, or an animal to its owner. Now I don't know if we as a society care about you quite that much, but I do think we care about you a whole lot more than the societies that you lived in on earth did.

"Then the second word, *eros*, is pronounced ay-rohs, and spelled e-r-o-s. It refers to what a man or a woman feels toward someone that they find very attractive and interesting looking. In the 1960s in the United States, where I came from, when my government was busy running a military operation in Vietnam, a lot of people didn't like it and suggested something else. They

had a very popular statement: Make love, not war. And that's what *eros* refers to, making love, or at least the feeling that you want to. Lust, horniness, whatever you want to call it.

"Now, let me tell you how we as a society express love to you.

"I'll start with *agape*.

"Where you came from there was a lot of force used upon you. Generally you were forced to do this, forced to do that, and so on. You were forced to go to school, perhaps by your parents, but definitely by the Government; you were forced to serve on Jury duty if you got called; as I noted in the definitions, you might even have been forced to go to war if the politicians decided they wanted to fight some other country. And of course, you were forced to pay taxes.

"We almost never use force here because it isn't necessary. It's not necessary down there for most things either, but most people haven't realized it. In fact, generally, we don't allow force to be used on people like you. Unless they use it first. And we even tell them when we're going to use force on them legitimately. Because we love them. I'll explain how in a moment.

"And now the other definition of love - *eros* - and how we show it to you.

"We needed a way to have what we think you need to know explained to you. We created a video for that. But we had to find a way to get you to see it. So what we did was to have someone come get you once you arrived, have them show you this video, and in exchange for doing that, we gave them something.

"When you came into our world, as you will remember, someone came out to meet you. That person is what we call a *Welcomer*. They saw what you looked like, liked how you looked, and decided to go meet you. They *chose* to pick you. They alone decided they wanted to go meet you. They were not forced to do so. We did not expect them to do anything; they can sit in their room all day and watch TV if they want. But they wanted to meet you.

"They wanted to show you a video which would tell you something about where you are and what happened to you. They wanted to answer your questions, if you had any, about what had happened. They wanted to calm your fears. And they wanted something else. They wanted to offer you something, which you were free to accept or decline, if you so chose. And most of you do choose to accept. You know exactly what it was if you did.

"Your *Welcomer* found you interesting looking. Make no bones about it, they wanted to jump yours. They wanted to have sex with you. They wanted to make love with you. They wanted to have a lot of fun and enjoy some hot sex with you. And what did they want from you? They wanted you to have a lot of fun and enjoy some hot sex with them. An even exchange.

"The highest and greatest pleasure two people can share and we give it away, in unlimited quantities, any time they want it. And the people who give it away are *all volunteers*.

"Think about that for a moment, ladies and gentlemen. This society, this government, despite all of its power, and its ability to do pretty much anything it pleases to you, it choose to please you. The first thing it does to you when you came into this world, is to let you come.

"The *Welcomer* who met you wanted to pay you the highest possible compliment one person can offer another: that they found you sexually attractive and wanted to express that attraction physically. What they wanted from you was the greatest possible gift one person can offer another. They wanted to be the first person in this world you had sex with. They wanted to be the one who pops your cherry in our world, by letting you have sex with them until you came.

Because they would also do the same thing, have sex with you until they came. In essence, it would allow both of you to offer and to give to each other the greatest gift one human being can give another, love. Or at least a great big orgasm or twenty, which is the essence of physical love.

“No exploitation, no ‘using’ anyone, just two people enjoying each other’s bodies for no other reason than the sheer pleasure of pure unadulterated sex. The worst and most dangerous kind of sex there is, the dirtiest stuff that the hardest hardcore porno films can’t even touch, the stuff that frightens religious people to the core of their very being. Sex for no other reason than that the two people involved want to enjoy it, to have fun. That’s all.

“We say that anyone who has not had sex in this world, after dying, is a virgin, no matter how much (if any) they had on earth, because it is radically different from what it was there. It’s much stronger and much more pleasurable for everyone here than it was on earth.

“Sex here is a lot of fun, for everyone. We want you to have fun, because when you do, we get to have a lot of fun with you, too.

“That is why the first thing this society does to its Incoming people is to offer to get them laid. To show them love if they want to accept it. And we have a code term for it. When you first have sex in this world it’s usually because a Welcomer offered to let you have it with them. They love you back into the world. Remember that phrase: They love you back into the world. What they are doing is popping your cherry here, in order to give pleasure to you, and receive pleasure from you, on the very first day you show up here. I can’t think of a nicer way to Welcome someone into a place where they could conceivably be spending the next twenty billion years.

“This government, this world, this society shows how much it cares about you by *loving* you. Literally. Love thy neighbor as thyself. We find a person, someone who wants to - again, no force - mate with you, to make love with you, to have sex with you, for no other reason than to share pleasure with you. We give them the opportunity to do this with anyone who comes along and let them decide whom to pick. So don’t think this is some form of prostitution or something like that. We offer them the opportunity to have sex with all the virgins they want. So perhaps we’re like the Aztecs, in that we sacrifice you virgin Incomings to the Welcomers. But since you enjoyed the experience, I don’t believe there was any sacrifice at all. And that’s how we bring you into our world. We bring you into this world by providing pleasure to you. We love you back into the world. Isn’t that wonderful?

“You look at other places, other countries and their first concern is how much they can make you fear the government, by making the first thing you discover is how powerful their military and police are. The first thing their government wants to show you is fear. The first thing our government wants to show you is *love*.

“As a part of that love you’re going to be turned loose in a society that grants you a lot more freedom to do as you please than possibly anything you’ve seen on earth. There is very little you can do here that is unlawful. Blocking a public corridor or an entrance to a building. Causing a disturbance in someone else’s place of residence or business. There are a few other things, nothing that you can’t avoid; you have a copy of the list right there in your bag.

“But there is one really big one. Actually, the examples I have just given you are part of the same thing and are indirectly related to that most important law we have on the books. It’s so big and important it doesn’t even have a statute number. It’s on the books under what it is

called. At the top of our society is the highest law of the land, Rule #1. And that's the one where if we catch you breaking it, we tell you we are going to use force on you. That we're about to do a number on you. That we're about to violate you six-ways-from-Sunday. "Also, don't think you can get around Rule #1. It's very explicit and very clear. This law does not bend. You comply with it or you break it, no two ways about it. And when you break it, you're in trouble. But you don't know what Rule #1 is. It is quite possible for you to live in this society, go about your business, not even know what Rule #1 is, and never break it. Unlike so many laws on earth. But, while ignorance of the law is not a defense on earth - a reprehensible rule set up by lawyers who want to be able to drum up business if ever I have heard of one - we do take that into consideration here. So I'm going to let you know what Rule #1 is so you can't claim ignorance of the law any more.

"I can tell you what Rule #1 means in a number of different ways. But I'll start with the exact text of the statute because I know it from memory. And I'll write it on the board here so you can read it and hopefully remember it. Because if you can remember what it says, and follow it, you'll probably never have any problems with the police here. So I'll write it on the board and then I'll read it to you. Here's what it says: 'RULE #1 NO PERSON SHALL INITIATE FORCE UPON ANOTHER EXCEPT TO PREVENT OR RETALIATE AGAINST THE OTHER'S INITIATION OF FORCE OR ATTEMPT TO INITIATE FORCE.'

"That's all. What does all that mean, exactly? Now, there are lots of nuances and qualifications as to when something constitutes initiation of force and so on and so forth, that's why we have courts and counsel to argue what you can get away with and what you can't. But I'll try and make it real simple for you. First I'll explain what we mean by force, and what that fancy word 'initiate' means.

"Well, to get that, I'll quote from one of the books you have in your bag there, Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. Actually I'll quote from the movie because I happen to like the phrasing. 'When you exercise force you are using *violence*, the Supreme Authority from which all other authority is derived.'

"That's why the Governments down on earth *force* you to do things. Because the only reason it has authority over you is because it's willing to initiate force upon you. To Initiate means to start. Meaning the government is willing to start to use force when you have not done anything to it. It is willing to commit violence to you to make you do things it wants. It uses its authority to impose its demands upon you. It has authority because it is willing to initiate force, to start the use of violence.

"If you don't think it's that serious back on earth, consider what happens if you drive on an otherwise empty expressway at 150 kilometers an hour - that's about 90 miles-per-hour for those of you that don't understand metric - and a police officer parked next to the road sees you. He's going to come after you and if you don't stop, he's going to initiate force to make you, and if you resist, escalate the amount of force. You haven't done anything to anyone, but he's going to start to use violence upon you to make you obey his authority if you don't.

"That goes right back to what I said when I started this lecture. I am God. I can use violence on you in ways you cannot hope to respond to, I can make you take it, and you can't do a damn thing to me. But if I do that, I've broken Rule #1. I've violated your civil rights. I've treated you like you are my property to do with as I please. And as a society we frown upon that sort of thing. So we have checks on what we can do. Because we respect you as we

respect ourselves. When you make people into property you are declaring them a *slave*. We don't think slavery is an appropriate thing to do to the people we love.

"And we like it even less when one of you does it to someone around you. I'm trusted to have the kind of privileges I have because people know that I won't use them to hurt other people. And that is what we expect of you. That's what Rule #1 means. It's so simple even a child can understand it. Don't hurt other people. You want to hurt yourself, go right ahead. But don't hurt me or anyone else. Unless they want you to, or they say you can.

"If you and a friend want to wrestle or fight with each other, and maybe punch each other out, that's perfectly fine. As long as both of you agree to it. But don't you go twisting someone's arm without getting their ok first, or you're going to wind up in the slammer.

"And the nice thing about it is that it covers everything. Rape, robbery - although we don't have property here I don't know what you could rob someone of - assault, kidnaping, battery, you name it, they all, in one way or another, break Rule #1. So we don't need to define 300 different crimes, we just define one. Initiation of Force. Use of violence upon another without their consent.

"And what do we as a society do about that? Well, we thought very hard about that subject, and we came up with what we think was a pretty neat solution. We just give you equal treatment to the way you are acting. Equality, no more and no less.

"When you start the use of violence against someone, you are saying that your opinion is that they, as a person, do not have rights, because if they did have rights, then you cannot violate them. Because if you have rights, we cannot violate yours either. Since you have shown that you think that people don't have rights, then we as a society can agree with you, and therefore say that *you* do not have any rights. You should not have any reason to complain, since you are getting the exact same treatment from us as you are giving them. Since once you violated their rights you could have done any thing you pleased to them, we as a society may now do anything we please to you.

"Well, since you just used violence upon someone without their consent, we're gonna do the same thing to you. We can initiate force upon you without breaking Rule #1 because you did it first, and it allows us to retaliate against you for what you did.

"You have done something wrong. You've made that person into your property. Well, now you're someone else's property until an appropriate punishment can be meted out to you that fits the crime you committed.

"The first thing that will happen, is that someone, either a police officer if they see it, or the person you struck, or someone else, will tell you we're about to do that. They have to. See, we love you so much that you can't even be arrested until after we tell you we're about to violate your civil rights and initiate force upon you in order to retaliate for what you have done.

"So how do we do that? How do we tell you we are about to violate your civil rights because you did it to someone else first? The person who does this will say what is called the four magic words. And I'll write them on the board here and read them to you. Here is what they will say to you: **YOU ARE HEREBY VIOLATED.**

"That's why we say, and if you watch tv or read the newspapers or a website, or listen to radio, when someone is arrested for breaking Rule #1, or any law for that matter, that they are *violated*. They are also arrested, but it's an admission to them that we are aware that in stopping them after they violated someone's rights, that we must violate theirs in order to

retaliate. It allows us, as a society to admit that we know that we must respect their rights unless they have failed to do so to others, and that statement is an admonishment to them that we are aware that they have failed to do so. It is both a compliment and a warning. It is a compliment to them that they are a human being with rights. It is a warning to them that they have failed to honor those rights of someone else.

“This point is held so strongly by the law that failure to state to the person when arresting someone for breaking Rule #1 that they have been violated is an absolute and complete defense to the charge of breaking Rule #1, and that the courts must, in effect, declare the person’s arrest unlawful. If a police officer or anyone else arrests you without informing you that you have been violated, the charge must be dismissed with prejudice by the court. No matter how bad your crime is, if the person who arrests you fails to ‘violate you,’ you cannot be punished. Not only that, if the person is informed that they are violated, but they are informed after they are arrested, it is the same thing as if they were never violated at all. It has highest priority and must be done first, or it is considered that the person who arrested you has failed to do so. “We do that to advise you that you are about to be punished for wrongdoing. To be retaliated against for the initiation of force. Once you have been punished, you have been retaliated against, the transaction is complete. You violated someone’s rights, so we violated yours, and now it’s over and done with and we can both go on about our business.

“Requiring that you be violated before being arrested and eventually punished is a tiny, but important ‘line in the sand’ in which we unequivocally state we are a civilized society based on rule of law, with respect for the individual above all else. But I think we showed that we love and respect you as a person because of what the first thing this society offers to you when you got here. To love you back into the world. In the true meaning of eros. And I think that the treatment of those who break Rule #1 or our other laws shows that we do love you, in a way that the countries on earth do not. In a sense of *agape*, as I have said.

“If this does not show how much we as a people, as a society, love and care about you as an individual, I suggest you do a u-turn, that is, go to the recycling center and ask to be put under the knife, that is, to go back to earth and be reborn as a baby, because I don’t think you’re going to be able to manage here.

“It’s been said that there are some things that are axioms upon which an entire system of philosophy is constructed. Rule #1 is the axiom at the base of our world, the lynchpin that holds society together. You can say it in many forms, but it all comes down to one thing: In the whole world, thou mayest do any thing, provided one does not do it to someone else without their approval.

“And that’s it. That’s all anyone has to do. Chances are you’ll never be bothered by the police or anyone else unless you get in the way and need to move.”

“And now we’re going to tell you even more, or rather, I’m going to tell you even more. And maybe a few things you don’t want to know. We care about you and love you so much that we think you’re entitled to know something you weren’t allowed to know when you were on earth.

“Well, first, you now know the answer to Question #1 that’s been plaguing you all the time you’ve been alive once you came to the realization that was only temporary.

“Now you know if there is life after death. And to answer the title of a movie I’ve heard of, you even know if there is *sex* after death. And even better news: there’s no income tax here! Consider that: Eternal life, all the sex you want and no income tax! If that doesn’t mean this

place is Heaven I'd be hard pressed to find anything better!

"But there's just one little question you're going to need to ask. Actually it's two. What is this place, that is, what is it made of? Second question is, where are we? Now we could lie to you and make up some entirely plausible story and it would probably work. In fact, we could make it work if we wanted to. But, because we love you, we're going to tell you the truth. And maybe you don't want to know. But we're going to tell you. "Look around you. Look at yourself. Touch the chair. Pinch yourself. Convince yourself you're not dreaming, that this is the real world. Now listen to a song I'm about to play a clip from:"

I just found out
There's no such thing
As the real world,
It's just a lie
We have to rise above.

"I'll repeat those words." He does. "So what does that mean?"

"Some of you may have seen a movie called *The Matrix*, in which the main character, Neo, isn't sure if things around him are real, or if they are simulated and that the world is just a figment of his imagination. They do the same thing to Arnold Schwarzenegger in a movie called *Total Recall*. And to Tom Cruise in a really strange movie called *Vanilla Sky*. They all wonder if what is happening to them is real.

"Some of you may have seen Robin Williams literally go through hell after he dies in order to retrieve his dead wife in the film *What Things May Come*

"By now, some of you might have figured out what I'm about to tell you. And, I'll go back to the film *The Matrix* again, to quote some dialog from the film:"

Lawrence Fishburne's voice plays: "What is real? How do you define *real*? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply, electrical signals interpreted by your brain."

"If you didn't get to see that movie on earth we're showing it after Orientation, so you can see it now if you want.

"So we're telling you, honestly and openly what is going on. From the time you first became aware, at maybe 3 or 5 or 6, your brain started transmitting all of the sensory information it received, and everything you thought about, by telepathy, in order that everything you know would be preserved. Where has it been sending it? To this government, to us. You've been sending us the contents of your mind for as long as you've been alive. And we've been keeping it and saving it for you.

"One day, something happened. Your body failed. You had an accident. Someone did something to you. Or you did it to yourself. In any case, your brain became unable to keep you alive. Remember, the rest of your body is meaningless, almost all of it can be replaced or simulated through equipment. Artificial limbs, artificial heart, kidney and liver dialysis, an iron lung, organ transplants, yes, medical technology on earth can do some amazing things if either you qualify or you're rich enough to afford it.

"But if the brain dies, that's *it* and you are *dead*."

“Well, guess what? You’ve been e-mailing us the contents of your brain, the memories, thoughts, feelings and emotions you had. And we’ve been saving them for you. Now you just died. All that crap you sent us was a waste, because we have no need for it. I have my own memories, what do I need with yours? I don’t even know you. But, there is someone who can use them and now *does* need them. That’s right, *you*.

“But how are you going to use them? You’re dead, and you ain’t here. So, you think we came to get you? Are you kidding? Do you think we have the time or the interest to bother watching for you to die? Well, you’ve been sending us the contents of your brain all of your life, how hard would it be for you to send us your soul, too? As it turns out, not hard at all.

“When you died, your soul started sending us messages telling us that, and saying it was coming along. So, in effect, when your body died, when the ocean liner of life that you were riding on, did a *Titanic* and capsized, you jumped out and swam for a lifeboat. Or rather, a *deathboat*. You went back to where you left all your memories. Which is where you are now, back on board your deathboat.

“But there’s just one little problem. You are a being of pure energy. But your essence, your soul, basically only knows how to interpret reality on the basis of sense information. Sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. If you don’t receive information through senses, all that would happen once you died would be an eternity of nothing but your thoughts. No light, no sound, no contact. Just silent darkness, floating forever.

“Boooooorinnngggg!

“But your soul is used to interpreting the signals your brain received. If you got the same information sent to you in the same way, you would never know the difference.

“So that’s what we did to you. We allow you to receive sensory input in the form of images, sounds, and contact with other objects. So you think you’re sitting in this room, listening to me. You’re not.

“What happened was, you sent signals to the fingers you think you have, to send a message to a transport kiosk to bring you here, and in any case you sent signals to the legs you think you have, to walk in here, and sit down. Now, being in this place, or so you think, allowed you to hear anything in this area that is transmitted to your ears as sense impressions.

“All this would take a lot of work to do. A lot of effort. Possibly dozens or hundreds of people would be needed to handle all the things that were done. Or, nobody at all.

“As I said earlier, while you were alive you were sending us your memories and we were saving them for you. How did we do that? We had a computer do it for us. Now maybe you can guess the answer to the question I am about to ask: How did we allow your soul to continue to operate after you died, and allow you to see and hear and feel everything you are hearing and seeing now? That’s right, the same answer: We had a computer do it for us.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you are components of, and sitting in, the largest computer program ever created. Here, now, your body and everything you are experiencing, are all computer-generated signals being transmitted to the sense inputs of your soul.

“When you were alive, your ‘soul,’ as it were, was a system of consciousness operating on the proteins and fats which compose the brain of an organic life form, i.e. a human being.

“When you died, your ‘soul,’ as it were, was transferred as a system of consciousness to start operating on the circuits and switches of an inorganic electronic device, i.e. a computer.

“In short, your soul is an organic program, running on the organic hardware of a human being

until that person could no longer operate, at which point the program that is your soul resumed operation as a computer program, running on computer hardware. And that is what you are now. And so am I. We are all dead, computer programs that have no physical existence. “Why are we telling you all this? For several reasons. First, it is part of the philosophy of this country, this society, this government, that we care about you as an individual and we won’t lie to you about your place in it and how you fit in. Second, so you can understand what is going on around you and how to fit into society. If we don’t tell you these things, you would be exploited by those who figured it out. People like me. And that goes back to the original reason these orientation classes were started. I’ll get back to that soon.

“Neither you nor anything around you is real. That means you can have anything you want just by thinking it up, if you know how. Arthur C. Clarke, who wrote the book and the screenplay to the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* coined the expression, ‘Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.’ So we can create things by thinking them up, and get rid of them the same way. Since the computer can capture our thoughts, we can talk to it by thinking, or we can say it out loud.

“And now here’s where I come in.

“There’s a guy down on earth, you’ve probably heard of him, he made all the papers all over the world, because he killed his ex-wife and her friend, the whole world watched on TV, saw his trial and watched him get away with it. I’m sure you know who that man is. Well, let me tell you something: I’m even better known up here than O.J. Simpson is. You ask anyone if they’ve heard of a guy named 246 and they’ll know you’re talking about me.

“No, I didn’t kill anybody although I think they could have forgiven me for that. What I’ve done is been very greedy in how I run my business. I’m what they call a sharp operator. I do computer programming here, and I charge all that the traffic will bear for the work I do. And sometimes more than the traffic will bear.

“What we have here is a meritocracy based on intelligence. I moved up the ladder because I could think faster than others and could see the whole picture. It takes someone who understands the complex relationships involved in the real world, in order to understand the even more complicated ones in the virtual world. And to understand what is and is not possible if you strip things down to the root, the core. To look at everything from scratch.

“So that’s how the orientation classes started. They wanted to warn people like you about sharp operators like me. So that you Clueless Incomings wouldn’t get ripped off too badly. I’ll even give you one quick example of how I would do it.

“Let’s say you wanted me to build a house for you to live in. So perhaps I say it’s going to cost you 500 hours of your time at some point in the future, that is, you’re going to have to do 500 hours of work for me or someone I send you to, in exchange for your house. I’m not asking you for money, just 500 favors of one hour each. So you say okay, I spend 5 minutes, your house is finished and I’m done. I gave you exactly what you ordered, and did it exactly the way you wanted it. But for you to get it, I’ve made you give me 500 hours of work for 5 minutes of my time. That’s why some people felt I was ripping them off. So now you know. Now some people had the same work done and felt that was a perfectly reasonable bargain and thought it was cheap in comparison. The last time they bought a house on earth it cost them 20 years of work. Or 30. So not everyone thinks I’m as bad as some people do. But you can make your own decision.

“Now maybe you know that, and you decide that I’m going to charge you too much. You can bargain but I don’t usually discount my rates; I don’t have to, I can’t keep up with all the orders I get and I’ve had to raise them from time to time in order to not be working 10/10 every standard day. Or rather, 24/7 every calendar day. That’s another reason to tell you something about this place: the clocks and the standard calendar are different here. I’ll explain that part later.

“Anyway, if you felt what I wanted was too expensive, then I might offer you a choice of options on something else you could do for me in exchange for what you want me to do for you. But since doing that is for your convenience, not mine, what you have to do for me is something that is worth it because I think it’s a good deal. So I might ask you to do something really embarrassing to you in public, especially if it’s very ironic or funny, or I might have you set up some practical joke on other people, or I might challenge you to some contest, and let me tell you, if you go into a contest with me on my terms, it will generally have two components to it: it will almost always have some sexual element to it, and you *will* lose.

“And that is what got a lot of people mad at me, in that I made them the butt of my practical jokes. Some people got the humor in them, and they still like me. So you’ll have to make up your own mind about what you think of me, if you do.

“So if you wanted something, and didn’t know you can get it by asking the computer to give it to you, you might get tricked into doing something that someone else wants in exchange for them providing it. That’s why these orientation courses got started, because some people felt I was cheating people by gouging them, per the example I gave you, where someone offers 500 hours of their time for a job that takes me 5 minutes. If you know all of this and you ask someone to do something, you might not be cheated by paying too much.

“And there’s a third reason. Since a person can create anything by thinking about it, the whole concept of money becomes obsolete. If you can make anything you want, what do you need money for? Or how can you have a concept such as money if someone could make that, too? So there is no way to pay anyone money or anything else of value.

“But we do have something else. We’re sitting in a computer program that has rules and logic to operate it. And it will accept commands. And to use some of those commands - including the ones that allow you to create things - require privileges. And to get those privileges you have to obtain them in some manner. One of the ways you can obtain privileges is to earn them. Which is what you have done today. We consider that you did some work by sitting here, listening to me rant on for all this time and some time in the future. So in exchange for the work you’ve done, we’re going to grant you the privilege of using the telephone and computer systems by voice at the end of this class.

“Oh, in case I didn’t make it clear, being able to create things is also a privilege. You have to earn it like you did today. Or buy it by doing favors for someone. Or steal it. You heard me correctly, I did say steal.

“Those who have privileges are the ones who have earned them through some effort, were granted them through their occupation, bought them by trading favors, or who stole them. That’s correct, I said stole. You’re in a whole new world here. Remember, almost everything you know is *wrong*. In the real world, stealing is bad. Here, stealing is good, it’s encouraged and tolerated. As long as you don’t break Rule #1.

“When you’re on earth, you wouldn’t bother stealing a pile of leaves from your next door neighbor because you’ve got plenty of them, they’re worthless. And if someone offered you

some weird looking electrical device that you could not figure out what it was, you probably wouldn't take it because you probably can't use it. So we figure people don't usually steal privileges just for the sake of stealing them, but because they figured out that there is some use they can make of them, meaning they're smart enough to know how to use the privilege if they're smart enough to figure out how to steal it. And basically you steal a privilege by getting someone to grant it to you but either figuring out how to keep it or making them forget to revoke it. Or figuring a way to steal the privilege granted to you by trick, by extortion, or mistake.

"So think about that for a moment, and remember what I said. You can have totally moral people, whose word is their bond and keep their promises, but steal at any chance they get and the rest of us think there is nothing wrong with it.

"Because all you're doing when you steal a privilege is getting something before someone else decided you should have had it. That's all. You're not preventing them from using their privileges - if you do, you're breaking Rule #1 on them - all you're doing is getting them for yourself. And we figure if you're smart enough to figure out how to steal a privilege, you're smart enough to know how to use it.

"That's the only reason we even have privileges, because there are some capacities to do things that not everyone should have. It's why you don't give liquor and car keys to 15-year-old boys on earth, because they are irresponsible and might kill someone, or themselves. And sometimes it's to encourage certain behavior. We wanted you to come in here, and spend time listening to boring people like me, and rather than use some law to force you to show up, we give you something free in exchange for your time; you get to use the phone system, free, simply by talking. All carrot, no stick.

"If you need to do something that requires a privilege as part of a job, then they will grant it to you if you don't already have it. Or if you can find someone who has the privilege to grant a privilege, if you can bribe, pay, blackmail or talk them into granting it to you then you can get it. Or if you do something very nice, very good and someone decides that you deserve that privilege be granted to you as a reward. So the four ways you can get a privilege is to need it, to buy it, to steal it or to earn it.

"One of the things we do to encourage people to take orientation is to give them what is called 'free phone service'. What that means is that you can use your voice to telephone anyone if you know their ID or their name, their alias or number. When you come up to the counter at the end of the class you'll be granted phone privileges.

"It is a privilege, not a right. The easiest way to lose a privilege is to misuse it. If you misuse phone privilege and call someone you're not supposed to, or harass someone, you will lose it. If you use any privilege to break Rule #1 on someone it is very likely you will lose that privilege. You may or may not get it back, it depends on how the court feels you have acted.

"When you have phone privileges you also have access to the computer system to do certain things. If you're going to live in this society, you'll find that computer access is almost essential, which is why it's one of the things that you get free along with phone service, it's what we pay you for attending this lecture. So you're not really getting it free, you paid for it with your attendance here and having to sit here and listen to me talk.

"Now I'm going to tell you something about measurement, the clock and the calendar. We have two sets of clocks, and two sets of calendars because we have a different system for time up here.

“Both the standard system of time and the calendar system of time use the second as the basis for their operation. A second is exactly the same in both systems. I quote: ‘a “second” of time is defined as the duration of 9,192,631,770 periods of radiation corresponding to the transition between two hyperfine levels of cesium 133 in a ground state at a temperature of 0 Kelvin. Legal Code, Section 2000.’

“And that’s about where the similarity ends.

“We have the standard minute, hour, day, week, month and year, And we have the calendar minute, hour, day, week and year. Calendar time is exactly the same thing you had on earth, 60 seconds, 60 minutes, 24 hours, 7 days, 12 months. Standard time is radically different. How different? You’ll discover that in a moment.

“Behind me are two clocks, one is a standard clock, one is a calendar clock. The standard one looks weird because it only has 10 hours. And it has 100 minutes on it. And 100 seconds. That’s right. We have adopted the metric system here, in that most everything is measured in metric, in centimeters, meters, kilometers and so on. It makes it easier to do things.

“We have also adopted a metric system of time.

“We have a standard minute, it takes 100 seconds. We have a standard hour, it takes 100 minutes. We have a standard day, it takes 10 hours..

“You might think that 10 hours isn’t much time in a day. Well, since each hour is longer, it ends up being a lot longer. A standard 10-hour-day here turns into the equivalent of 28 calendar hours on the other system. We gain 4 hours over earth every day; in fact, we have to use special systems to synchronize with earth to compensate for this. But there’s more.

“On earth, a calendar week is 7 calendar days. Here in the afterlife, a standard week is 10 standard days. Which means a standard week is about the equivalent of two calendar workweeks.

“On earth, a calendar month is 4 or 5 weeks, roughly 30 or 31 days. Here, a standard month is 10 standard weeks, 100 standard days.

“On earth, a calendar year is 12 months. Here, a standard year is 10 months.

“Now, if you do the math, it will occur to you that a standard year here is 3 calendar years long, 1,000 days. I’ll give you the exact numbers. A year on earth is 365 or 366 days of 86,400 seconds. A year here is 1000 days of 100,000 seconds. A 365-day year on earth is 31,516,000 seconds. A year here is 100,000,000 seconds. That’s 3.17 calendar years.

“The week has three extra days in it. So I’ll tell you the days of the week. You know the first seven, and I’ll tell you the other three.

“Here are the days of the week: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Iduday, Earthday, Aftersday. And I’ll tell you what they meant in case you didn’t know or have forgotten the meanings of the first 7.

“Sunday was, of course, named for the sun.

“Monday was named for the moon. At one time I believe it was called Moonday.

“Tuesday was named for the Greek goddess Tule.

“Wednesday was named for the Greek god Wotan.

“Thursday was named for the Greek god Thor.

“Friday was named for the Greek goddess Frigg.

“Saturday was named for the planet Saturn.

“Now the new ones. Iduday was named for Iduna, a Greek goddess who stole the Golden

Apples of Immortality.

“Earthday is named for the planet Earth

“Aftersday was named for the Afterlife.

“Now, because the months are fewer, the standard calendar uses a whole new set of names for them. I’ll give them to you now and you can see them on the board behind me:

Jashobeam, Dodai, Benaiah, Asahel, Shamhuth, Ira, Helez, Sibbecai, Abiezer
and
Maharai.

“There is also a set of standard abbreviations: Jas, Dod, Ben, Asa, Sha, Ira, Hel, Sib, Abi, and Mah.

“Where did we get those from? I’ll read you the quote which is edited from a fairly well known book::

In any matter of the divisions which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year:

Over the first division for the first month was Jashobeam;
Over the division of the second month was Dodai;
The host for the third month was Benaiah,;
The fourth captain for the fourth month was Asahel;
The fifth captain for this fifth month was Shamhuth;
The sixth captain for the sixth month was Ira
The seventh captain for the seventh month was Helez;
The eighth captain for the eighth month was Sibbecai;
The ninth captain for the ninth month was Abiezer
The tenth captain for the tenth month was Maharai.

“In case you don’t recognize this passage, it’s from 2 Corinthians 27:1-13.
“We thought that was kind of cute. The days of the week are from a pagan religion, the months of the year are from the Christian religion.”
“Only the first 36 days of each month match up with earth, for the first 9 months. The last month, Maharai has 41 or 42 days that match up to earth. The other 70 days of each month have no corresponding day with earth.”
“You might wonder how different this world is from the one you came from. Well, there’s a lot of garbage on earth that we do not deal with here.
“Now, for example, take the California Penal Code.” A large number of law books on a pallet appeared behind him, then crashed to the floor with a loud bang. “Please, take it. Weighs a ton, costs a fortune if you are a lawyer or run a library and have to buy it, and it’s packed with all these rules about what you can and cannot do.
“Now, let’s see why we don’t need most of this.
“We’re not alive so we can’t die. Which means we don’t have any of the things we had back

down on earth that related to death, like regulation of mortuaries, or cemeteries, or funeral directors.” As he says these, some of the books behind him start to disappear. “And since nobody dies you don’t have life insurance. We don’t get old. We don’t get sick. No health insurance needed. We can eat, but we can’t consume anything. We can drink but it’s the same thing as food. So we don’t have rules on food safety and inspections.” As he mentions the items that don’t exist, some of the books disappear.

“Well guess what, ladies and gentlemen, this essentially eliminates the medical community! What do you need doctors for? Maybe psychiatrists for the occasional person who goes psychotic up here, which is very rare. And with the way things are here, a lot of things that drive people crazy aren’t around. Or maybe we’re all crazy and the inmates are running the asylum, and the ones who go psychotic are the ones who become sane, I don’t know.

“So you can toss out anything dealing with medicine, pharmacy, licensing, etc. Nobody gets sick so you don’t have hospitals or HMOs” More books vanish.

“Now, we don’t have resources. This world is *virtual*. Outside of maybe Ayn Rand, one of the greatest thinkers who ever came along, are the two guys who wrote the screenplay and later directed *The Matrix*, the Wachowski brothers. I’ll talk about that one later.

“Since anything that exists can be created simply by writing computer code to generate it, you eliminate almost all of the laws regarding property. We don’t *have* any! And even if we did, guess what: we don’t have any money to pay for it! Oh wait, yes we do.

A large block appears on stage “This cube contains 20 million dollars in U.S. currency, as exact as possible. Tellers will be bringing along cages, please take some as they come by. Oh, sorry, I almost forgot.” A new block appears. “For those of you who were from the European Union, here is 20 million in Euros. If you like those, please help yourself. Spend it however you like, and if you want more, there’s an ATM machine outside. Don’t forget your credit cards.

“But what good is it? If someone can make something simply by thinking about it, anything that can be created can be created by anyone else. That means that money, and all the forms of money, and everything else used to trade with are worthless.

“In fact, there is a scheduled bank robbery today at 8 over at the Bank of the Afterlife just past the Main Entrance, through The Picketing Zone at 105 Administrative Avenue, come by to see who wins, the robbers who are trying to steal the money or the cops who try to stop them. We never know who is going to win, sometimes the cops get outgunned. If you’d like to participate, either as a bank employee, as one of the robbers, one of the police, or as a bystander, stop by at 7.

“So how do you get things done? Well, the simple answer is that things get done around here because someone decides they need to be done and does them. That’s it. If it’s more complicated than they themselves can do, they find someone else who is willing to do it. Or they find someone who will do it and offer them something.

“But since anyone could conceivably create anything else, there is no property, no possession, no gift that you could give them that they couldn’t conceivably give themselves. Or is there? What could you give someone in exchange for doing something they otherwise aren’t interested in doing?

“On earth, do you know what is simultaneously the most valuable thing there is and the least valuable thing there? Salt. It is absolutely necessary for human existence, which makes it

extremely valuable to people. And yet it is available in such massive quantities that companies can sell it for next to nothing and still make a huge profit.

“So the most valuable thing here is... Time. And yet the least valuable thing here is Time.

“I say the least valuable thing here is time because, unlike those who are on earth, we’re already dead. We have all eternity to do whatever it is we want to do. An incomprehensible amount of time. A billion years? Hell, the earth is older than that! So if you have literally unlimited amounts of time to do everything what difference does it make how long you spend on anything?”

“On the other hand, what any one person can do is limited in any finite space of time, and therefore their personal time is very valuable to them, because if they have to do something for someone else, that means they can’t do something else they might want to do instead.

Therefore they would have to have a reason to want to do whatever it is that someone else wants. That means to them, the most valuable thing is their time.

“All we can do is get the personal services of others. Everything else has no value. The only thing it’s possible to trade here is my time to do something for you, and your time or someone else’s, for mine. That makes the most valuable thing in this world the *Favor*. And yet it’s valueless because you can’t use one from someone unless they honor it. That means that personal honor and one’s word are all but sacred. Money has no value here, but words are more precious than gold. If you don’t keep your word and your promises you’re not worth dealing with. Go away and leave me alone. If I can’t trust you, I can’t deal with you.

“With the exception of favors that have to be given as penalties for punishment for crimes involving the breaking of Rule #1, favors are not enforceable. You can’t sue someone for failing to honor the favors they gave you. The courts will not make them do something no matter how much you did for them. All you can do is refuse to do anything further for them and to let other people know that they cheated you. Which means other people probably won’t do things for them because they don’t want to be cheated. Unless your complaints are considered bad because you’re not considered trustworthy, in which case people will ignore your complaints and figure that they had a good reason not to honor their favors to you.

“We try to make these orientation classes short, so as a result we have more than one. We encourage you to take all of them, in order that you can better understand the way things are here, so you can fit in to society better, and so you can have fun while you’re here without possibly getting yourself in trouble.

“Now, if you think the rules here are too much trouble or you don’t want to go along with them, we also have a solution for you. I’m going to give you the same suggestion as Horace Greeley: ‘Go West, young man, go west.’ Actually, it’s in all directions outside the city, but I like the phrase. I have a place to recommend you go. It’s a place called the Frontier. There’s no law but the Law of the Jungle except what the other inhabitants think they can get away with imposing upon one another. Except for a couple of exceptions I’ll discuss later.

“You can take any kiosk or other method of transportation and go out to the Frontier. It’s the place where society ends and where the worst people go. It’s a really bad place, almost as bad as Detroit. If you want to go on a rampage in order to rape, pillage and plunder, you don’t have to try to sneak around and not get caught at it like you do in a civilized society, you just go out to the Frontier and do anything you think you can get away with to anyone else. With two exceptions, nobody is going to punish you for anything you do out there. But it also means anybody can do anything they want to *you* and get away with it.

“When I speak of the Frontier, I mean the area past the city and not on The Road. Before you go out to the Frontier, there is a sign posted on the fence on the right side of The Road. Read the sign and it will warn you of what you’re going up against. So let me tell you what you can’t do in the Frontier, there are only two things that will get you into trouble with us.

“First, don’t do anything to anyone on The Road, or do anything *to* The Road. The Sign by the Right of the Road will tell you what you’re not supposed to do, but basically it’s that you can’t molest others on the road or damage the road.

“Second, when you’re in the Frontier, the one and only thing you can’t do is break a solemn promise.

“It’s part of the same thing here. Words - promises - are the most precious things here, more valuable than gold. Rule #1 is the linchpin that holds our society together and keeps us from descending into anarchy and chaos. Solemn promises are what holds the anarchy and chaos of the Frontier together and keeps it from descending into nihilistic barbarism.

“You go out to the Frontier, you’re on your own. But that would mean you could not trust anyone, someone could make themselves powerful and be able to lie, cheat and steal to get whatever they wanted, could promise anything then renege on those promises, and it would mean that nobody would believe anything from anyone. You’d end up with a system of vicious warlords that took whatever they wanted and engaged in battles among each other for control, where truces would be broken at will. Something like South Central Los Angeles.

“The problem was that it caused a lot of people who otherwise would have gone out to the Frontier and committed crimes there, to stay here and commit them because they had no protection for promises made amongst each other. And we got irritated by it. We didn’t really want some of these people around, and if there was no place for them to go they’d keep bothering us.

“So a number of us went out to the Frontier and grabbed a bunch of the biggest warlords there, and forced them to sit down and listen to us. That it was to their benefit to go along with this. They could institute treaties with each other to divvy up the Frontier and not have to constantly battle for control and fight each other for pieces. That if one of them offered safe passage to others they could count on it to be valid. We showed them it was to their advantage to require respect of solemn promises, because if someone made a solemn promise and broke it, they got thrown out of the game and sent back to earth. This opened a new chapter in the sadism of the warlords of the Frontier. Now, if a guy cheated, you didn’t have to beat him, you simply reported him, he got taken out and you get to take over his stuff. It’s far easier to win territory by default than to fight for it by conquest. It also kept the warlords in line because if they didn’t keep their solemn promises they would get tossed too.

“Suffice to say, it works. There is very little crime in this city because those who want to do bad things to others go where nobody cares and they can’t be punished for it. They go out to the Frontier where everyone feeds on everyone else in a big circle of abuse. And they get to have fun at it, if you consider that sort of activity to be fun. But there is safety in promises, so it allows people to manage out there and it keeps from driving them back here.

“Some people go out to the Frontier, commit heinous acts against others, then come back here to escape. As long as they behave while they’re here, we don’t care what they do out there. If they make solemn promises out there, and don’t keep them, if someone reports it they’re going to be in trouble and most likely will be sent back to earth.

“So enough about the Frontier, it’s not a pleasant place compared to this city. I’ll pass on a couple more points before I take your questions. Right now the tellers are also passing around a large dispenser bowl containing question tickets. If you’re thinking of asking a question, we’re passing out a bowl in front of you, reach in and take out a ticket, the number on your ticket will indicate in what order we take questions, if you don’t take one you’ll have to wait until everyone else who did has their question answered. If you’re asking a question we answer in one of the other orientation classes, I’ll tell you which one you need to take if it’s very long and recommend you take that class. If it’s a real short answer, I’ll tell you which class it’s in but I’ll answer the question. If I can’t answer the question right away and it’s capable of being answered I’ll give you a note to come back later to have your question answered after we find out. If you ask a really good question, I’ll ask you to step aside because I may want to talk to you further. If you want to ask multiple questions think of your most important one first, then we’ll see about having you write down the rest to have them answered.

“There are a few points I think I need to pass on to you. First, although this world is virtual and we could essentially make it into anything we wanted to, we have tried to set up something with standardized rules and conditions, that is, an objective reality that people could depend upon to be consistent.

“Someone might say that it’s ridiculous to expect an objective reality in a virtual world. Well, let me tell you something, adherence to an objective reality is more desperately needed in a virtual world than in the physical one, for the simple reason that the physical world has constraints upon it that this one does not. And if we don’t stick to some fixed rules, this place would become a madhouse, and instead of being a place where people could be happy, it would be nothing but a miasma of pain and suffering.

“If you can’t expect things to remain consistent, then existence becomes torture as you worry about what would change from moment to moment. Would the floor suddenly vanish, leaving you to fall forever in a void, or turn into a bubbling cauldron of lava, and have you cook for eternity? Could your chairs be turned into spikes, impaling you and leaving you ‘twisting, twisting in the wind’ as some medieval view of hell as a place of the damned?

“It was decided a long time ago that this was to be a place of fun, a place to rest from the wearisome effort we had to express to exist on earth. But since most of us are used to the way things were on earth, generally we would keep most technology at or near the levels used on earth so as not to confuse you Incomings.

“Basically, this world is the exact opposite of the real one down on earth. Therefore, one must think backward. They have physical constraints, resource limitations, physical reality and limited freedom of choice in action. We have none of these restrictions. We can do anything that someone can dream up. That, without some imposed restrictions, would make it very difficult to do things here.

“Second, we don’t have money or anything similar to that. We have, as a result of not having money, left the equivalent of something like *thirty trillion dollars a year* of value in the hands of individuals who no longer have to work for a living in order to afford things. We do have the trading of favors but that’s getting other people to act on a retail basis to do something in exchange for something you did for them. There is a simple reason for this. We chose to make this a world of rest and play, not another ‘weak clone’ of earth where you have to work for a living. If you choose to work here, it is because you do so because you like what you’re

doing and wouldn't be doing anything else, or you're doing work in order to earn some privilege you want. This, also, is part of the philosophy of only doing things that are absolutely necessary. And that includes that which *you* think are absolutely necessary, because unless you think they are, you won't be doing them

"A dear friend of mine who went under the knife a while ago used to run this scam on Incomings, because it was so funny. We'd have a huge booth signing people up for credit cards, and we'd deliberately set the limits to enormous amounts, US \$200,000, \$300,000 or more. And we put some ATM machines up that they could get money, lots of it. Since the machine created it on the spot, they never were empty. And we put up all these automated stores where people could buy things. We'd have them sign favors in exchange for the money they got. "But they discovered that it didn't matter how much money you have, it's totally worthless because you don't need anything and generally you can instantiate anything you did want, essentially for free. Oh, man how some people got mad at that! We had people get so upset about it that they turned right around and got back on the next birth back to earth. Recycled themselves. We call that taking a u-turn.

"They don't think.

"But I have. I happen to like it here and I plan to stay. And maybe you will, too. As I said, we've done what we think is the best we can to make this a nice place to visit and a great place to live. Or rather, a great place to be dead in. I will now start taking questions. Who has ticket #1?"

Chapter 111

“...offer them an opportunity to rape ... as an incentive not to do it again.”

“246, this is Sherry.”

“Yes?”

“You said if I helped I could get an extra guy out of this?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Okay, well, anyway, 10 of us let these rapists come at us, and all the other girls say almost the same thing, the guys tried to fuck them from the instant the guy pushed her back on the bed. So in my case, I waited, after about ten seconds of him pounding on me I started coming, so I turned on this feature you said to use. It was amazing. I started coming over and over, and he kept coming right after I did, I kept feeling him spray me with every orgasm I was having. Anyway, this went on for maybe 5 or 6 minutes, and then he was saying he wanted it to stop. But he kept on fucking me anyway. He started crying, pleading for me to make it stop. All the while I kept coming, and I was feeling him come right after me the whole time. I almost felt sorry for the guy, if I hadn't known he'd ignored some woman who probably begged for the same thing, for him to stop, I'd probably have felt sorry for him and stopped. So, anyway, after half an hour, I threw the stop and he passed out on top of me. It was fun.

“Anyway, a couple of minutes later, he woke up and pulled himself out of me, and tried to run for the door. He couldn't get it open, of course, and so I told him to come back to bed, that was fun and I wanted to do it again. Which was true, of course. Anyway, the guy screamed and backed into a corner.

“The other girls all said the same thing, these guys wanted nothing to do with them, no matter how much the guy supposedly wanted a woman before, he wouldn't go near her again. And none of them went longer than twelve minutes before he started to complain. Most started to beg after five or six minutes.

“So I told the guy who was on the floor that he could either get back in bed with me and do what I told him, or four other women were going to come in and repeat what I just did to him. So the guy got back in bed with me and did everything I told him.

“So this time, I said he could have me, he was much nicer about it and not so forceful. This time I just locked him inside me without turning on the thing again, just like you said. Once I'd come a couple of times I let him come again. And it was funny, just as you said, he tried to get out of me, and thought I was going to do this again. I let him slow down a little and said if he was nice I'd let him go. So then after I came about four more times, I let him come again and I let him go. I said if he still wanted he could have me again or he could go. He said he wanted to go, so I told him what you said to tell them, about telling everyone to turn in rapists to Wizards, or else he'd get more of this, and gave him the papers like you said. I let the door unlock and he ran off in a hurry. That was fun and I'd love to try it again. All the other girls said the guys they were with more-or-less did the same thing, they all ran off. None of them wanted to be with her any more.”

“246, this is weird.”

“What's that, John?”

“I'm doing Wizard work out at the Frontier and two guys - one of whom I know is a Road

Molester we've been looking for - walked right up to me, plain as day, and brought out six guys they claimed were rapists. They said that you were offering karma bounties."

"Yeah. Provided the guys they turn in are actually rapists. Get their IDs and tell them that when we confirm these guys are rapists they will get credit."

"I've never seen anything like this. Another guy has two more in handcuffs!"

"246, this is Supervisor 1703. I'm out in the Frontier wearing one of those God-awful looking Wizard's cloaks. You know, sometimes when I'm out here, guys will come up to me because they want to try to come on to a female Wizard, but a guy came up to me dragging another guy he claimed was a rapist. "

"Reports are coming in to the Channel 134,013 Newsroom that there has been a huge bounty placed on the heads of Frontier rapists turned in to Wizards. Apparently there has been instituted a massive crackdown on sexual predators in the Frontier..."

"Good Morning, 246."

"Good Morning Andrea. You asked for an appointment, so go ahead."

"Are you guys involved in this crackdown on rapists?"

"The Welcoming Department always complies with the law. There are no persons from the Frontier being held by this department for the crime of rape. Rape in the Frontier isn't a crime in this section."

"Okay, then, are you personally involved?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I want in on it. I hate guys who do that and I want to see that they get punished."

"So I gather, considering what you did to Barney."

"Yeah, that was fun."

"Can I say something to you off the record?"

"Yes, it stays private with me."

"I have to tell you that I was indeed pleased that you got to beat the shit out of him, and that you got away with it, too. Well, I've already got enough people involved to do everything we need."

"So you really can't let me get in on this?"

"Well, I'm afraid not. In fact, I've got a waiting list of women wanting to participate."

"Okay, then we're on the record. Look at these. I have signed authorizations from six men who have disappeared from the Frontier. They were turned in to Wizards in the Frontier, and have not been brought to trial, and there have been no charges filed against them. As their *next best friend*, I will be suing you, personally, as well as you in your official capacity and this Department, and filing motions for writ of *habeas corpus* and order for release. I can argue that since they were grabbed, on your specific order, by Wizards, who have the power of the State, that their individual action represents State Action in the same manner as if these men were arrested in the English Language Section by security personnel of this Department, and are therefore entitled to the protections here. Now, considering that, do you want a precedent on the books that people in the Frontier have all the protections of people in civilization? You were smart enough to grab guys who were wanted here, so they won't show up to file complaints because they'd be violated and arrested too, so normally you'd get away with it. Or even if I

lose, do you want it on record you were involved and violated their civil rights in that fashion?"

"You know, I never thought about it that way. We specifically kept them out at the Frontier so that we wouldn't be bringing them into civilization, I do have some respect for the law. I presume you're not really interested in what we do to these guys, and you'll forget about it if I let you in?"

"Yeah, but since I had to resort to threats I want something extra. I want to know the whole story of what's going on."

"And it stays private?"

"Sure."

"You can tag along with me and watch. I'll give you the background info and the video we did of the first guy and the others, then you can decide if you want to participate. But the women involved will be having sex with these guys, and letting them come, are you willing to do that?"

"Are these guys going to be punished for what they are doing?"

"Yeah, they will be."

"Yeah, I can do it."

"I've read about how this whole thing started, and I even spoke to the woman who discovered it by accident. So if I understand this correctly, this whole thing is just a stunt to test a new sexual technique, and so you're using rapists to test it out?"

"That's correct."

"So let me get this straight. You're going to torture rapists by giving them more pleasure than they can stand, as punishment for hurting women."

"I thought that it had a nice symmetry. Men generally rape either because they want sex and believe they can't get it, or they do it as a power trip. So whether he believes either he can't get sex, or he thinks that he has some right to force himself on women, we're going to let him do exactly that, then discover what happens when he gets exactly what he wants."

"I think it's wonderful."

"How many do we have, Travis?"

"We have 6,978 confirmed rapists. But three of them turned in others, and with the bonus their Karma is at or above zero."

"I'll talk to them. Send them in one at a time."

"So, I see you were in a rape gang. You turned in all of your fellow participants."

"Yeah, you guys said we get extra points for it."

"That's right. Okay, we confirmed, you turned in two, so you get to go in addition to the Karma points."

"Thanks."

"So I see that you turned in sixteen rapists."

"Yeah. You guys weren't offering bounties before. Now I don't have to hide from the Wizards, I no longer have negative karma."

Andrea asks, "246, can I ask him a question?"

“Sure.”

“And it doesn’t bother you that you’ve been out raping women, but you can turn in other guys for it?”

“Hey, I caught them first. One of them could have caught me and I’d be in there. In fact, if I hadn’t caught at least two before someone grabbed *me*, I would be.”

“That’s all I wanted to ask, 246.”

“Okay then, you’re free to go.”

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Yeah.”

“I mean, nobody told me that they’d changed the rules and made it illegal to do rapes out here in the Frontier. When did they do this?”

“There’s been no change. Nobody has been arrested, and they’re not being prosecuted. We’re conducting an experiment.”

“So, what, you gonna cut off their balls or something?”

“No. Actually, if I told you, you wouldn’t believe it.”

“Try me.”

“We’re going to offer them an opportunity to rape some woman, and even come inside her, and more than once, as an incentive not to do it again.”

“Yeah, I don’t believe you.”

“Well, anyway, you’re free to go.”

“So, let’s see, you’ve committed 46 rapes, but you grabbed two guys who only committed one each.”

“Yeah, when I heard you guys were grabbing rapists, and you get to go free if you find two others, I figured I had to do something.”

“Well, that’s fine. You’re free to go.”

“Are they gonna grab me again?”

“Not unless you commit another rape.”

“Well, I got a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“Guys like me, who don’t speak or read English, or French, most of the women of those sections won’t bother with us, and the government whorehouses won’t bother with us if we can’t understand English or French over there. And some of us are wanted in those sections.”

“And?”

“What are we supposed to do for relief? Most of the women here in the Frontier won’t give in, or they don’t want sex.”

“Well, you’re from the Mexican section, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Get the Mexican Authorities to accept the same requirements for civil rights as the English and French language sections. Then they can have computer support and women can release climax privilege.”

“The authorities there won’t agree to it. Last year something like 50,000 people were rounded up for asking for that.”

“So?”

“So? What do we do against armed Federales?”

“Disarm them.”

“How?”

“Look, the Mexican section has about 2 ½ million cops. There are probably 420 million people in the Mexican section, and maybe another 40 or 50 million primarily Spanish thinkers like yourself who are out in the Frontier.. Maybe ½ that number are men. That means that you can start raising an army, when you get enough to grab all the Federales and put them in their own jails, then you can take over and petition for the Chairman to recognize your government.”

“What happens when they use their magic powers to retaliate?”

“Any section that doesn’t have women who can grant climax privilege doesn’t have any magic powers. And, in case you didn’t know, you can’t die a second time, all their weapons can do is hurt for a while, they can’t kill you or recycle you.”

“Looks like we have enough men for all the women who wanted to try Endless Orgasm and then some.”

“Set the extra guys aside for the women who have seniority, a few of them will want to try again with another guy. Pull them in order by number of confirmed rapes. I want the ones with the most rapes to go first, because they’ll be on longer.”

“246, I think we found one guy who figured out what’s going on.”

“Tell me about it, Sherry.”

“Okay, so we’re supposed to tell them that they can’t rape us, and wouldn’t want to, anyway, because they’re scared of real women. For most of them, that’s enough to get them to attack us. Once they start fucking us we’ve got them, then we put them in lock, and force them to keep moving. Some take more than others. A lot of these guys are tougher than the ones we had before, but still, even within 15 minutes at the most, all of them start screaming for it to stop.”

“Uh huh. So what’s the status on this other guy?”

“He said he figured it out, we’ve put some kind of razor or device in there and we’re cutting guys dicks or grinding them”

“Okay, We’ll go see him. Have the other four ladies meet me in your crib.”

246 and Andrea walk into a Welcomer’s room where a guy is sitting on the floor, some distance from a woman who is on the bed.. “What’s your problem?”

“Look, I figured it out. I heard about that poor bastard you guys tortured for days on end, and the other guys you did, I got the idea, that you’re tricking guys into banging those sluts only to find out they got grinders or knives in their pussies and they’re cutting the guy’s dicks. I’m not gonna be stupid and have you guys grind my dick into powder.”

“Look, none of these women have *dentatas*, nobody is going to cut you; all she wants to do is let you have sex with her. She’ll even let you come. She will release climax privilege to you, and more than once, and she will allow you to come, just like you wanted with the women you raped.”

“Yeah, right, you’re just saying that to get us to do something so you can cut us. I’m not falling for it. And I never raped any woman.”

“Okay, we’ll do it the hard way. Has it been confirmed he’s committed multiple rapes?”

“Yes. At least 3 confirmed. Probably more we don’t know about.”

“You four, Erica, Lee, Betsy, Jill, pick him up and lay him on the bed, one on each arm or leg. Now, Sherry, you get on top of him. We’ll do this manually.. Sherry, you get him to get an erection, then you can ride him. You’ll still be able to come by moving on him even if he won’t do anything. If he stays still after ten minutes, give him a climax, get off and let the next one try. If he can resist all 5 of you, bring him back to my office. Whoever gets him to move gets to roll him and have him service her, but only for ½ hour because he didn’t force himself on her. Once he has ½ hour he’s not going to want to bother with a woman for a while. So either we’ll get him to react or he’ll act like a good little rape victim. Either way he’ll learn. Once one of you is able to flip him, the others can go back down and get a man for herself. So even if you can’t get Endless Orgasm out of him, you’ll still have some fun at his expense.”

“246?”

“Andrea?”

“Let’s talk privately.” They step out of earshot of everyone else. “Can we do anything to him?”

“No. The only thing you’re allowed to do is release climax privilege to him and allow him to come. No pain or torture.”

“Can we do other things to give him pleasure?”

“Absolutely, make him come as much as you want.”

“I have a suggestion. “

“What?”

“Let the other girls go find another guy. I can get him to fuck me and I won’t have to do anything except give him pleasure, or maybe stop his orgasm if he won’t go along. In fact, I’ll get him to *want* to fuck me, no matter what he thinks. In fact, I think if I do this right, I might even get him to voluntarily come back and willingly have sex with me afterwards, but still teach him a lesson.”

“You really think so?”

“1000 favors says that if I have enough time with him I’ll get him to admit how many rapes he did, the longest he held any of them, and he’ll even ask me to have sex or he’ll fuck me by his own choice.”

“Deal. Okay, but Sherry still has first crack at him.” They come back into range “Okay, girls, we won’t need you to help, then. Sherry, you get to try him first.”

Chapter 112

“ A woman had made me beg.”

“246, we have the first guy to come out, Andrea tripped him and she had him for a while.”

“Thanks, Travis. Send him in.”

Earlier, this man was a cocky and self-centered brute. He stands before 246, a changed man from what he was. “I’m Supervisor 246, but you can call me 246, everyone does. Have a seat, we need to talk.”

“What do you want?”

“Well, I was wondering what you thought of our hospitality, or of Andrea, the lady who was working on you.”

“Look, I’ll admit it, you broke me. I wanted it to stop. There have been times I wanted a woman so badly I’d have done anything, and did. After what you guys did to me, I’d have cut my dick off to get away. And to think, that’s what I thought you guys were gonna do.

Frankly, I think maybe I wish you had.”

“So tell me what happened. I want to hear it from you.”

“Well, that first woman worked on me, but I knew what you guys were going to do, or at least, so I thought. Anyway, I came, it was fantastic, but I knew it was just a trick, so I still didn’t move. She got off me. But then, that other bitch, I couldn’t resist her.”

“So what did she do?”

“From about the second or third time she slid on me, I started to come. Then, just as I was about to, she figured out how to shut it down, then she started it up, and I was about to come, and she cut it off. It was getting unbearable! So she does this a couple more times, I couldn’t stand it, and she whispers in my ear, ‘Move inside me and I’ll stop this and let you come, or I’ll keep doing this for the next ten minutes. And then I’ll call the others back and so will the next four girls. You can stop this torture now and have some fun, or keep on suffering.’ And just to make it worse, she let me get more than half way through coming and cut it off again, that really hurt. So I said, ‘And you’ll just keep doing that anyway, so why should I give you anything?’ So she says to me, ‘I promise that I will let you come and won’t stop your orgasms from completing if you do what I say. I want you to come inside me, if you’ll let me let you. I’ll even let you have me again if you ask.’

“I couldn’t take it any more, I gave in. I started moving and she let me come this time, it felt so good. So she says to me, ‘Roll me over and fuck me, and you can do it any way you want, and I’ll let you come again. In fact, I’ll let you come more than once, and I’ll never cut off your orgasms again.’ So I thought I’d really pound on this bitch, so I rolled her on her back and pounded her as hard as I could. Most women I’d do that to would cry out in pain, but not this one, she smiled as if she was having a wonderful time. So I did this for maybe a minute or so, and then I came again. And then, I came again, and again, and again, and I just kept coming, and coming. Finally I realized for the first time in my death I’d actually fucked some hot bitch so much I actually had enough. But I couldn’t stop. I kept coming, and coming, and coming. I wanted it to stop, but I couldn’t make it stop, it was like I was possessed. I screamed, I yelled, I complained, but she just smiled. She did something because it stopped for a moment. I still couldn’t stop fucking her, but I wasn’t coming.

“So she says to me, ‘Would you never have sex with a woman again if I let it stop?’ I swear to Christ Almighty that I would have promised never to touch another woman if it would end what was happening! I said, ‘Yes, I’ll never touch another woman again!’

“Then I start coming again, she looked up at me, like she was angry, and said, ‘Liar! You’ll pay for that.’ So now she starts moving! I thought I knew what unbearable was, but that was nothing compared to this!

“So now, she stops moving. I still can’t stand it, I’m still fucking her, and crying, and I’m coming, and coming, and coming, then she stops it for a moment, and she says to me again, ‘Would you never have sex with a woman again if I let it stop?’

“Well, my mama didn’t raise no dummy, I wasn’t stupid, I knew what she was up to. So I said, ‘It doesn’t matter what I say, you’re going to claim I’m lying.’ So, then, I come again, only it’s not unbearable like the last times. ‘See, I can make it nice for you when you cooperate, and actually let you enjoy this. Not like your victims. I will know if you’re lying, so don’t, or I’ll punish you worse. Oh, that reminds me. I want you to tell me something, how many women did you rape in the Afterlife? Or in the Frontier?’

“I tried to think for a moment, and I’m starting to come as strong as ever, so I cried out, ‘I wanted to answer honestly, but I can’t think!’ So she stops it for a moment. Now, I’m still pounding on her, and she says, ‘Do you want to slow down a little?’ I nodded. She says, ‘Go ahead and try. So I discover I can slow down a lot. So I start counting, and I said, ‘I think it’s 25.’

“Well, it must have been okay for her, because she wasn’t making me come. So she says to me, ‘You can answer this honestly and I won’t punish you. Do you like fucking like this?’ I said, ‘You mean where I’m not coming so much I can’t stand it?’ She nodded. ‘Yeah, it’s better than the alternative.’ Then she says, ‘Are you aware that I’m coming the whole time we’re doing this, I’m enjoying it, and you’re giving it to me?’ ‘I figured that,’ I said. ‘And it was the exact opposite when you were raping those women, you were coming, and enjoying it, because of what you got to take from them?’ ‘Yeah.’

She says, ‘I want to know, what’s the longest period you kept a woman that you were raping?’ I was worried. I was afraid if I told her she’d keep me here for a long time. I guess she could tell, because she gave me a strange look. ‘Just say it, and I’ll give you something nice.’ So I admitted it. ‘Six Months.’ At this point, I had an easy climax, that didn’t overload me. ‘Now wasn’t that nice?’ she asked. I nodded. And I wondered what was next, because she hadn’t started it back up again, I was just plain fucking her. After I had been doing this for about a minute or so, I had another non-overloading climax. ‘Well, if you start being nice and ask a woman for it instead of taking it, you can have it like this any time you want. Okay, nice time is over.’ So now I start coming really strong again, and after four or five, I say, ‘Tell me what you want, I’ll do anything you say.’

“I never thought in my death I’d ever have such a thing happen. A woman was making me tell her anything she wanted to know, and to top it off, she rewarded me for telling her, by not making me come, and punished me by making me! If someone had told me such a thing could happen I’d have told the guy he was nuts.

“Well, she stopped what she was doing to me, because she asked me something.. ‘When you raped women, did you ever stop when they asked or did you fuck them as long as you wanted?’ Well, that’s a stupid question, but I answered it, ‘I fucked them.’ Then she says, ‘Did they beg

for you to stop?’ I just nodded. ‘Did they beg the same way you did?’ ‘No, I think it was worse.’ I started having unbearable climaxes again. Another minute of this or so, and then it stopped. I figured she was going to ask me another question, and I was right. ‘When you raped women, do you think they were coming or were they hurting?’ I said, ‘You know, I never really thought about it, I never really cared, one way or the other, I just wanted to get my rocks off.’ I start coming in agonizingly pleasurable form again, and she asks, ‘Do you like it when this is happening?’ ‘No!’ I yelled. ‘Do you think the women you raped liked what you were doing?’ ‘No!’ I yelled again.

‘I then realized she was about to ask another important question because I stopped coming. ‘Do you think what the women felt was better, the same, or worse than what you were feeling when I asked you if you like it?’ And I finally got it. ‘I’m sure it was worse.’ I said. ‘Why?’ I thought about that for a second. ‘Because she was hurting.’ ‘Why was she hurting?’ ‘Because I was hurting her.’

‘‘Think carefully, and I’ll let you take a moment,’ she says, ‘When you don’t like it or you’re begging for me to stop, am I hurting you?’ I was kind of dumbfounded. I hadn’t thought of that. It seems ridiculous to claim someone is hurting me by giving me pleasure. ‘Yes’ ‘Now, did you care about what those women felt when you raped them?’ ‘Obviously, I didn’t, or I wouldn’t be here.’ The pleasure started up again. I started to cry. ‘Right now, when this is happening, am I raping you?’ I screamed out, ‘YES!’ ‘Now, can you think of a reason why I should care about what you’re feeling right now?’ Oh God, she starts to move! ‘Is there any reason I shouldn’t get as much pleasure as I want out of you whether you like it or not? It doesn’t matter. I’ve got another 25 minutes with you, that’s nothing compared to what you’ve done to some women, I’m sure.’ Then she stopped moving, but I’m still coming, unbearably. ‘Cry out and tell me why you don’t like it and maybe I won’t make it as intense. And if you come up with a good reason I might make it stop.’

‘‘On second thought,’ she said, ‘I want you to beg me to make it less intense. Because I’m thinking of more things to try to give you even more pleasure.’

‘I thought about it for a second. No! I wasn’t going to let some broad make me beg her. I’d take what she was doing. It was horrible, but I could die through it.

‘‘That’s when she called you.’’

‘‘Central Computer, telephone Supervisor 246.’’

‘‘Office of Supervisor 246, this is operator 1103.’’

‘‘This is Andrea 528, let me speak to 246.’’

‘‘Yes, Andrea?’’

‘‘246, I want more time with him, I’m having so much fun and I want him to enjoy it even more. The longest time he kept a woman he was raping was six months. I’ll settle for six days if I have to.’’

‘‘Okay.’’

‘‘Thanks. Central Computer, hang up phone.’’

‘‘I’ve got a great idea. Let’s see what this does.’ I think she stuck her finger up my ass. If I thought that climaxes were strong before, this was horrible! Then, on top of that, she started moving. I screamed. I cried out. But I was determined not to let her make me beg.

“I don’t think I’ve done enough to make my pussy tight for you.’ All of a sudden she was incredibly tight, again I yelled out, but I still wouldn’t give in. ‘Let’s try “Stairstep.”’ Suddenly it was like I was in an ocean of pleasure, and wave after wave kept crashing on me.

“Hmm, this isn’t working, it must not be pleasurable enough. I’ll let him ride ‘The Rollercoaster.’

“Suddenly all the pleasure stopped. A wave of relief flooded me, then boom! It swamped me again, then dropped, then slammed me again. ‘Okay, the “vacuum cleaner.”’ Now, it felt like someone was sucking my cock while I was fucking this broad, and everything else that was happening. ‘And I’ll keep this up for the whole six days. Unless you want to beg for me to cut it back to 30 minutes?’

‘I gave in, and I screamed out, ‘Please, I’m begging, make it stop! No more! Please don’t do this for days, all right, I’m begging, please!’

‘It all stopped. After about a minute, I started coming over and over again.

“She’d won. A woman had made me beg. Again, I cried out, I begged, and I pleaded, I tried to say anything I could think of that might make her stop. And I realized what she was doing. The women I had done things to, I’d ignored their whines, and cries, and pleas, because I didn’t care. So she was doing the same thing to me.

‘I guess it was only the half hour she did, because it stopped. I think I passed out, but I came to, I wasn’t moving. I was still trapped inside her, and I couldn’t get out. She looked up at me, with that big fat fucking smile on her face. If I could have, I’d have pasted that bitch in the mouth. That’s when she said it to me, ‘Don’t you think that’s how the women you raped feel about you?’

‘I don’t know why, I think it struck something in me. I cried. Not for myself. I cried for all the women I’d hurt. I think I started to see that as long as someone is willing to exploit them for their own selfish purposes, then the only hope they have is whatever the other person is willing to be less cruel to them. If the other person is a real bastard, they have no hope at all. And more than that, I deserved everything that was done to me, and I knew it.

“That’s when she let me go.”

Chapter 113
“Andrea: 4, 246: 0.”

“Would you care to have a chance at her again?”

“Well, actually, what happened was, I rolled over and laid next to her. I think she wanted to see what I would do next. I laid there for a moment and then I said, ‘I forgive you. I don’t know if anyone will ever say that about me, but you have showed me what I’ve done has done to other people. Your name is Andrea, right?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘I’m Dale. If you’re willing to try again, I’ll promise not to hurt you if you’ll promise not to torture me like that. Let’s just have plain ordinary sex.’

“‘Okay.’

“And that was when we made love. I think that was probably the first time I ever did.”

“Hi, Andrea.”

“Hi 246.”

“I’m curious, how did you figure out what to do?”

“It was something I once saw on TV when I was alive, there was this cop, he was telling how, when he caught shoplifters, unless you got them to break down and cry, you could never reach them to understand that what they were doing was wrong. Maybe it would be trivializing it, but raping a woman is the sexual equivalent of shoplifting. Or maybe burglary, but I don’t think that’s right, either. Most of these guys, if they’d learn to be nice and either *ask* a woman they found for sex, or seduce her into giving it to them, would probably be able to get it out of her without force. But no, they have to steal it. So, you have to make it personal to them since they don’t see it as personal on the part of the victim. You have to find what is at least one of the things that bothers them, make them confront it and see how it feels when it’s forced on them from someone else. Once they can see from the other side, then you can reach them. Or as the Court of Appeals said in the Barney case, ‘you have to make them walk a mile in the shoes of the victim.’”

“Okay, you won. Central Computer, transfer 100 favors to Andrea 528.”

“246, the deal was for 1,000.”

He smiled. “Yes, it was. Central Computer, transfer 1,000 favors to Andrea 528.”

“I’m shocked. You’re giving me a bonus?”

“Yeah. As someone, probably the only one in a contest who’s beaten me more than once, and the first woman to ever beat me, you deserve it. And certainly the only one who’s beaten me in four separate events.”

“I had a little help figuring out how.”

“Oh? How is that?”

“One of my boyfriends is Willis 309. I think I’m the one that gave him the idea in part for ‘Climbing the Mountain’ in the first place. Although he went a lot further with it than I ever imagined it could be done. That’s part of the reason I wanted to get in on this, I wanted to see and experience what you and Wilfred had done with what he gave you to start. You guys did fantastic, too when you used it with the other thing to create Endless Orgasm. But you say I’m the only person to beat you more than once and the only woman?”

“Yeah. In fact, if it was publicized they’d probably print it in the sports pages.”

“Let me guess. Andrea: 4, 246: 0.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“I have just one little question.”

“What’s that?”

“I checked some of the other information including what happened in the police station; I didn’t get to it earlier because I was too excited about finding out what happened, and I should have noticed it, but we all make mistakes, I guess. Anyway, this woman, Melanie, was raped, for days on end, and if it hadn’t been for the fact that the new change to Climax Privilege meant she was essentially numb the whole time, and now, if I understand the transcript of what happened over at the police station, you basically were going to offer her the opportunity to be involved in this pseudo torture gag by getting screwed again by the guy who raped her. WERE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? WERE YOU EVEN THINKING STRAIGHT?”

“That’s two questions.”

“You know what I mean. Allowing her to confront the man again, and letting her see that she can’t be hurt, yes, that was a good idea. But you shouldn’t have even considered letting her get involved in such a thing with the man who did this to her. The thought of it alone might have set her off or maybe made her lose her mind.”

“Well, what I’ve heard is for a number of women, what they want more than anything else is to get revenge against the guy who did that to her.”

“That’s fine as long as it’s not sexual in nature. Otherwise it could have triggered all sorts of issues for her.”

“I guess I never thought of it.”

“Well, if you wanted to do something for her, what you should have done was offered to allow her two things (1) to know that if she had sex with a guy, she’s not going to get into trouble, and (2) to put her back to the place she was when she allowed that Welcomer to take her to his crib without any memory of what happened when she got grabbed. Do you have the capacity to do that, to simply chop it out of her memory as if it didn’t happen?”

“Yes, I just didn’t think about it because I’ve felt a person’s memories are theirs and it is not my place to alter them. To me I’d rather not be changing what someone remembered. I think it sets a bad precedent to be tampering with people’s minds.”

“Look who’s talking about setting bad precedents. Well, anyway, I have an idea. Let me offer her the opportunity not to remember what happened, I won’t push it, I’ll just let her know that we can chop it out of her memory if she chooses, how does that sound?”

“Okay.”

“Next thing…”

“There’s more?”

“Yeah. The way you’ve acted since you became Administrator is almost out of character to the way you’ve acted in the past or to what you have said about things before in your speeches. I think you’re becoming corrupted.”

“What do you mean?”

“That first rapist you pulled this stunt on, uh, Chavez.”

“Yes?”

“Exactly when did you offer him a lawyer?”

“Well, I didn’t think it was necessary. Besides, it’s kind of obvious no lawyer is going to let him talk.”

“246, you’re not thinking. A lawyer’s job is to get the best possible outcome for his or her client. You get him a lawyer and tell the lawyer you’re offering a special deal, the guy accepts administrative punishment, allocutes and gets let go in exchange for not being recycled. I can’t think of a lawyer with any intelligence who wouldn’t strongly recommend it to their client. You solve two problems. First, you’ve ensured that you haven’t violated his rights, and second, you eliminate the possibility he can come back and file a civil rights violation suit against you. Not very likely, but it’s possible. Thus, also, you’ve had a third party who has a vested interest in protecting the accused agree that the terms of the plea bargain are protective of his rights. Did you read the dissent in the decision of the Court of Appeals in the *Barney* case?”

“Yes.”

“I like the argument even if I don’t agree with the decision. Short-circuiting the protections of the law makes the people who run the system look bad. You might want to consider your actions in the future, unless everything you’ve said in public was just mouthing of words, and you really don’t care or you’re a hypocrite. And I don’t think you are.”

“Funny, I hadn’t much thought about it. A friend of mine once referred to me as ‘a strange and complicated person.’ Maybe I do need to pay more attention. But how come it didn’t bother you to get involved?”

“Hey, I’m not in power; you are. You’re supposed to have higher standards. And you should think about it. As Louis Brandeis once said, ‘The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well meaning but without understanding.’ I wasn’t really that concerned about the people out in the Frontier; they chose to go out there, they deserve whatever they get. They could have stayed in civilization, but they didn’t. But once you have people here, in what allegedly is a civilized country, we’re supposed to be better than they are, if for no other reason than we have the luxury of being able to do so. We can be better, and we should be. It’s like the difference between being rude or being polite. It costs us nothing and will almost certainly provide better results. You look at history, and invariably we see that the worst condemnations have gone upon those who did not act as civilized as possible, and we look at those whom history has seen as being outstanding are the people who chose, to do what was right, not what was easy to do or didn’t cause a problem. Especially when the choice to act responsibly was difficult. But in this case, the small and extra effort we can do to be right, even for those who are most reprehensible, and especially because we chose the high road over the quick and easy fix, goes a long way to allowing us to be proud of the government we have.”

“If justice is only meted out when it’s easy or convenient to do so, then the protections of the law are worthless cant, and the Constitution is nothing but a piece of paper.”

“Exactly. What is that, something by Jefferson?”

“No, actually I’m paraphrasing something by Robert A. Heinlein in *Metheuselah’s Children*.”

“Well, since you know this, you might want to be more careful in the future unless you don’t care. I don’t think you realize just how important you are and how many people admire your beliefs. You have a lot of power to do good, but you’re only going to have real support for what you believe in as long as you’re consistent. Do you remember what happened to Perot after he dropped out of the race for President, then tried to get back in by giving some lame

excuse, something about threats by the Republican Dirty Tricks Squad to ruin his daughter's wedding? Whether it was right or not, his actions disappointed so many people he stopped having any serious influence. You have a lot of influence to push things you agree on, and while this thing with rapists probably wouldn't hurt you a lot, if you keep going this way you might damage yourself as a result of acting improperly. And I think you do want to be able to continue to influence society."

"I will consider what you have said very carefully."

"Fair enough."

Chapter 114

“I interrupted you while you were trying to commit suicide.”

“Okay, 246, I want your advice on something.”

“Go ahead, Diane.”

“We need to have someone who is a regular resident of your world on earth in order to handle things there. George doesn’t particularly want to send people from our world and essentially make them stay long term in yours, there are nuances between the two, and they might make some mistake and maybe make someone notice something is going on. So we’re trying to figure out what’s the easiest way to go about it.”

“Hmm. Okay, you need someone from your world or someone from mine who is willing to kill people on demand. You’ll need a zombie team in order to manually move someone from one body to another. Now, I know we move people automatically in and out of the Afterlife via the computer system either when they arrive as an incoming or when they are recycled, but can you do this with someone who is already alive, so that you pull the soul of one person out of the afterlife and switch them with the person already in that body so the other person comes back to the afterlife?”

“Yeah, I think we can do that. It’s not popular because it requires 4 people to do it manually and they all get massive headaches afterward, but we can.”

“Okay, here’s what you do. Find some guy who’s depressed and doesn’t want to live. Tell him what’s going to happen, that after he’s dead you’re going to ask him to do some work for you back on earth. Kill him and let him come up here. We let him see what’s coming to him. Okay, now, we ask him to go back to earth because we want to hire someone to work for us, and we want him to watch that person’s body while we make the offer to them. In a week or ten days, we’ll send the other guy back and he can come back here permanently. In fact, tell him this before he dies. I have an idea on how to do this...”

This was his first time crossing over into the new universe, and while he knew what he had to do, and knew that it would work, he was still a little worried. But, he has a job to do, and it shouldn’t be that hard. He went up to the street sign and determined he was in the right place. He walked over and found the address. He walked up to the door and rang.

“Yes?”

“Mr. Cooper? Are you Mr. David Cooper?”

“Yes.”

“My name is John Race. I’m here because I want to offer you a job, and pay you more than you can imagine.”

“Well, I’m not really interested, I...”

“Yes, I know. I interrupted you while you were trying to commit suicide. Or rather, while you were in the process of trying to raise the nerve to commit suicide.”

“How the hell...”

“Since you’re curious, do you mind if we step inside and discuss this privately?”

They go back inside and David closes the door. John sits down on the couch. “What I want to explain to you is something you’re not going to believe, so bear with me if I explain this to you. The big problem you have is you feel your life is worthless and you don’t want to go on, but

you're afraid to kill yourself because you don't know what will happen when you die. Is that about right?"

"Uh, yeah, but how did you know?"

"Well, this is what you're not going to believe, so let me ask you something. What do you think happens when you die?"

"Uh, I don't really know, I suppose you go to see God or something, and get judged for what you did here on earth."

"But you're not really sure."

"No."

"Okay, how about if I was to promise you that when you die, not only would you not be judged for what you have done, but some woman would come meet you and want to have sex with you, and it would be better than anything you've ever had on earth, would you be interested in that?"

"Yeah, but you can't promise that."

"Maybe I can. But I want you to hear me out. We want to hire someone to represent us on earth. We want to send him to the place I've just described and show him what he can expect when he dies. What we want to do is, we'll send you there first so you can see exactly what we're promising, then we send you back to keep his body alive while we show him what we're offering. Then when we're finished showing it to him, we put him back in his body and you get to go back to the afterlife permanently. That's the job we want to offer you. You just have to come back for about two weeks and take care of someone else's body. Now, if this was possible, would you be interested?"

"Well, yeah, but why couldn't you just offer me the job you're offering him?"

"Because you're suicidal and don't want to live. He does. Now, on the other hand, if you think that if you saw that there was something beyond this world, do you think maybe that you'd be interested in taking on the job we're offering him?"

"Hell, yeah. But this is ridiculous, you're talking crazy."

"But if I could prove it to you, would you be interested?"

"Yeah, sure. But you can't."

"All right, let me make sure it's absolutely clear. If I can prove to you that there is a world after you die, that you'd be willing to come back and manage someone else's body for us while we show him the same thing and offer him the opportunity to either come back here and work for us, or if he decided not to come back you'd keep his body and stay on earth and work for us knowing you'd still get to go back later when you died of natural causes, would you be interested in doing that?"

"Well, yeah. But you can't prove it."

"Oh yes I can. If I can prove it, someone named Supervisor 246 will come see you to have you do this for me, is that all right?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Okay, then, I'll be leaving." He gets up and walks to the door.

"That's it?"

"No. Remember my name is John Race and I told you about this. Say hello to Supervisor 246 when you meet him." He turns around and faces David. He pulls out a gun with a silencer and puts a bullet into David's head. After David collapses, he puts two more into him. He

then leaves the house. He walks back to the transport point and disappears.

“Here he is, Administrator.”

“Thank you, Travis. I know you’re David Cooper. If your memory is any good, you should know who I am.”

“Well, you must be the Supervisor 246 I was told about.”

“Correct. So, anyway, is the Afterlife everything the person who invited you here as he promised?”

“Yeah, I couldn’t believe it. That woman I was with was unbelievable, I did some things with her I’d never have believed.”

“And I presume you have no hard feelings over how we brought you here.”

“Hell no! If I had even the slightest inkling of what was to come I wouldn’t have suffered anywhere near as long as I did, I’d have killed myself years ago.”

“Okay, so anyway, what we want to do is what he said originally, we send you back to earth to manage someone’s body, while we bring him up here for two weeks, then offer him the job of being our representative, and if he accepts, you’ll come back, otherwise you’ll keep his body and do whatever we want you to do on earth, then once his body dies you’ll come back. Now, if he turns us down and doesn’t want to go back, you’re not going to go suicidal and kill yourself, are you?”

“Hell no, now that I know what’s going on I actually have a reason to want to live. Not that I wouldn’t mind staying here but I can handle it either way.”

“Good. I’ll let you know when we’re ready to send you back.”

“I’ll be ready, and if I have to stay I’ll be willing to do whatever you guys want.”

“Fine.”

Chapter 115

“...you’re worse than the most ...evil man... on the face of the earth.”

He’d been told to expect this man. “Hi, I’m Supervisor 246.”
“Hello.”

“So, what do you think of the place?”

“I absolutely love it here, I hope to be here for a long time.”

“Well, I have some kind of bad news for you. You’re not going to be staying.”

The man looked like he was ready to cry. “I don’t know what to say, or what kind of things you people are, but you’re worse than the most vicious or cruel or, or, evil man who ever existed on the face of the earth. I don’t know whether to hate you or what, but if this is the kind of thing that you do to people, it’s worse than the alternative. At least that would have made sense.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it’s quite obvious that for whatever reason I didn’t make it here, or something, so now you’re going to send me to hell and I spend eternity in torture, if that’s where I had gone, at least I’d never know about this, but it’s going to be worse, all the time knowing all the things I never got to have, all of the experiences that I will miss, and the...”

“STOP!”

“I’d really love to know what was the point in doing this.”

“Well, first of all, there is no hell, that we know of, so you can stop thinking you’re going there. Let me ask you this: could I or anyone else have convinced you of what would happen here if we just told you about it?”

“No.”

“So now you know for a fact, as an absolute certainty when you die that you’re going somewhere you really like?”

“Yeah, uh, are you trying to tell me you’re sending me back to earth?”

“That’s exactly it.”

“Oh. Did they revive my body or something and so I have to go back?”

“Not exactly. Let me tell you what happened. There was this guy, his name was David Cooper, really, really depressed, who decided to kill himself but couldn’t quite bring himself to do it. We were watching him, and sent someone to see him. We told him that if he would do a job for us for a few days, we’d guarantee he’d get into heaven, or at least out of the mess he was in. He agreed. So we killed him and let him see what things are like here, then we brought you here, and now he’s somewhere else. Can you guess where he is?”

“In my body?”

“Correct. We had to find a way to keep your body alive while you weren’t in it. We’re giving you the option to stay here, and he gets to stay in your body and take the job we want to offer you, or we send you back and he dies just as you did. The reason is very simple. You have no serious ties with anyone. No close family, no serious girlfriend, no close friends. We know how you think so we don’t expect you to want to stay, but will want to go back. And you have the connections to get things. You’re perfect.”

“Perfect for what?”

“We want to hire you to work for us back on earth. It’s a new plan we’re developing. We

have people from here as well as other worlds who will cross over into yours, and we need someone there to arrange things for us.”

“You’re kidding.”

“Nope. Do you want me to explain?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“We need someone we can trust implicitly. You’ll be handling a lot of things for people, a hell of a lot of responsibility and we have to be sure you won’t have a problem if we ask you to do something illegal.”

“Well, as long as I don’t have to kill anyone I’m okay. I mean, presuming you’re not going to hold it against me if you ordered me to kill someone, I think I could work myself into it if I had to but I don’t know if I could.”

“No, we have other people for that; they know nothing about this. Assassins are easy to find. What we need is much more rare; what we essentially need is someone who can be both totally honest and as crooked as a used-car salesman. It’s that you’re going to have intimate knowledge of what we’re doing there, and that means you have to keep your mouth shut and make sure you set things up so our people can stay out of trouble when they are there.”

“So you mean like arrange fake identities, get paperwork to make them look legitimate, collect background resources like credit cards and such?”

“Yes.”

“I think I can handle that.”

“Let me explain something to you, so you understand. It will have to be the best possible work you are capable of. There will be people who are arriving in your world who came from some other world, quite possibly another universe that is slightly different from yours. That means they very likely will have no equivalence in your world. That means the stuff you get for them has to be letter perfect, in case they get arrested it has to stand up to extreme scrutiny. And you also have to make sure you’re not visible as being involved because if you get caught somewhere in the world and tortured, you might reveal what is happening. Maybe nobody will believe you but we don’t want to give them ideas.”

“I understand. In fact I have a pretty good idea of how to handle that.”

“So I’ll ask you if you want to go back or stay.”

“Uh, if I go back, how much of what happened here will I remember?”

“Everything.”

“You got a deal.”

“So you understand, if you get caught and the authorities there make you talk, you won’t get back in here, we’ll send you back to earth as a baby. If you get caught and you get let go without saying anything, that’s okay. Or you bribe your way out. Or you kill yourself before you get questioned. Just as long as you don’t tell anyone anything except the people you do jobs for us.”

“Okay.”

“So what I need from you is a solemn promise that you’ll keep what you do for us secret from everyone, that you’ll do what we tell you and follow our instructions to the letter. If you can agree to that, then say that we have your solemn promise that you will.”

“I give you my solemn promise that I will.”

“Very well then, congratulations.”

“I um, well, I’m not sure how to say this, but, uh...”

“I know what you’re thinking. This isn’t Heaven or something where we expect you to do things for our benefit at your expense. We’ll pay you for what you do for us.”

“Oh, okay then. I was kind of worried, I mean, I want to be able to come back here for real but I was worried how I was going to manage if I had to do some really expensive things.”

“The only reason we brought you here was that we decided to get a few people we could trust on earth and let them know what’s going on so that we would have their complete cooperation to do whatever we needed.”

“I see.”

“You admitted it yourself. Nobody could have talked you into this, you had to actually see and experience it for yourself in order to believe it.”

“You got that right. Ain’t nobody could have told me about this place and convinced me just by talking. It would be - actually it is - exactly like someone telling me that there is a God. I’d have asked them to show him to me.”

“So, you wouldn’t believe in God unless you met him in person?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I have some news for you...”

Chapter 116

“...I think I’ve been with enough women to know something...”

“Good Afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to Women’s Sexuality Orientation. Most of you probably know who I am but for those that don’t, my name is Supervisor 246.

“You might ask why a man would be discussing Women’s Sexuality. Well, I think I’ve been with enough women to know something about the subject. But what I am going to explain, more than anything else, is how a woman’s sexuality is different here than it is on earth. I don’t need to explain what a Graftenberg spot is or how the clitoris works, or those type questions. Any good textbook from earth will do that. But I do need to explain what a Climax Privilege is, or how things operate differently here, or what you can do now as far as sex is concerned that you could not do on earth.

“I have to repeat some of the things I say in the general orientation class so you may have heard some of it before. But if you haven’t taken that class you might not understand what’s going on here, so if I repeat stuff you’ve heard before, please bear with me. Also, if you don’t want to hear frank talk about sex, you’re in the wrong class so you shouldn’t be offended by that sort of thing if you’re going to sit here and listen to me talk.

“I don’t know if you’re seeing me live in the audience or possibly on a video at some point in the future so I’ll try to do this either way.

“I’m going to say a few things now that might be a little offensive. But ladies and gentlemen, we’re all adults, we’ve all heard these words before, and probably almost all of you have used them. And almost everyone in here has done what those words mean. So let me say what is going on.

“A while ago, you died. Whether it was ten minutes ago, or ten thousand years ago, you died. You showed up here. You were what we call an Incoming. You didn’t ask to come here - unless you committed suicide - and you almost certainly weren’t sure if you would end up here or someplace else or would simply cease to exist. Basically the universe just dumped you at our doorstep, the way it dumped you in your mother’s womb to be born. Actually it’s a little more complicated than that, but it’s a good enough example.

“And so what could we do when people like you came into our world? Let me explain to you what we did do. You needed to know a few things. We decided we wanted you to at least know a little bit about the world you’ve just been forced into when you arrived as an Incoming, same as you were forced into the world you just died in when you arrived and were born. So we created a video to tell you them. That there are things you knew on earth that are now totally wrong, and that you need to unlearn them. We had to let you understand that yes, you’re dead. Yes, you’ve died and gone to Heaven, as the saying goes.

“We call this the Afterlife because a lot of people disagree as to what Heaven really is. Some people think this is the Purgatory that you go to while you’re waiting to get in to Heaven. Well, that’s their opinion and they’re entitled to it.

“Remember, that you are, in effect, an entity of pure energy, a spirit as it were, you don’t really have a physical body. Because you don’t really have a body, you don’t have to eat, or drink, or sleep, or a lot of the other things you had to do on earth to survive. You don’t even have to go to the bathroom. We have no bacteria here. So you don’t get old. You don’t decay. You don’t have bad breath, or body odor, or athlete’s foot.

“What you have there that you are sitting inside is something we make you think you have because it’s easier for you to understand if you have something similar to what you had on earth.

And so what could we do when people came into our world? Let them know what was necessary to manage. Why they’re wrong. Can’t feed them. Can’t water them. Could talk to them. Could listen to them. And, we could love them.

“And that’s something to think about, ladies and gentlemen. What do we as a society do to you Incomings? I think a society or a country or a government shows its character by how it treats the most vulnerable members of that society. And who is more vulnerable than someone who has just arrived here, freshly dead and probably scared to the very core of their being that they are going to be punished for whatever stupid mistakes they made in life?

“This government, this world, this society shows how much it cares about you by *loving* you. Literally. Love thy neighbor as thyself. And that’s how we bring you into our world. We bring you into this world by providing pleasure to you. We love you back into the world. Isn’t that wonderful?

“Let me tell you a little about what happens. First, when you die, we recreate all of your existing memories and your personality and store them in a computer system. We then capture your soul, your essence, out of your dead body, and transfer it to an electronic device so that you will be able to continue to exist and think. While we’re doing this, we let some people who died before you did, who wanted to see you when you came in, see you and allow you to see them. We figure it makes it a little easier for you to take what has happened.

“While this is going on, we scan your personality to find out things about you. First, we determine if you have an adult personality. We don’t want to put someone who has the mental capacity of a child in a world full of adults. They would be mercilessly exploited. Everyone who has less than the understanding capacity of a normal adult is automatically Recycled. They go back to earth and start over as a baby again. It’s not fair to throw a child into an environment to try and compete against experienced adults; the child would never have a chance to grow up, and would be constantly taken advantage of.

“If you were unable to communicate, because, say, you had become so traumatized by life, or by dying, that you were catatonic or schizophrenic and could not communicate, or function without severe trauma, you would be shunted to the psychiatric intervention unit where a MIG-T would try to bring you out of it if they could, then put you back into the system. If we can’t, we’d have sent you back to earth to try again.

“So now, you pass all the tests, do we then drop you into the waiting area? No. We do a couple additional things. First, we try and determine what your sexual orientation is. If you’re gay or lesbian, or bisexual but with very little interest in the opposite sex, we put you into a queue for those. If you’re heterosexual or bisexual and have an interest in heterosexual relationships, we put you into the appropriate queue for men or women.

“Now, because people sometimes do change their mind about what their sexuality is, we do something else. If you’re a man, we put a gizmo, a special piece of software inside your head. I’ll talk about that in a little while. If you’re a woman, we put a complimenting piece of software inside your head too. While those things are really only needed if you’re heterosexual, we put them in everyone’s head.

“Now we put you into a reception area related to one of the four basic sexuality groups. Gays, lesbians, male heterosexuals, and female heterosexuals.

“While all this was going on with you, some people were waiting for you to show up. When you came into our world, as you will remember, someone came out to meet you. Someone in the Welcoming Department was watching the display of newly Incoming people who match them. A man if they are a gay or a female heterosexual, a woman if the opposite, who is of the complimentary orientation as the Incoming who has just arrived.

“So they watch the video feed that shows all the Incoming people available. That person saw you, and thought you were interesting looking. That person is what we call a Welcomer. They saw what you looked at, liked how you looked, and decided to go meet you. They chose to pick you. They alone decided they wanted to go meet you. They were not forced to do so. We did not expect them to do anything; they can sit in their room all day and watch TV if they want. But they wanted to meet you.

“So anyway, when the Welcomer finds someone that looks interesting to them, they put a marker on that person. Nobody else can do the same thing at that point. So now, the computer tells them where to find you.

“They then go down to the waiting area to go get you. They ask you to come with them and they take you back to their apartment. They also do something else. They make themselves look attractive to you, so you’ll be interested in them the same way.

“They wanted to show you a video which would tell you something about where you are and what happened to you. They wanted to answer your questions, if you had any, about what had happened. They wanted to calm your fears. And they wanted something else. They wanted to offer you something, which you were free to accept or decline, if you so chose. And most of you do choose to accept. You know exactly what it was if you did.

“Your Welcomer found you interesting looking. Make no bones about it, they wanted to jump yours. They wanted to have sex with you. They wanted to make love with you. They wanted to have a lot of fun and enjoy some hot sex with you. And what did they want from you? They wanted you to have a lot of fun and enjoy some hot sex with them. To put it bluntly, they wanted to fuck your brains out. While you fucked their brains out. An even exchange.

“No exploitation, no ‘using’ anyone, just two people enjoying each other’s bodies for no other reason than the sheer pleasure of pure unadulterated sex. The worst and most dangerous kind of sex there is, the dirtiest stuff that the hardest hardcore porno films can’t even touch, the stuff that frightens religious people to the core of their very being. Sex for no other reason than that the two people involved want to enjoy it. That’s all. Two people fucking each other’s brains out, like rabbits. Fucking like minks, as Michael Douglas said in *Basic Instinct*.

“But you needed to know a few things, which we told you about in the video. We had to let you understand that yes, you’re dead. Yes, you’ve died and gone to Heaven, as the saying goes. We call this the Afterlife because a lot of people disagree as to what Heaven really is. Some people think this is the Purgatory that you go to while you’re waiting to get in to Heaven. Well, that’s their opinion and they’re entitled to it.

“Remember, that you are, in effect, an entity of pure energy, a spirit as it were, you don’t really have a physical body. What you have there that you are sitting inside is something we make you think you have because it’s easier for you to understand if you have something similar to what you had on earth.

“Because you don’t really have a body, you don’t have to eat, or drink, or sleep, or a lot of the other things you had to do on earth to survive. You don’t even have to go to the bathroom.

We have no bacteria here. So you don't get old. You don't decay. You don't have bad breath, or body odor, or athlete's foot.

"It also means you don't have venereal diseases. Or any diseases. No syphilis, or gonorrhea, or cancer, or herpes, or chlamydia, or genital warts, or even the big one AIDS. If you had any of these on earth, or you died from one of them, they stayed there and died with your corpse.

And you can't catch them here, either.

"Let me make it clear. You're dead. This is it, you can't die again unless you go back to earth. Nothing you can do to yourself or that anyone else can do to you can cause you to die again while you're here. The only way you can die is if you go back to earth, in which case, when you die, you end up here again.

"Also, nobody is ever born here; everyone that is here, is here because they arrived here as an Incoming, as you did when your Welcomer came out to meet you, who got here because they died on earth and was an Incoming a while ago when a Welcomer came out to meet them, and so on. That means women can't get pregnant.

"So it also means we don't have to use any precautions. No birth control, or condoms, or anything else. People here can have unprotected sex without any risk of disease or pregnancy. And it gets even better.

"Because of the way your existence is carried here, the signals in your brain that are the responses to sex do not have to go from your sex organ to your brain, then across to the other person's sex organ, then to their brain, the effect is, for all intents and purposes, a direct connection. This means that the experience of sex is much, much stronger here than it is on earth. Much more pleasurable than the best sex anyone ever had down there.

"Remember, I said you don't have a physical body. You don't have to let your body rest or recuperate from sexual activity. Men don't get soft after orgasm and ejaculation, and women can achieve orgasm from vaginal intercourse alone. Let me repeat that.

"This means that if you're a man, you have the capacity to continue to have intercourse even after you climax and ejaculate. Actually, we usually don't say ejaculate because it's not really the same thing as what you did on earth. Men are used to releasing a fluid when they orgasm, and women are used to feeling a man do that when he does, so we duplicated it as something similar, and we call it *spray*. It has no taste and no odor. It's strictly a simulated ejaculation because people are used to having it happen when a man climaxes.

If you're a woman, there are two important benefits you don't get on earth: one, you have a much faster response time and can orgasm much faster as a result of intercourse. Also, since you don't have children here, your vagina only needs to stretch to accept a penis, it does not need to stretch to discharge a baby.

"On earth, a woman's vagina has sexual response tissue for only about the first 4-5 centimeters, about 2 inches. The rest, while it may have a small amount of sensation, generally doesn't feel a whole lot except for maybe the Graftenberg point, the place where the nerve endings of the clitoris cross through the vagina, the "G" spot as it were.

"Here, since the vagina doesn't have to stretch to let a baby pass, and you don't have to pass urine, it only has to have one use: to provide pleasure for a penis. Well, then, there's no reason to only let the penis have fun with the vagina, so the pleasure sensitive area is not merely the first 4 centimeters, the pleasure sensitive area runs through the entire vaginal surface! You might think of it as if the entire vaginal vault is filled with Graftenberg spots.

“On earth, only about 30% of women can achieve orgasm through vaginal intercourse alone. Some say it’s even less than that. Here, since no matter what part of the vagina a man moves his penis along, he is going to be rubbing tissue that generates pleasure in a woman when rubbed against. This means that *all* women can orgasm as a result of vaginal intercourse. You heard me correctly: 100% of women here can experience orgasm through vaginal intercourse alone if they have been prepared through foreplay to allow the vaginal vault to relax and the vaginal surface to lubricate.

“So consider this. There are two basic reasons that people use condoms. The first is to prevent contracting a venereal disease, and the second is to prevent pregnancy. We don’t have any venereal disease here. None, nit, swabo, bupkes, nil. As I said, syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, AIDS, chlamydia, crabs, they all stayed behind on earth. So we get rid of the first reason. Women cannot get pregnant here. As I said, when a man has a climax, he sprays, he does not ejaculate. So we can get rid of using condoms altogether! Or any kind of birth control. People can resume having sex bareback, as they call it.

“Also, most rape is unheard of here. You might think that a man can just stick it in and take what he wants. Oh no, he can’t.

“For those of you men in the audience, you may or may not be aware of this, if you have never been loved in the world, otherwise your Welcomer would probably have told you. For you women, you know what I’m about to tell you because, if you’re heterosexual, your Welcomer had to tell you this so you could let him come, and if you’re a lesbian, she’s supposed to tell you so you can use the ability to stop a man from raping you and transport both of you to the police.

“Earlier in this lecture, I told you about a gizmo we put in your head if you’re a man, and a corresponding feature in your head if you are a woman. Ladies, I’m now going to tell you what we did to you. We have completely destroyed whatever power structure men and women have in sexual roles on earth, and turned it upside down.

“After you died, if you were a man, we put something in your head. It’s in mine too, so don’t think some of us got it and some didn’t, all men here have one of these. It only activates if you are having sex, or trying to have sex, with a woman. Guess what. You can’t come. It won’t let you come. No matter what you do, no matter how hard or slowly you stick it in her, or what opening you use on her, or how much she blows you, you will not come. You can have sex with her for 5 minutes. You can pound on her for 5 hours. You still won’t come. There is one other thing that needs to happen for you to come.

“You see, what we put in your head is something we call a Climax Privilege. Any time you’re with a woman, and trying to have sex, it prevents you from coming. Oh, don’t think you can’t get to come. Oh you can come big time, even better than before. In fact, chances are you probably have come with a woman here, and more than once. Only difference is it’s not automatic like it was on earth. No, here, you come because someone - some person - decides you should be permitted to come. And it ain’t you. And only the two of you know what you’re doing. So guess who decides when you get to come?

“That’s right, fella. She does. And you can’t make her. She can be nasty and give you an orgasm the instant you get inside her. Or she can make you pound on her for 5 hours before she lets you have what you want. Or she can give you ten orgasms in a row. She decides. Just her.

“That’s what we put in her head. As a man you have a climax privilege lock in your head,

preventing you from having an orgasm with anyone who has a climax privilege release in theirs. What we put in her head was a climax privilege release which prevents any man from climaxing if at any time he's touching any part of her body.

"Well, if you're the type that is brave enough to take on two (or more) women at once, in that case, any of them can give you an orgasm. As long as you're touching that woman and your dick is rubbing on something. Whether you're inside of either of them or anywhere on them, you can come if any woman you have skin contact with allows you to and you're moving it at the time.

"What it means, if you're a lesbian, it has no affect on you. If you are a gay male, since the other man doesn't have a climax privilege release, it also has no effect on you. You still are able to climax and orgasm with the usual automatic way as on earth.

"So that means you can't be nasty to a woman, or fail to satisfy her needs, or treat her rudely, and expect to get anything from her.

"Well, let's say you meet some nice lady, and you take her home with you, and the two of you get hot, and bothered, and you get in bed together, and do some foreplay, then she says for you to go ahead and get inside her, or you ask her if it's okay and she says yes, so you start moving inside of her. So you do this for three or four minutes, and she enjoys it, and has two or three orgasms while you're doing this, chances are, she's going to let you have yours now. So you do and you have a terrific time, really big time climax and orgasm, and you spray her. She knows you were going to do that, and probably enjoys that too. So what do you do now, roll over and go to sleep like you would on earth? No! Guess what fella, you're not soft after you come. What you do is keep right on moving inside her, in whatever way she wants you to do it. Whether she likes it fast, or slow, or hard, or soft, you just move whichever way she wants, and guess what, most likely she'll give you another orgasm, because while you've been moving, she's been coming over and over again. So maybe, over the next hour or two, she might give you fifteen or twenty orgasms, maybe even more. But you've probably given her a hundred or more. What do you care that she's getting more, you're getting plenty, right? Right.

"So you don't have to have these question and answer sessions where you ask her if she enjoyed what was happening, or if she came, or if you did her right. If you're coming, you know you're doing her right. If she continues to let you climax and orgasm, again and again every few minutes, she's telling you in no uncertain terms that you're doing just fine.

"Because one thing we tell women, and I'm telling you women in the audience right now, is if a guy isn't doing what you want, tell him what you want so he will. And don't ever give him an orgasm unless he does do precisely what you want and that he continues to do what you want. Make sure you get some orgasms before you give him his first. And make sure you continue getting them before you give him any more. And if you want something, like you want to get on top, or you want him to hug you or kiss you while you're doing him, or if, as it turns out, you're on top and you want him to roll you over and drive for a while, tell him. If he wants to come inside you, or on you, or at any time while he's with you, make him pay for the privilege. And the way you make him pay is to withhold his orgasm until he does what you want. When you get what you want and he behaves, then let him have his. But not before. And if he stops doing what you want, stop giving him orgasms, and tell him why.

"Women are so loving and generous that they will usually give a man plenty of orgasms. Probably more than he deserves given the way most men treat women. But if you're a man,

and you're with a woman, and you've been doing whatever you think she wants, and you feel you've waited too long and deserve an orgasm, ask her for it. She might just be waiting to see how long you'll play with her before you ask. Some women get a kick out of this.

"For the first time in their existence a woman has power over a man instead of it always being the other way around. So if you don't get it, ask. She might just be waiting for you to do so. Or she might be giving it to you less often than you want it because she doesn't want to spoil it for you by giving it to you too fast. Which is reasonable, part of the fun of sex is the build up to an orgasm, if it happens too soon it's like wolfing down food instead of being able to eat it and taste it. But you might want it more often than she thinks you do. Chances are, if you ask her, she'll give it to you. As long as she's getting what she wants from you.

"Or it might be the reason you're not getting any more orgasms is that you're not listening to her and you're doing her wrong. So she's withholding your orgasm to get your attention. So give her your attention and find out why. Then do what she wants and before too long you'll be spraying her like crazy, because you're doing exactly what she wants that pleases her, and in exchange, she is doing exactly what you want that pleases you.

"And if a woman uses it correctly she can stimulate a man to do exactly what she wants without saying a word. Let's say two people are at it, he's on top of her, moving inside of her nice and easy, and she's had a marvelous time over the last two minutes since he got inside her, so she decides it's his turn. She grants climax privilege to him. He feels himself about to come so he starts to move very fast. She doesn't like this and starts to lose the climax she was on. So she immediately revokes climax privilege before his orgasm completes. Boom, his climax shuts down and leaves him feeling like he just tried to eat dinner and had it snatched away from him after half a fork of food.

"So he slows down and after 10 seconds or so, she grants climax privilege to him again. If he pulls the same stunt, she does the same thing, cuts him off. I think after the second time, he'd get the message. So now he slows down, she waits a few seconds for the next orgasm to hit and grants him climax privilege. This time he continues moving nice and easy like he was, she continues to have her orgasm, and so does he. A nice big orgasm and he gets to spray her. And she hasn't had to say a word to him. And he knows she doesn't like it when he does that. But he can always ask her if he can, if he offers to make sure he'll give her more orgasms in a different way, or something, if he likes to do that when he comes. Communication can make a lot of difference in what people get out of sex and how they enjoy it. For both of them.

"Another thing some women do if they are enjoying what is happening is that they will move a lot. If you're on top of a woman, doing her, and she's matching your movements, that is, moving toward you when you move in on her, and moving away when you pull out, chances are she's having a lot of fun too, and soon thereafter so will you. Some women like it better when they don't move. Or they move in a different manner. Or maybe she wants you to move if she's on top. Or maybe she wants you to remain still. Ask her; she might just like it, and guess what, you're going to like it a whole lot more shortly thereafter. Whatever it is, if she either lets you come regularly, or tells you she wants something else, and you do that, that's all you need to know that she's happy with what you're doing, and soon you will be, too.

"As a side note to women, I don't think I've ever heard of an instance of a woman being stingy with letting a man come. Basically if you try that, after a while men will find out and they'll look for someone else who is nicer to them. Besides that, I doubt you'd be allowing a man to

have vaginal intercourse with you if you weren't expecting him to come inside you. But I'll give you a pointer on how to get him to do whatever you want in bed the way you want it. "It's important that if he is doing you right, and you are having fun, that you let him have some fun on a regular basis. It doesn't have to be a lot, but, unless you're doing something special for him that will have a long buildup, it probably should be at least once every 5 minutes at most. And more often if he's doing really nice things to you that you like a lot. If he gives you something really, really good, really special, give him something immediately, even if you have just let him come. It's straight positive feedback. To put it bluntly, men are very much like dogs. Reward them for good behavior - when they do things that you find pleasurable, and enjoy, give them a nice orgasm on a regular basis - and punish them for bad behavior - withhold orgasm if they won't do you the way you want - and as a result you'll find they are very willing to do whatever you want. And if he takes too long to notice, ask him to stop and tell him what's wrong. Chances are, he's not there because he wants to be nice to you or to give you orgasms. He's there because he wants pleasure from you and he's willing to do what he has to do to get it, and he knows the only way he's going to get it is to make sure he gives pleasure to you.

"Maybe on earth you had sex with a man because you wanted some attention or felt you had to do it or something else. Well, here, we can be honest about it. You can stop having sex if you're not enjoying it or you don't want to. If you don't like it, quit and let those who do like it take over in your place. We're all in it for ourselves, as we should be. Sex is the most selfish thing anyone can do. Nobody - unless they are very ignorant of their own needs - does it for someone else's benefit. (At least a man doesn't; I have a suspicion some women would.) We do it because it feels so goddamn good. A man is going to give you a lot of pleasure because he wants pleasure from you. Or whatever you want out of sex. But it has to be an honest transaction, you have to give him pleasure if he's giving it to you. And you need to keep repeating that as long as he does. And make sure he does, if he doesn't, don't keep doing what doesn't work, do something else and keep trying until you do get pleasure out of him. If you still have a problem and nothing works, after say, half an hour, come over to the Welcoming Department, ask for assistance and let us check you both out to see what's wrong.

"One thing it is extremely important to remember for a woman is that the body you are sitting in isn't real. That means that if you have sex, and you aren't feeling a climax very soon after someone starts eating you (if you have someone do that), and if you aren't feeling orgasm shortly after a man starts having vaginal intercourse with you, either you on top or him, or whatever position you're using, stop and find out why. If you have sex for longer than 5 minutes without an orgasm, or if nothing happens after more than 10 minutes, immediately stop and get assistance, because something is very, very wrong and you need to find out why.

"More often than not, it should take no longer than two minutes from the start of intercourse before you have your first climax. It should actually be faster than that but some women take longer to get there. And climaxes should be very soon forthcoming as intercourse continues. So rather than have a woman panic if she's really slow, I'll allow up to 5 minutes. That's why, I tell women if it takes longer than 5 minutes to have your first orgasm during sex, or if, at any time, you've been having sex for 10 minutes or more and haven't had another one, stop and get attention. This is especially important if you got them even faster when you were on earth. Personally, if a woman told me that she was having sexual contact - either with a penis or a

finger or an object or a tongue - and spent more than 3 minutes at any time she was being vaginally or clitorically stimulated and was not getting an orgasm I would be very concerned and recommend that she look into getting the matter checked promptly.

“In fact, orgasms are a necessary part of a person’s psychological health. Orgasm does to a healthy person’s brain what electro-shock on earth can do for someone who is sick in the head, it stimulates various brain systems to improve their function.

“You women deserve orgasms as much or more than a man does, and there’s no excuse for not getting them. If it takes that long, there’s something wrong and you need to get it checked. You can come down to the Welcoming Department if you like and we’ll check you out to see why. Because we would want to know too. It’s not supposed to take that long and if it does, it could indicate something serious, not just for you, but possibly for others.

“Now, let me summarize what I have said. You died. You arrived here. We offered you the opportunity to have sex because we care about and love you, and wanted to show you something that would be fun, and because we wanted you to know we as a society don’t consider anything wrong with doing that.

“And that’s something to think about, ladies and gentlemen. What do we as a society do to the Incomings? I think a society or a country or a government shows its character by how it treats the most vulnerable members of that society. And who is more vulnerable than someone who has just arrived here, freshly dead and probably scared to the very core of their being that they are going to be punished for whatever stupid mistakes they made in life?

“This government, this society shows how much it cares about them by *loving* them. Literally. Love thy neighbor as thyself. We find a person, someone who wants to - again, no force - mate with them, to love them, to have sex with them, for no other reason than to share pleasure with them. And that’s how we bring you into our world. We bring you into this world by providing pleasure to you. We love you back into the world. Isn’t that wonderful?

“You look at other places, other countries and their first concern is how much they can make you fear the government, by making the first thing you discover is how powerful their military and police are. The first thing their government wants to show you is fear. The first thing our government wants to show you is love.

“The highest and greatest pleasure two people can share and we give it away, in unlimited quantities, any time they want it. And the people who give it away are all volunteers.

“So am I. I am Supervisor 246. I am the ranking male supervisor, the highest level non-administrative person in the Department. Or rather I was until I became Department Administrator. I work for the Welcoming Department. I handle the volunteers in my section who do this. I don’t get paid anything to do this. All the work I do, I do for free. Because I believe in what I’m doing and want to see it done right. And because I have fun at what I do. If this job ever stops being fun, I’ll quit and find something else to do. I did it once before. That doesn’t mean it’s a barrel of laughs all the time. But it is so much more fun when it is than the times it isn’t that it’s worth the small amount of aggravation. That’s what we call a tradeoff. No sacrifice, just an exchange of a whole lot of fun for a small amount of work. The stuff I have to do that I don’t like is work; everything else I do is fun.

“In short, I run the largest whorehouse in the universe. But that’s wrong because we don’t charge anything. We give it away! And you can have all you want! Any time. And what do they pay me? Nothing. I volunteer here too. Everything that exists here exists because

someone wants it to be and has used their time to create it.”

“Now, same as in the other orientation classes, I’ll take questions. Who has...” He is interrupted by a woman who appears very upset.

“How can you act the way you do? You and your kind are like pigs, you’ve got no morals!”

“Excuse me, ma’am, but if anything, most of our people have a lot better standard of morality than most of the people on earth. Mostly because we *have* a standard of morality. What’s your complaint?”

“You people just... well, they do it with anyone indiscriminately. They don’t care about others, all they’re interested in is what they can get. It’s like you think people are expendable and anyone is interchangeable with anyone else. You’re violating the laws of God and acting like you can do anything you want.”

“You know, every time I hear someone invoke the name of God as an excuse for whatever they believe in it’s usually because they want to believe in something that contradicts with reality and want to wish for what is impossible. But I’ll answer your comments.

“Let me tell what we really are, and you’re not going to like it. First, we are not pigs. Pigs are no where near as sexual as human beings. *We are as gods.*

“Let me make that clear. This world that we are in has no physical limitations. The only limitations on what we can do here are the ones we choose to place upon ourselves. What we, as a society, have chosen, is that one may do anything as long as you do not do something to someone else without their permission. As we do not have the issues of disease and we can’t reproduce, as far as sexual contact, we have decided not to put restrictions on what people choose to do with each other.

“Let me stress that point. It is what people *choose* to do. Now, if you bother to look up the histories of mythology, the stories of gods that were written around the time of Homer, basically they mated with each other any way they wanted because they could do anything. So basically, given similar circumstances here that’s essentially what has happened. However, we have a difference between our society and those depicted by the myths of gods. The gods of those stories had sex any way they wanted, and in some cases whether or not the other person wanted to let them. We don’t allow that here.

“The highest law of the land says that nobody is allowed to force others to do things. And we take that very seriously here.

“And we do not have sex indiscriminately. The people who Welcome Incomings choose who they want. They aren’t assigned people; they make the choice. We have people who examine the lives of Incomings and write summaries about them. This information is available to our Welcomers in order to decide if they’re interested in choosing someone.

“What we have are people who find having sex with different people to be fun. On earth that sort of activity is frowned upon because some people - such as yourself - do not like it. These are people who would otherwise be frustrated and miserable, but in our world, they are stable and productive members of society who provide a valuable function.

“If you don’t want to do this sort of thing, that is your absolute right. But don’t presume to say that other people shouldn’t be allowed to live their lives in ways that don’t hurt others.

“But as for your claim that we consider people expendable or that we don’t care about others is specious in view of what we have gone through to do exactly that. We have the Welcoming Department specifically to show people how much we do care. We allow those who like the

idea of having casual sex with others to do that, and in their actions they also allow the other person to enjoy what is happening. They also do one other thing: they offer the incoming the opportunity to learn something about this world.

“If we didn’t care we’d just allow you Incomings to be dumped at the Main Entrance and left to fend for yourselves, and eventually a lot of you would do something to get yourself in trouble. You’d also make a lot of local residents very upset and some of them would get in trouble because you’d insult a lot of them so bad some of them would pop you one.

“We had that problem centuries ago because we had no way to at least allow people to learn something about how to function in this society. But we had to have some way to encourage people to take the time to teach others. So we gave them the opportunity to proposition the people they met.

“Whether what we have done here is the best solution available is possible debatable, but the results are not. The number of sex crimes is so low that when there’s a rape it gets front page news, and it’s almost always because of some Incoming who didn’t know they died.

“We’ve basically eliminated sexual frustration, fear and guilt, and as a result, we have a fairly stable society with very few crimes against others. There are two billion people living in the jurisdiction of the English Language Section. If we had as many police officers per capita as, say, Los Angeles, which has about one police officer for every 1500 people, we’d need over 130,000 police. We don’t even have 20% of that. Since we’ve given people a reason to care about society - basically because they know society cares about them - we don’t have anywhere near the level of problems they do on earth. But I’ve spent enough time answering your comments, I should respond to the people who were polite enough to wait their turn. Who has ticket #1?”

Chapter 117

“Now this is something strange to ask...”

“246, you’ll need to do some preparations. You know it’s not going to be the same, it’s going to be the way it was, and it’s going to be different because you’re used to the way things are here. So you’ll need to start practicing by restricting yourself to ground-based technology and non-advanced systems for a while to get used to them. You got me so far?”

“Yeah, I think I’ll do that for the last month or so.”

“I have to tell you since we never did this before we don’t know how different it will be, so you’re going to be a bit of a test case. I mean, what we have done before are people who went under the knife, nothing like this. Also, the two people we have transferred were only here for two weeks or so, we don’t know how well it will work with someone who’s been here for decades.”

“Yeah, I understand.”

“Now this is something strange to ask, but, do you want a Real Sex Change?”

“No, I’ve decided I want to experience this as a man. If I decide to go back a second time or if I decide to try a sex change here and maybe stay with it for a while, I might do that but for now, I think it would cause too many problems.”

“I agree. I was going to seriously try to talk you out of it if you did choose it but I wanted to at least put the offer on the table.”

“Well, thank you, anyway, George.”

“You’re welcome. Now on to other matters. What do we do about the time while you’re gone ‘visiting the Frontier’? We need to have some preparations.”

“Well, she has learned a lot over the past few years, we can let Marilyn be APT again for a while, she’s a hell of a lot better at knowing what to do things about, and what to keep her hands off than she was originally. I think had she had, perhaps, a couple of calendar years in Cynthia’s place, she would never have made the kind of stupid mistakes she did when she got here.”

“Well, when Cynthia quit, I knew I had to get someone who was good at implementing policy and following the policies set down by the person in charge. I never dreamed that Tom was going to quit any time soon, I would never have picked her to be top boss, but then once he did I can’t very well appoint someone outside the Department over her, it would look bad. Thing was, I figured you wouldn’t want the job after what you said when I offered you a seat on the Board and you shocked me by turning it down.”

“Actually I was considering taking the position as Administrator for a short time then giving it to David, because I can work for him, but I won’t work for Putty Tat again. And I’m not the only one; when Willis decided to take my old job he specifically said he wouldn’t report to her. I’m not saying I won’t work for a woman; I did when I was a Welcomer, if you ever decide to make Diane your replacement I’ll accept that, and Cynthia would have been great as Tom’s replacement, she knew enough to leave well enough alone unless you know exactly what you’re doing and it’s an improvement over what was there. In fact, if Cynthia ever changes her mind, I’ll accept going back to lead male supervisor, and she can be Administrator. Or if she wants my help, I can be deputy and we can dump Putty Tat into some side role.”

“Well, that’s nice of you.”

“I just want to show that I have no problem working for anyone, male or female as long as they

either know their job or admit they don't, act as a figurehead and leave things alone. If they're smart enough to leave well enough alone when they don't know what they're doing, 9 times out of 10 they'll do better than trying to make a decision."

"Well, how would you work it if you had to make a decision about something if you were a figurehead, did not know how to run the organization and had a problem come up?"

"You either find out who does know if there is someone you can trust, or you grab a small group of people who could reasonably be expected to know what's involved, put them together and ask them to come up with a solution, then you implement that solution. Even better, make sure that they're the ones who have to live with the solution, that way they will be very careful to make sure they don't dump garbage on themselves."

Chapter 119

“He had himself murdered so he could ... become a martyr.”

“246, I heard about how Willis, the current lead supervisor doesn’t want it anymore, and most everyone around doesn’t want to replace him, because they think it’s a lotta trouble. I’d like to apply for the job because I think it’s some way I can try and make up for everything you’ve done for me.”

“Do you really think you can do it?”

“I can try, and from what I heard, you took over the job when nobody else wanted it and you did pretty good at it. I can try it for a while and if you don’t think I can do it, you can get someone else.”

“Well, okay, we’ll see how you do. All right then, you’ll be... Supervisor 31662.”

“Thank you, 246. I really hope I can do right by you.”

“We’ll see what happens. Anyway I have another appointment, so on your way out have my assistant send him in.”

He does. “Come in, have a seat. What can I do you for?”

“Thank you, Mr. Administrator. I’m glad you would grant me an interview on such short notice, apparently I was lucky enough to know someone who could get me an appointment to see you. I’ve been told that if you really need something important done, Administrator 246 is the guy to see about it.”

“You can just call me 246, almost everyone does. Well, I understand you’ve asked for some help regarding something that happened on earth.”

“Yes. I’m not ashamed of what I did, apparently you people don’t punish people for what they did there. But the thing is, someone I know is going to be punished for something he didn’t do. I’ve heard that what happened to me was in the news and it’s possible to go back and look at it.”

“Oh sure. I could just query the system, but I’ll be polite and ask you, what is your identification code?”

“What’s that?”

“There’s an 11-digit number you were informed of, it begins with 5 digits, has a 2-letter check code, your first name and a 6-digit trailer. And how long ago did you die?”

“Oh, let’s see. He looks in a notebook. ‘01212 NN Ralph 003217,’ that appears to be right. And I died three weeks ago.”

“Central Computer, audio search starting minus twenty-one days, news, ‘01212 NN Ralph 003217,’ and list.”

“In other news, on Earth, a man named Ralph Fine, 01212 NN Ralph 003217, is currently in arrival processing today and will be scheduled for *Tunnel of Light* viewing at 2:33 Afterlife Standard Time tomorrow. He has not been flagged and will be offered standard Welcoming once he is finished with processing and becomes an Incoming. Fine was murdered by gunshot outside of a bar in Houston, Texas, United States at 11:41 PM Central time yesterday by another patron, Willard Matthew, 01072 PK Willard 000120, during an argument over a drug buy. Police have arrested George Robinson, 00931 FA George 807219, as the person they believe to be the shooter. The arresting officer, Detective Lieutenant Alan Engel of the 14th Precinct, 44172 NA Alan 661216, planted sufficient incriminating evidence on or around Mr. Robinson, that in the opinion of our legal correspondent, the planted evidence being enough to look like he

did in fact commit the crime, and the fact that Mr. Robinson is poor and black and has a long criminal record for various crimes of violence anyway, essentially guarantees that when he is arraigned later this week after his indictment by the Grand Jury, he will be represented by the inadequately funded public defender's office and given a minimum cost defense, with almost any requests for additional evidence disclosures that would have exonerated him unavailable or effectively blocked or denied by the court for various excuses - usually the prosecutor calls it a 'fishing expedition' - but actually due to lack of funds, will arrive here in about six to eight standard years after his death penalty appeals have been exhausted, being routinely rubber-stamped as approved by the appeals courts. By accident, Detective Engel has also used planted evidence on three people who actually did commit the crime to which they were charged, so he's not all bad. Our scorecard for today shows this is innocent person number seven that Alan 661216 has put on Texas' death row in the last twelve months in addition to the three who really were guilty. Well, the guy ain't on death row yet, but short of a miracle, he will be.

"In other news, now here's something really depressing..."

"Central Computer, stop audio. So what is it you want?"

"Well, personally I'd like to see that George isn't punished for this, when I was alive he saved my ass at least a half dozen times."

"Usually we don't do things for individuals. But let me ask you this, do you regret dying or what's happened to you since you died?"

"Uh, well, no. The problem is like everyone else, he doesn't know what's going to happen, and if anything he's going to be terrified, I know, I was, even though I died fast, it was the worst ten minutes of my life."

"Tell me about it. It's sort of like someone said about cars, the hardest mileage in terms of wear-and-tear that a car will ever drive is the last three meters before an accident."

"Plus, it's really not fair. I mean, even though he is my friend. if he'd done something really bad to somebody, say he'd been a child molester or something, I'd say that he deserves it. I don't think it's fair to punish him for it when he didn't do anything to deserve to die."

"Not everything in life is fair."

"Yeah, I guess so. But maybe you can get that cop to be caught for what he's been doing or at least maybe get him to stop it?"

"Well, generally we tend to leave earth alone, if people want to ruin things for each other, that's their business. My understanding is we don't intervene unless it gets to the seriousness level of say, the Cuban Missile Crisis or where if something isn't done life on earth might cease."

"Did you guys intervene in that?"

"No, fortunately, but we almost did."

"Do you guys know just about everything?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I have a question, since you mention that particular incident, I was wondering about..."

"You want to know how he died and whether there was a conspiracy?"

"Yeah, I was kind of curious."

"I think that's one of the top ten really big questions that people, at least from the U.S., ask about."

"Oh really?"

"Really, really. Anyway, it's quite simple." He taps a few keys on his electronic paper and

hands it to Ralph. "Here's the report."

Ralph reads the paper. "You're kidding!"

"Nope."

"Well, I've heard all sorts of conspiracy theories but this is one I don't think I've ever heard."

"Yeah, it's the one thing apparently nobody thought of. They talk about the suspicious appearances on the grassy knoll and the question as to whether one man was the shooter, but they never considered this one. Yes, there was a conspiracy. He had himself murdered so he could go down in history and become a martyr. I know you're skeptical. Go ask him or some of the people involved, many of whom have died over the years. Including the guy who killed him who was killed in the basement of City Hall and the guy who killed him, but was a wildcard nobody knew about or expected. They'll tell you; they have no reason to lie."

"I see. Well, anyway, I'm wondering if there isn't some thing you can't do maybe to prevent those innocent people from being punished for what they didn't do."

"Again, we generally don't get involved in what happens on earth."

"Well, okay, but could you perhaps, like, take it under advisement and if someone has the opportunity maybe they can do something?"

"I can put it on the list, but no promises. But if we are able to do something, it's going to be very expensive, you'll owe a lot of favors if we can do it."

"I'll accept that. Thank you for seeing me."

"You're welcome."

Chapter 120

“So, do you think you’re ready to try it?”

“Are you ready?”

“I don’t know why I’m scared to death, but yeah, I suppose I’m about as ready as I’m going to be.”

“What are you afraid of?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you want me to say?”

“Yeah.”

“I’d guess you’re afraid of what happens if this doesn’t work. You aren’t sure what will happen.”

“Yeah.”

“What’s the worst that could happen?”

“Hmm, that’s a hard one. That I’d become a vegetable, or worse.”

“What worse?”

“I keep thinking I want to say, that I’d die, but I’m already dead so that’s not it.”

“I can offer you a couple of possibilities.”

“Go ahead.”

“Part of you might wonder if all the years in the Afterlife might be some dream or something else that wasn’t real, say a coma instead of dying, or that you might, say, fall off the Afterlife and go wherever you would have gone if we hadn’t intercepted you and everyone else. And maybe you’re afraid you’ll really have to accept responsibility for what you did on earth, and maybe everything afterward. Or since we intercepted everyone, you get to Heaven and it’s closed because we took everyone and you end up sitting in an empty Heaven in front of the Pearly Gates for eternity. Or that there isn’t anything in place of what we put in and you will cease to exist.”

“That’s probably about right.”

“Why should we take annihilation off the table, as a thing to worry about?”

“If I die, dead, then there’s nothing and I’ll never know. I just don’t like the idea of the billions of years of fun I’d miss.”

“You know, I have a suspicion that the universe might just thank us if that did happen.”

“You might be right. But actually I think it’s your number two friend that his future Welcomer said would make the universe a better place if he ceased to exist, so I think I have to get in line behind her. Remember, his future Welcomer has met me and she thinks I’m a nice guy.”

“Well, as someone I know says, ‘That’s her opinion and she’s entitled to it.’ So I think we can safely dispose of your nonexistence as something you no longer need to fear. What else?”

“You gave a good example. Could you imagine how horrible it would be if I did show up in Heaven, and it had been closed down because we got everyone. I’d be alone for all of eternity! You know me, that would be hell! What I’d probably do is try and find the Throne of God and see if I couldn’t get his forwarding address. Then there’s something you have to worry about: maybe he’s still there and wonders where everyone went. And I’ll tell him. He just might be grateful enough that he gives me St. Peter’s job. Then he’ll take his job back from you. Most likely, he’d either be so damned glad to have someone to talk to that I wouldn’t be alone or he’d

take me over to one of the universes you hadn't captured, or I might talk him into sending me back over here. If Heaven is closed down, I suspect Hell just might be too, and I doubt he'd go to all that trouble just to punish one person but do nothing about everyone else. Probably be easier to send me back. So maybe I can exclude that one too.

"On the other hand, if it turns out God is a woman, then I think I'm going to be a very happy camper! Having been there I think I could die with that. So maybe that wouldn't be so bad. But with my luck I'd find out She's a lesbian and decides since there's nobody else around, She gives me a sex change. Or perhaps does that and gives Herself one. Or I find out God hates homosexuals so much because He's one and decides He likes me and I end up being His love slave. So it turns out that Heaven has just become Hell!

"I guess I'm just worried about annihilation even if I'd never know it, or losing my intelligence, and knowing I had lost it, in becoming a vegetable or retarded or something else, and knowing the difference. I mean, maybe at some time in the past I was even brighter than I am now. Since I don't know it, I don't miss what I don't have. It's knowing you had something, and have lost it, is what is so bad."

"Good, now we have something to work with. You're pretty good at analyzing people, what's the first and most important thing about calming someone's fears?"

"Identifying their fear and showing them why they do not need to fear it. Or discovering that they are right and you need to do something about it because you need to be afraid, too."

"Excellent. Let me tell you something, when we first set this up, it cost us 11 people. They all died. Years later, when we developed the time travel technology and later captured this universe, we also very carefully snuck in to our own and life-tagged those 11 people, as carefully as we could to avoid a time-travel paradox. Do you know how many of the 11 we were able to recover?"

"All of them?"

"Yes. And not one of them had any mental damage at all. That's been one of the things we're trying to figure out how we can capture our own universe, perhaps set it up on another system, maybe have ties into yours. But we want to be very careful because we don't want to mess up our own existences. If we can figure out how to get into our own universe and do what we did successfully to yours, we will. I mean, it may be cruel and heartless, but when we did this, we figured if we screwed up and damaged your universe, well, it didn't affect us."

"That makes sense. I presume what you meant was you would act as carefully as you could to make sure it would work, but there were no guarantees and you couldn't tell until you actually tried it. I mean, if I wanted to actually get into Heaven and be able to use it, I'd want to do it right so I could even if there was no risk to me if we did screw up. Not because of any concern over the billions of people I don't even know - or maybe some concern, I'm not that selfish - but because I'd want it to work and would not want it to fail, simply because it might fail when I was in it."

"Exactly. Because we'd want to be sure we could do it right in our own universe we would be as careful as if it was our own, but obviously, if you destroy your own past you don't get a second chance we had to try it somewhere else first, and there was always the possibility we were wrong in how to do this. That it all worked perfectly gives us a lot of confidence, and we may want to try another universe before going to our own."

"I think the scientists who developed the atomic bomb had the same fear, that they might blow

up the earth just from testing.”

“Yeah, I heard that one too. My first teacher of Analytical Symbolics said that the scientists who created the bomb were afraid the reaction would volatilize - that is, vaporize - the entire atmosphere and leave earth an airless shell. We weren’t sure what would happen when we were working on our system. So, do you think you’re ready to try it?”

“Yeah.”

“So, do you believe you’re ready to try it?”

“I just said so.”

“No you didn’t.”

“Yes, I did. If you’re trying to bait me and win another 5,000 favors it will take more effort than that.”

“Are you sure you just said ‘yeah’, you don’t think you could be wrong?”

“I know, I just said it.”

“Well, guess what, you are wrong. 246, you said ‘yeah’ three days ago. Right after you said ‘yeah,’ we froze your existence, pulled you out of the Afterlife, put you in a clone body in our universe, and revived you. We could have done it much faster but we were super, super careful and extra, extra cautious. So, what do you think?”

“I think I’m supposed to say, ‘you’re kidding’ but I don’t think you would be.”

“No, I’m not. Do you want to try out your new body?”

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“You shouldn’t notice any difference, just get up.”

“This is absolutely amazing! You’re right, I don’t notice any difference.”

“You’re not supposed to, which shows that we did it right. But here, drink this.”

“Oooh. I’d forgotten what it was like to swallow something, and have it flow into my stomach. Hmmm.”

“Well, remember, now you will feel hunger pains, so you’ll have to eat every day.”

“Eating is something I’m not likely to forget, I was sometimes overweight on earth in my first life. But I’m going to try very hard to avoid overeating, I’d like to enjoy the time I’m going to spend here.”

“I know all about being overweight, I had the same problem. Well, anyway, here’s your chance if you want it.”

“Chance for what?”

“Well, on several occasions you’ve mentioned I’ve insulted you enough that you could legally slap me. Well, now you have the opportunity, I’m actually here in person.”

“George, my friend, how about I give you a hug instead?”

Chapter 121

“We decided to have a little celebration...”

“Where are we, anyway?”

“This is near Panus in Chevy Chase County. In your world it’s called Kissimmee-St. Cloud, in Florida. We’re on the campus of East Coast University, an institution that has no equal to your world. But I think there is something you’re going to want to see a whole lot more. I’ll take you around the neighborhood a bit, then I’m going to show you something.

“If you look out the window this is just the typical university campus, nothing special. They leave and walk over to another building. They go up in the elevator and get out, then walk over to a conference room.

The secretary looks at them, “They’re expecting you, go right in.”

They do. “SURPRISE!”

More than 50 people are there. “We decided to have a little celebration in honor of your coming over to our world, so I’ll introduce you to some of them. First, this group over here, you know them, the other members of the board. Now, here’s a few you haven’t met. Dr. Waters, Dr. Towers, they were on the committee that approved my doctorate. Dr. Wilson, the one who publicly pretends to be Hugo’s enemy. You’ll get to meet these people over here privately later, they’re some of the people who were ‘killed’ trying to allow us learn how to reincarnate people into a clone. These are the technical support people who brought you back from the Afterlife, and there are a few other people we’ve sworn to secrecy because we want to invite them into our organization but they aren’t sure whether they want to. And Rheta, my secretary, she wanted to meet you too. So, what I want you to do is give a little speech for us, tell everyone here about yourself, what you have been doing, and what it’s like where you’re from. You have my permission to tell anything about anything, no restrictions, say anything you want. I think all you have to do is tell the truth, it’s probably more fascinating than anything I could tell them about where you’re from. So introduce yourself, then go ahead.”

Chapter 122

“...anyone can do anything they please...”

“My name is Supervisor 246. I was dead until a few days ago. I am the Administrator of what, for lack of a better term, is the largest whorehouse in the world. I have more than 200,000 people who are interested in only one thing. Screwing everyone who dies. They’re all there because they’re very horny and they like to have fun sex with the people who show up. They’re divided up about half men and half women, and basically when one of you dies, if you’re tied into my world, you come into it and one of them sees you, picks you, and goes out to meet you.

“They will take you back to their apartment and show you a video explaining what has happened to you. After they answer your questions, they’ll hit on you. They’ll ask you if you want to have sex. They will be very attractive to you and try very hard to convince you that it’s okay and you’re allowed to do so. They will then, if you agree, take you to bed and give you the wildest hot sex you have ever had. If you think you have had good sex now, you cannot even believe how good it is once you get there.

“If you’re a man, when you come you don’t get soft, so you can fuck for days on end and come over and over again for as long as the woman will let you have sex with her. And she’s going to enjoy it even more than you do.

“If you’re a woman, the amount of pleasure you get from sex is about ten times as good as it is right now. You also can respond to sex much faster, you will always come from intercourse, and a man generally won’t have sex with you unless you have said okay, because he can’t climax unless you let him. You alone get to decide when he comes and how often. You can be nasty and give him an orgasm the second he gets inside you. You can make him pound on you for five hours. You can give him ten orgasms in a row if you want.

“In the world I come from there was a movie called ‘The Matrix’ that tells of a world in which everyone has been convinced the world around them is real, but in actuality they are in a pod being fed information into their brain to make them think the world is real. They’re seeing a computer-generated world to cause them to stay contented and docile. Well, our world of the Afterlife is the same thing, it really is a computer-generated world. And everyone there knows that it is. Which means people know that we can change the world and do things in it if they want to. So we have a lot of gee-whiz technology you can’t duplicate here on earth, things like teleporters from *Star Trek*, people can shoot at someone and the bullets effectively bounce off, just like in *Superman*, and so many other things.

“Since we’re dead and the world we’re in is virtual, it means that there are no diseases there. Colds, AIDS, cancer, the flu, venereal diseases, they all stay here on earth. That means you don’t get sick. It also means you can have sex with someone without using a condom and there is no risk at all, not even pregnancy. Also, you don’t have to eat, or drink, or go to the bathroom. You don’t have to sleep. Oh, and one year on earth is the equivalent of three years there, so the pace of life is a whole lot slower. We’ve got all eternity to do anything, and life runs at 1/3 the speed of earth, so if we want to take time to do something we just do it.

“When you get to my world, if you do accept the offer to have sex with the Welcomer who picks you, you can take as much time as you want with them, whether it’s a day, a week, a month or longer, until one or both of you gets tired of the other. Then, if you’re still interested in having

sex, you can go find someone else and start over with them. Or you can go out into the real world and start meeting people. And maybe you might go home with one of them. Or you can come back to the Welcoming Department any time you want and someone will be more than happy to take you to bed again.

“A lot of people have a lot of sex a lot of the time. But it’s not the only thing you can do there.

“Virtually every book and every movie ever made that was released on video is there. That is, every movie from the earth I was born in, I don’t know how many you guys get that have no equivalent there.

“You don’t have to do anything, you can spend decades enjoying all the things that are there. But a lot of people just have to have something to do. Well, you can either see if there is something you think should be done, and start doing it, or you can visit the employment office and see what someone needs someone to do, and if you think it would be fun and you can do it, then you can ask for the job. The reason I say, ‘if you think it would be fun’ is because you don’t get paid anything. We don’t have any money there. Because it’s all virtual, you can create anything there simply by thinking about it. So if you want something, if you know how you can make it by thinking about it, or get someone else to.

“But one thing we do is get people to do things. How we do that is to trade favors. I do something for you, you owe me some favors for doing it. Or the other way around. We also have privileges. It was one of the ways we thought of as a way to get people to do things. In exchange for doing work, they got certain privileges.

”We don’t have kids there, we felt they would be exploited. Women cannot get pregnant there, everyone who is there got there by dying. So basically, what the Afterlife is, is the biggest amusement park in the world for adults. There is something there for everyone.

“And if you don’t like the world as it is, you can go out to the Frontier where there is no law but the law of the jungle and live as people do here on earth. The only thing you’re required to do there is keep any promises you make voluntarily. Other than that, you can do anything you please to anyone else out there as long as they’re not traveling on the main road. Have fights with artillery, commit vicious rapes, do anything you please, and anyone can do anything they please to you. Or stay in the city where you have to behave, and do all sorts of fun things.

“And if you don’t like either of those two choices, you can choose to do the equivalent of committing suicide. You can go to the recycling center, lose all your memories, and come back to earth to be born over as a baby again.”

“So there is basically almost anything you can think of if you want to do or try something, the whole idea is to have fun and enjoy yourself. For as long as you want. Thank you very much.”

They all applaud.

Chapter 123

“Do you really expect us to believe that crap you just told us?”

Some of the people come up to say hello to 246, who is sitting at a table, eating a piece of cake. ^{xxi} Some come up to get his autograph, some just to say hello. A few stop to ask questions. One, in particular, wants to ask several. “Do you mind if I ask you some questions?”

“Not at all. Have a seat.”

“Do you really expect us to believe that crap you just told us?”

“No, sir, I don’t expect anything. George asked me to tell the truth about where I’m from, and I gave an off-the-cuff speech about what it’s like there. Whether you choose to believe it is your business, not mine.”

“And do you really believe that yourself?”

“I don’t have to believe it. It’s real where I come from, as real as I can tell, so I go along with what I experience.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“This room around us. How do you know this is real? For all I know, George could have set this whole thing up just to make me think he brought me out of the Afterlife. The place I went to after I died is real enough that if they hadn’t told me it’s a computer simulation, I would never have known. For all I know, this could be another one. Or it might be real. Are you real? How do you know you haven’t died at some point and someone grabbed you and brought you here, but you don’t have the memories of what happened before you got here? Or have you considered the possibility that this whole world - including you and me - is the figment of someone’s imagination?”

“Huh?”

“There is a book in my world called *Number of the Beast* by Robert A. Heinlein. Have you ever heard of it?”

“No.”

“Well, in that book, what the characters discover is that it is possible to cross over into other universes, same as I have apparently been able to do. And the reason those other universes exist is that someone wrote a story where the things described in those universes actually happened. Once they wrote the story, the universe existed with a past and a future. So this universe, with you, and George, and everyone else, might actually be a story that someone wrote. The universe I came from might be a book in the same or another story. And the universe that they wrote this or both stories in might be one or more stories in yet another universe, and so on ad-infinitum.”

“That’s crazy.”

“Is it any crazier than the belief by some people that some old man with a white beard created the universe simply by mouthing some words, then sending his son to die in order to save people from either annihilation or endless torture, a belief held by about 90% of the populace of the United States and about 70% of the world? Or that the one and only God sent His Prophet (peace be upon Him) to tell His story, something about another 20% of the world believes in?”

“But a belief in God is quite reasonable!”

“Is it? Show him to me, I’d like to meet him. I’ve been wanting to meet him for some time

now.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

“Why is it ridiculous? You said it was reasonable to believe in God. Fine. What’s your reason for believing, that is, what is your logical premise, the conclusions that make it possible for you to believe?”

“Well, simply enough, the world, it’s too logical and organized to be random chance, the connections are simply too obvious and real to be here simply by random accident.”

“Okay, granting that, you say that someone caused that to happen, correct?”

“Yes.”

“How did she get here?”

“She who?”

“The woman who created all this.”

“God is not a woman.”

“Why not? Why do you propose that God is male? Did you shower with him sometime and saw his sex organs?”

“This is too weird.”

“Why? If God has either male or female attributes it is usually because he or she has sex organs as we know of them. Does God have sex? If so, is it with a man, or a woman, or both, and is he or she heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, or something else, and what type of person does he or she find attractive?”

“I think this conversation is getting into blasphemy in some manner.”

“Why? You claim to know that there is a God that is running this universe. I’m asking you what he or she is like, and how you know. You are the one who is making the claim, I’m simply asking you for answers.”

“You know, it’s atheists like you that have ruined the good things in society by pulling religion away from people and turning the world into some Godless mess.”

“Who said I was an atheist? I have neither opposed your idea of God, nor have I mocked it, nor have I supported it. I simply asked you to explain how you know what you know about Him or Her. If I had never seen a strawberry, would I be anti-strawberry simply because I asked you to describe what color it is, what it looks like, how it grows, or anything else you might know about strawberries?”

“But strawberries are real!”

“Therefore God isn’t real?”

“That’s not what I said.”

“Well, what are you saying? You claim to believe, if I understand you correctly, that there is a God who is running this world. You can’t tell me anything about Him or Her other than that you don’t think It’s a woman, you don’t know what He looks like, don’t know if He has sex organs, don’t know if He has sex, but despite the fact you know nothing, err, excuse me, despite the fact you know none of these things, you proceed to tell me as if it were a matter of fact that God is a man, and that He created this world, but that you do not know how He got here.”

“You should not mock God in such a fashion.”

“Why? Why is my asking questions in some way ‘mocking’ God? If I were to ask you questions about Him that you could go to the Bible and look them up, I do not believe that you would be saying I was mocking Him, but as soon as I ask questions that you can’t answer, you

presume to declare what I am asking to be an unacceptable question. Let me ask you this, the Bible claims that people are sinful as a result of Adam eating the apple. Did God do anything to fix this, perhaps send someone to atone for it?"

"Yes, he sent his only begotten son to pay the penalty for our sins."

"So you believe that we are responsible for a sin committed by our ancestors?"

"We are the product of sin."

"Meaning we had no choice in the matter?"

"We have free will."

"Meaning we have the ability to choose never to have sinned?"

"No, we all have sinned."

"Then we don't have free will?"

"Yes we do, we can choose not to commit sins."

"But if we can choose not to commit sins, then why can't we choose never to have committed them in the first place?"

"We have a tendency to be sinful."

"Do we have the ability to resist that tendency?"

"No, it is part of our nature."

"So we have no free will to resist the tendency to commit sins?"

"No, we still have free will."

"One of my favorite writers said it exactly: a free will with a tendency to commit sin is like playing craps with loaded dice. You're being held responsible for the outcome but you have no power to change it. How can we have free will if there is a tendency to commit sin?"

"We can choose whether or not we will sin."

"Okay, let me try another tack. Do you believe God is omniscient, that is, he knows everything about you from the instant you were born until the moment you die, and knows all this before you were born?" George smiled when he heard this, he knew what was coming; he almost felt sorry for what the man was going to go through when 246 got finished with him.

The man responded as if it was obvious. "Yes, of course."

"Therefore you do not have any power to change anything that will happen in your life because God already knows what you have and will do?"

"We have free will, we can change what we are doing, it's just that God knows what we will choose."

"Meaning that no matter what we choose, God already knows what it will be?"

"Yes."

"Therefore we have no power to make a choice that God doesn't already know about?"

"We have free will, God doesn't make us do anything."

"I never said He or She did, all I said was that God already knows in advance what we are going to do, correct?"

"Yes."

"Therefore we can't change what we are going to do because God already knows what it is before we've even done it?"

"For someone who claims not to be an atheist, you seem to be awfully hostile toward God."

"I'm not hostile to God. I'm simply trying to find out, from people like you who claim to know what He or She is, what God is. If my asking questions is being hostile, maybe it's because

your belief in God is very weak, and because you cannot sustain what you believe in, you choose to ignore or oppose such questions because you do not want to face up to the contradictions in your beliefs.”

“Can I ask you what you believe in?”

246 smiled at him, thinking of a line from one of the *Star Trek* movies. “You may ask.”

“What do you believe in?”

“I don’t know.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“Yes it is. I’m an agnostic. I can’t accept either answer. I can’t believe that the universe is run by some old man turning the crank because nobody can tell me how he got here. I can’t believe the universe just created itself out of nothingness, turns the crank itself because it’s like a self-winding watch, and it simply created the order in this world out of nothing because nobody can tell me what caused it. I could accept an eternal and uncreated universe except you still can’t show why there are many things that are orderly and do work in a universe without any controlling order. And if you claim there is a controlling order, you haven’t shown where it came from. Those that claim there is a God who created everything can’t explain where he came from. Those who claim there is No God who didn’t create everything can’t explain why there is order in a universe of chaos. So my answer to the question, ‘How did the universe get here?’ my answer is, ‘I don’t know’.”

“And you believe you died and came back?”

“Yes I do.”

“And what is your *premise* for believing it, as you like to put it?”

“Many years ago, I was alive. One day I was driving along when I fell asleep at the wheel of my automobile. I crossed the median strip, bounced into the wrong lanes, and crashed into the embankment at 65 miles per hour. I was not wearing a seat belt and was impaled into the steering column, which collapsed my lungs and I passed out, suffocated to death and died. I went through the whole *Tunnel of Light* scenario, then came to in another place where someone came out to meet me, talked me into having sex with her, then after I left her I went into that society and became a part of it, worked in it for many years, until I quit my job, then talked George into giving me the privilege of coming back to life on vacation as the terms for me to go back to work, he and his staff figured out how, and here I am.”

“How do you know that is true, that it isn’t all some illusion, as you put it?”

“I don’t. But I take it this way. All I have are my senses. I have to rely on them until such time as they are shown to me to be wrong. Because I have nothing else with which to guide me. Does not mean that they are wrong, just means I have no choice because I can’t live as if nothing means anything. Well, I mean I can’t exist as if nothing means anything actually, since I’ve only been alive for one day so far.”

“How old are you?”

“Now I understand what George meant when someone asked him once, so I’ll use the same reply. That’s a complicated question.”

“How is it complicated?”

“Do I count from when I was reincarnated, the time I was alive in my previous life, the time I’ve been dead, and if I count the time I was dead, do I count the subjective time or the actual time on earth? Do I count all of the times I was alive - and dead - before that?”

“You were alive before?”

“Yes. I looked it up. I’ve been alive at least a dozen times before. Like the last few times I was alive, in one I was a German infantryman in World War I and died on the battlefield. Later I was a Japanese flamethrower operator in World War II until I got shot in the tank and it exploded. I figured it out that since neither one of those countries had options for having sex after you died, I went back to earth almost immediately in both cases. Other than that I have never looked at much of the content of my previous lives because frankly, I’m afraid that whatever personality I had back then might be stronger than mine is now and might decide to take over. I figure I’ve got possession of my body, if he - and they all were ‘he’ before - wanted it that bad he should never have gone under the knife and gone back to earth to be born again. On the other hand, what is left might simply be memories and I might find out that the same personality I have now was the one back then, I just don’t remember. I’ve decided I don’t want to know because I don’t want to lose my existence if I am wrong.”

“Lose your existence?”

“Yes. Have you ever heard of people with multiple personality disorder?”

“Yes.”

“Well, what I’ve heard is that there is a ‘dominant’ personality that fractures. The other personalities take over from time to time and the dominant personality has blackouts during that period. The other personalities often know they are not dominant and are able to watch when the dominant one is in control. So I’m afraid that if I allow whatever I was before to come back, that it might take over. Now, if I knew I was not the dominant personality I wouldn’t worry and I might not mind letting someone else drive for a while, but I don’t want to find out if that isn’t the case. Or maybe never find out if it never lets me come back.”

“So can’t you give some number? From the prior time you were born, until you showed up here, how long has it been to you?”

“Let’s see. I was 35 when I died. I’ve been dead for about 55 standard years, which is a little over 165 calendar years, so I’d say I’ve had about 200 years of experiences since I was originally born.”

Chapter 124

“A lot of people just ain’t very happy about what happened.”

“You look like you’re about 25.”

“This is a clone body.”

“Cloning is a myth. We don’t know how to clone people.”

“Then I guess I don’t exist. Thank you for not speaking to me then.”

“Are you dismissing me?”

“No, I gathered *you* were dismissing *me*. I am in what I think is a body. It was not the one I was born in. I am told it was created by cloning. If that is not possible then everything I think I have seen or heard from the instant I came here, and maybe even from the moment I believe I died - including this conversation - is a hallucination of some kind. Or is that ‘an hallucination?’ In any case, either I’m really here, in which case I’m sitting inside a clone body, or I’m not really here, in which case this whole discussion is moot.”

George decides to break up the conversation, politely, possibly before someone else breaks up the conversation, impolitely, say, with a fist fight. “What did I tell you, he’s really something, isn’t he?”

“I am amazed. I’ve met a lot of people, but most can’t define their own beliefs that strongly. I don’t agree with him but I have to respect that he’s given a great deal of thought as to what he believes in. Well, it’s nice meeting you, Supervisor.”

“Nice meeting you too.” The man leaves. “George, is he one of those you’ve captured yet?”

“No.”

“Let me know if you ever do, I’d love to see the look on his face when he finds out I was right and he was wrong. And when he finds out who I am. If he does, that is.”

“Uh huh.”

“I’ve kind of wondered why you decided to capture everyone in our world and why we simply accept everyone, good or bad.”

“Where do you draw the line? Then we have to put in all sorts of rules and exceptions and then we have to make value judgements over this person is good enough, but this one isn’t, and do we punish someone on top of whatever they were punished on earth? I figure if someone is bad enough, so many people will so hate him or her that they will beat the shit out of them all the time or they’ll decide to be recycled and they’re out of our hair. You heard what happened to Stalin when he got here?”

“Yeah, fun lovin’ Joe boy didn’t think it was so much fun when he was suffering continuous beatings at the hands of several thousand of the people he had tortured or killed. I think that went on for three or four years before the Russian police decided he’d had enough and so graciously offered to escort him to the recycling center. I think the Chinese are still beating up Chairman Mao, going on since before I died. But he had a lot more people killed, too. And they’d still be beating up Hitler now if he hadn’t been smuggled off. A lot of people just ain’t very happy about what happened.”

“That’s kind of an understatement.”

246 Smiled. “Well, you know me, George, I’ve always been fond of understating things.”

Chapter 125

“...you prefer being dead, it’s more fun...”

“So, what did you think of the party?”

“I thought it was very nice. You could have warned me that I would have to give a speech, I could have prepared myself better.”

“I wanted it to be spontaneous, most of the people here know you and your opinions, they just wanted to meet you in person and I told them they would hear an unrehearsed speech from you. It’s part of something I wanted you to see, as well as something I’m going to let you know, part of which relates to things you’ve wondered about once you started thinking about the world you had died into.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah. Now, something important. I’m going to let you see and find out a few things that very few people know about. You’ll be the only one actually in the Afterlife who knows about this, and I want it kept that way. I’ll let you know when we get to the place I want to show you about.”

“You have my solemn promise not to tell anyone about it unless I know you’ve said they’re allowed to know, is that okay?”

“That’s exactly perfect.”

“So we understand each other, had I known before what you are planning to tell me, I could have mentioned it here, correct?”

“That’s exactly why I didn’t want you to know this until after the party.”

“Okay, then.”

“Well, we’ll have to do some traveling later on but in the mean time I’d like you to get to see a little of my world.”

“Okay. So I can discuss this with you in such a way that others won’t know what we’re referring to, do you want to make up a code word for whatever it is we’ll be seeing or do I?”

“Well, you don’t know what it is, so I’ll think of a term. Hmm, ahh, I have it. When I need to refer to what I’m going to show you, I’ll mention the ‘Afterlife Assurance Company’.”

“Life Assurance, now that’s cute. I do believe some of my sense of humor is rubbing off on you.”

“Perhaps it is. Anyway, we’re having a small dinner party later at my house, just a few friends. In the mean time I need to get you situated. Let’s go back over to my office.”

They arrive, and George says, “This is something extra I wanted you to see because you’re one of the few people I can trust to know this. I’ll show you something only 5 people in the world know about, and two of them don’t even remember any more. Sit at my desk but don’t touch anything. Watch.” He pressed a control on the side and a panel opened. “Take a look at the controls.”

“Cute, real cute. None of these do what they say they do, I’ll bet.”

“You have it right. But watch this.” He moves a file cabinet out of the way.

“A hidden ladder, leading into the basement.”

“Exactly. The architectural drawings for this area were carefully done to conceal this space as if it was a load-bearing region. So nobody knows about it, that is, nobody who isn’t a Zombie. You’re being given special permission because I know you keep your mouth shut.”

“Am I going to have to sign a check for a hundred dollars?”

“No, basically that was a scheme we used to qualify the people who came into our system. I know I can trust you, but fact is, you’re not going to stay, you prefer being dead, it’s more fun, so it’s probably not worth taking the time to have you learn AnSym since you can’t really use it, because you already have all the benefits of a virtual world where you came from, so it’s not going to give you a whole lot of advantages. Besides that, I’m not sure we want this technology even potentially leaking over into your world yet, I don’t know if your world is ready for it or not.”

“Good point.”

“And yes, in the real world I can read minds. Hugo taught me and Lynn. See, I know what you’re thinking, just like you can do back in the Afterlife. You’re worried a little about how we’re supporting its operation and whether we might decide to terminate the experiment. I didn’t want to tell you while you were in there about what’s going on, but you’ll find out why we won’t, okay?”

“Oh, okay.”

“Well, anyway, I’ll put everything back the way it was and we’ll go.”

Later, outside the building, they approach a car. “Here, take these,” George says, tossing 246 the keys.

“Thanks.” They get in and 246 drives off. “I’ll tell you how to get there. Take this turn off here.” He does and after a few minutes they arrive.

Chapter 126

“I don’t think I believe in much of anything.”

“Here we are.”

“You have a nice place.”

“Thank you, but you need to tell Lynn, she’s the one that spent all the time and money on it. Let’s go in.”

“246, it’s so wonderful to see you!” She gives him a big hug.

“Well, you’ve seen me lots of times.”

“You know what I mean. In person, silly!”

“Yes. It is nice to finally get to meet you quote in the flesh, so to speak. You’re actually quite a bit more attractive in person than I thought you would be.”

“I’ll bet you say that to every woman you meet.”

“Not particularly. Mostly I tell the women in the Afterlife that I find interesting how much I want to go to bed with them, because I’m in a hurry and only have all eternity.”

“That’s funny. Anyway, dinner will be ready in half an hour, I’m sure that both of you have a lot to talk about, I’ve got to finish.” She leaves.

“George, you’re indeed a lucky man.”

“Tell me about it. What we’ve done - what we all have done - between what Hugo started and what I was able to find people to do, sometimes it just frightens me in terms of what all of us have accomplished.”

“Maybe it was supposed to happen. At some point, perhaps, the universe, or rather the universes, had to figure out a means to conserve all that exists and thus the method to do so was developed as a result. And your group just happened to be the lucky ones to do so.”

“246, don’t tell me you believe in fate.”

“I don’t think I believe in much of anything. But you have two basic contradictions in the universe, each solves the problem of the other but they still point out their own contradiction as a result. Maybe that’s not exactly right but you know the issue, it’s what I told that guy back at the party. If you believe the universe was created, who did that; if you believe the universe wasn’t created, how did it get here? I have a good answer and I sometimes thought about presenting it but most people don’t want to have their religion challenged. I mean, you’ve seen it when I’ve gotten into a discussion with people about how you can have free will or you can have an omniscient God who knows everything, but you cannot have both at the same time, and no matter how clear you make it they still don’t get it.”

“It is quite amusing. I smiled when I heard you do it today, I was thinking that it was probably going to tick him off when you did it.”

“It’s almost as bad as when I point out that atheism is a type of religion, they generally don’t like it either. Most people just want to keep their nice little prejudices of whatever God or No God they believe in and don’t want to hear evidence to the contrary.”

“I think someone once said, ‘most people are idiots’.”

“I disagree.”

“Oh really? What’s your opinion?”

“I’d say they were overestimating capacity. Too many people - including myself, sometimes - don’t even come up to that standard.”

At that point the doorbell rang. "Come in."

Dr. Diane McCloud walked in. "246! How are you!"

"Diane, it's wonderful to see you." He kisses her.

"246, I really expected better than that!" She turns to George, "I mean, I tell this guy I want him to fuck my brains out, and more, after I die, and all he can do is this lukewarm little kiss.

Maybe I should change my mind."

"Diane, in the Afterlife I'd have read your mind and figured out how you wanted it. I don't have that capability now, so I go with something not very strong, then if I find you're more interested, I'll go from there. Like this!" He kisses her again, considerably more passionately.

"Whoa! That's more like it!"

"I'm kind of handicapped by not being able to do all the things I would do in the Afterlife, but at least I can kiss passionately if nothing else."

She whispers in his ear. "Oh I can think of a few things. 246, I'm going to see you later in your room, first I'm going to be playing backgammon against Lynn so I'll see you after that. I want you to be excited before I get there."

"Okay."

Chapter 127

“She gets to have you later.”

“So anyway, that was a wonderful dinner.”

“Thank you. Anyway, Diane and I will be playing backgammon, so you might want to catch some TV in your room, see how things differ here with your world.”

“All right, sounds like a good idea.”

Diane leans over and whispers in his ear. “After maybe a half hour or so, be naked under the covers so we can get busy. If you understand, nod your head.” He does so.

George shows 246 where his room is, and how to use the remote control. “I don’t want you to think I’m being patronizing, but I don’t know what you have as far as TV remotes there, so I don’t know if you’d understand this one.”

“It’s all right George, I appreciate the offer. It’s more-or-less the same, so I think I can manage.”

“Okay then, I’ll see you later.”

246 gets undressed right away anyway, then watches a number of TV shows, and discovers that many of the stories don’t make much sense because he doesn’t have references to the local culture and history to know the context of some of the local events. A little while later, she opens the door, reaches in, turns the light off, and walks over to the bed. She picks up the remote and turns off the TV. In the semi-darkness he can see her taking her clothes off, then pulls up the sheet, and slides into bed. He reaches for her, then is slightly taken aback.

“Lynn?”

“Yes.”

“Uh, this may be kind of stupid, but where’s Diane?”

“Three guesses.”

“With George.”

“Yes. We’re discreet about what we do because while it’s probably quite common, people are hypocrites and look down on it while often doing the same thing. Actually we both wanted to be your first time so I suggested a game and the one who won would get to have you first. She gets to have you later.”

“You’re trembling. Lynn, are you scared?”

“I don’t think so. I’m really excited. I figured this would probably happen once I died, but I wasn’t sure if it would happen here. Well, there is one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“I don’t know how you are, while I do like sex, I don’t like being pounded hard.”

“Oh. Okay.”

With that, 246 begins to work on Lynn. “Oh damn.”

“What’s wrong?”

“I’ve gotten so used to reading a woman’s mind to find out what she wants and whether she wants to tell me or wants me to figure it out that I’ve gotten used to hearing it in my head. So this may sound stupid, but do you want me to try to guess from your reactions or do you want to tell me?”

“You go ahead, if you do something I don’t like I’ll tell you.”

So, again, 246 begins working downward on her body, kissing her all over and touching her in places. Then he begins to kiss her passionately as he feels below. Then he stops. "Oh, why'd you stop?"

"You're not wet enough yet. I probably have to get you more excited before I finger you."
"Nice."

246 continues his various activities on her, then proceeds to go down on her. "Oh my, you're pretty good at this. George does it really good too, but I had to teach him how. A lot of guys give lousy head."

He stopped and looked up for a moment. "They do it so they can get the woman to do it to them. So they don't really care about doing it well, it's just a chore they do because it's what they have to do to get something they want. It's a whole lot easier to do a good job at it if you consider it something to do as part of the whole experience, and because you care about her."

"Oh." So 246 continues where he left off.

"Oh, oh, oh, oh I can't stand it, go ahead."

"You said you don't like being pounded hard, so you want me to be easy?"

"Just do it any way you like as long as you're not really rough, it's okay, but I can't wait any longer."

246 moved forward, put his hands between her legs and spread them, but not much since she was already doing so even as he touched her thighs, then he climbed on top of her, felt for her opening, then moved to get himself in position and wet his cock, then firmly slid inside her, kissed her on the lips, and began moving in and out of her. With his very first stroke into her, she moved to meet him and also kept moving as he did the same. They continued this for a few minutes until he came and spurted into her.

"Uh, I forgot."

"Forgot what?"

"I forgot, I get soft after sex now. It's funny to have that happen after so many years."

"Well, there are a few things we can do until you get hard again, okay?"

"Okay."

So they did until he did and could, and this time he moved at a slower pace, taking a bit longer before he 'poured the pork' into Lynn again.

"246, I was thinking about doing it again, but I promised Diane I'd leave something for her tonight. So I'm going to leave for now."

"Lynn, you've been wonderful."

"Thank you. You're pretty good too. Why don't you go into Diane's room, it's the next one on the right."

"Okay." He gets up, leaves, and walks into the other room where Diane is waiting. He gets into bed with her, and finds her naked to the touch. "Hmm, you smell terrific."

"Thank you." She isn't able to say much else because he smothers her with kisses. He works around her head to various sounds of encouragement. Then he works down her body. After some time doing this, he moves back up but continues to use his hands to stimulate her. Then he begins very intensive stimulation of her G spot and slight stimulation of her clit. "Uh, 246, you need to get a condom out of the drawer there."

"Really, you're not using contraception? I wouldn't have thought of it. Maybe I should have stuck with Lynn. We didn't use anything."

“Lynn has a diaphragm.”

“Well, okay. Hold on a second while I get one out of the...”

“246, I was just kidding. I have contraception too. And I know how to use it, as I am now. I just wanted to see if you’d complain.”

“If it wasn’t for the fact you’re one of the women on my list of women I really want to fuck I probably would have, but if I have to, for women I really want, I’ll do it.”

“Oh. Well, let’s do it then.”

Again, 246 slips between the legs of a very receptive woman, slides into her and kisses her, then begins moving inside her. Feeling her lips part, he begins tonguing her in time with his thrusts. She moans a bit as he continues. She breaks the embrace, then says to him, “pound me a little harder.” So he does so, and she moans again. As he reaches the home stretch, he moves rather quickly, then climaxes into her.

“246?”

“Yes?”

“Let’s fool around for a while until you get hard again, then I want to get on top.”

“Fine by me.”

This practice continues for some time until he is able again. She sees that he is, so she climbs on top and begins sliding him in and out. He lays back watching her for a moment or two until she puts her hands on his ass and pulls. Not needing a second hint, he begins moving up and down under her as she is moving up and down on him. The last few seconds before he comes, he moves up and stays, then spurts into her again.

Chapter 128

"I don't want to wear this body out before the warranty expires..."

"Diane, roll over on your stomach, I want to try something."

She does. "Uh, 246, if you're going to stick it in my ass, be sure you get the lube out of the drawer over there."

He climbs on top of her. "Ah, no, I just wanted to give you a backrub. You've been very nice." He begins doing so.

"Thank you. You're not half bad yourself. I'm surprised you'd bother."

"Well, I wanted to show you that I'm not the type that, once he's had a woman he doesn't care about her. Besides, there's a more important reason."

"Which is - oh do that again, that really feels good - which is what?"

"While it's nice to find new women every now and then, I do want to have multiple chances at women I've been with before. So, in order to get a woman to be interested in seeing me again, I have to make sure she knows that I will give her a good time both before and after sex."

"I see. So this is just a prelude to get me interested so you can fuck me again. Okay, I'm interested."

"No, no, not at all. I mean, if you were to tell me we weren't ever going to have sex again, I'd still do this for you. Well, I mean, you've already told me you want me to love you back into the world when you die, but you know what I mean."

"Yeah."

"I think long term. So, let's say you were just some nice lady who wanted to meet me and make love, but I didn't know you otherwise. So maybe you've decided that you just wanted some sex this time and that's it. Well, maybe you'll change your mind later. But, even if you didn't, chances are you will talk to your girlfriends, and tell them about me. So even if I can't have you again, if I do treat you right you'll probably mention me to some other woman who will let me have her. And probably more than once."

"Oh. Oh, that is good, do that spot again."

"Besides, I think maybe I should get a little rest. Four times in one night for a living man is a little much. Now, in the Afterlife this would be just the minimum, but considering this being the real world, I probably want to go a little slower. I don't want to wear this body out before the warranty expires, I've only had it one day."

"Oh, come on, 246, you know better than that."

"Yeah. Well, since you're 'interested', how about we do it doggie style? I'll lean on my knees and you can just rise up on yours."

"Okay!"

Using a finger and a thumb to pleasure her, he moves the other hand to various sites on her body to get her more excited. Softly she moans, "Uh, umm, go."

With a vigorous thrust he enters her deeply, then begins moving in and out of her. After a minute or so, he slows down and takes longer strokes. Then he starts moving a little faster, Then a little slower. After a few of these changes, she says, "Oh, right like that, I like it like that." So he resumes doing this until just before he finishes, then moves very fast and comes again.

"I think I'm going to act like the typical man and go to sleep after having sex. But I'll hold you

in my arms.” So they do.

The next morning 246 wakes up to find that Diane is no longer in bed with him. But Lynn is.

“Well, good morning.”

“Good morning, Lynn.”

“Let’s try again, last night was fun.”

“Not that I’m complaining, but between the two of you I’ve been having, at least for a human being, or rather, for a living man, what is probably a lot of sex for one day. I mean, this is a new body, do we know what the limits are?”

“Oh. Actually, well, part of the reason we’re doing this is we wanted to see if there would be a problem. Besides that, 246, are you aware that both Diane and me have the same mental powers as George?”

“Oh yeah, I’d forgotten.”

“So if you really needed it, we could give you the capacity to override your normal responses and be able to do a lot more than you normally could. We’re not doing that because, well, first of all we want to see what you can do, and frankly, we hadn’t asked you first. You know the general rules we have on using mind control or special powers on others?”

“Yeah, you only do it if there’s a potential problem or danger, or you get someone’s permission, either directly or by asking them in a way that they don’t suspect what you’re up to.”

“Right. But think about it for a moment. Look, what’s the worst that could happen?”

“Well, I could drop dead from a heart attack.”

“Your body is 25 years old, in prime condition, how likely is that, and even if it did, so what?”

“Oh yeah. I hadn’t thought about that.”

“The worst possible thing that could happen is that you have some kind of, thing, like a blood vessel or something in your head go ‘pop’ and you have a stroke. If that happens, we’ll just kill you, and if you still want to come back again, we try again with another body. But we haven’t had any such problems that I know of.”

“Oh. Okay.”

“But we also want to find out what your limits are. I mean, me and Diane are both very sexual, we know that, and if you can handle us then whatever anyone else does in the future probably won’t be any problem. We also had the possibility this could get ugly; this is all brand new. Like I said, you could have a stroke. Or, as you pointed out, you could have a heart attack. We can’t really be certain in this case. We’ve done this sort of thing before, directly, but we’ve never had someone who was in computer storage for decades be restored back into a human with all their memories intact. There could be any number of complications. We’re going to presume they won’t happen, and so, one of the things we want to do is try and stress you in various ways to see if there might be a problem.”

“That makes sense.”

“Well, let me try this. 246, of all the time you’ve been in the Afterlife, how many times have you slept alone, or really, I mean, how many days have you not had sex with a woman at least once that day?”

He laid there for a moment saying nothing. “Oh damn, I’m so used to querying the computer that I’ve gotten used to it. Come to think of it, I suppose it’s probably zero. I mean, you and Diane are good in bed, but compared with a lot of the women of the Afterlife you’re both a bit timid. Women there have no problem asking a guy straight out, or telling him what she wants

him to do. More than that, I'm proud to say that our male Welcomers allow women to learn that they are sexual beings, that there's nothing wrong in admitting they are, or in being willing to have sex if they find someone attractive and compatible."

"Well, if I'm so timid, then, come over here and fuck me."

"Oh. Okay." So he goes through all of the nice things he can think of for foreplay until she indicates she wants to be entered. "Lynn, do you want to do a different position or do you still want me to be on top?"

"That's sweet of you to ask. Right now I'll stick with it this way. I'm having fun and I'm enjoying this, and I want to make sure I... uh, rather I mean I want to make sure you're able to do this okay several times. Besides that, you're younger and in great physical condition, you can probably do this with a lot more uh, 'stamina' than I can. I'll probably want to try a few other positions later."

So 246 uses his 'stamina' to give the both of them some pleasure.

After they finish, Lynn suggests they get up, take a shower and eat breakfast.

Using a very large waffle iron, Lynn makes four enormous Belgian waffles with strawberry topping. She takes one, gives him one, then sits down next to him. "Syrup and butter are in the warmer over there. 246, can I get some serious answers out of you?"

"I don't think I've been anything but serious the whole time I've been alive."

"Okay, well, since you mentioned it, are the women there really that open about sex?"

"Yeah. One example, I have to have my calls screened because I get about 2,000 women a day who want to have sex with me. Once a month I have - for lack of a better term - an 'open audition' time where I let any woman have 50 seconds with me in an attempt to see if she can keep from coming that long. I get thousands of women who want to try. Hasn't happened yet. But they keep trying. I..."

George and Diane come in. Lynn looks over. "George, it's a good thing we don't keep secrets or hide things from each other. What you two have been up to is so obvious that it would be pointless for you to try to deny it. I'm just glad I'm not jealous any more. I made waffles, your favorite."

He comes over and kisses her. "Thank you, my love. For everything."

Diane comes over and sits next to 246, then leans over. "Kiss me, you fool!"

He does. "George, 246 is, if you can believe this, afraid we're going to wear him out. As much as he's had and he thinks having sex six times over two days is too much."

"Don't you usually have sex every day, if not more often than that?"

"Yes, but I don't have a real body to worry about."

"Years ago, I think it was Hugo, or it might have been TDR, told me that you can't really have sex too much, or more than your capacity, because your body simply won't let you. As long as you can have a response you're at or below your limit."

"And you have such a nice response!" Diane said.

"Diane, 246 says that compared to the women he knows, we're timid in comparison."

She stops eating, gets up, wipes her face and puts down her napkin. "Oh. In that case, let's go back and fuck." She takes 246's hand and pulls him. He gets up and follows her back to his room. They open the door to find the bed freshly made. She closes the door and they undress. They get under the covers and begin kissing passionately. He begins moving down her body, She stops him. "246, just go ahead and screw me, and do it any way you like, as hard or as soft,

or as fast or slow as you want.” She spreads her legs apart and opens her arms. He gets on top of her, enters her and begins stroking. She puts her hands on his ass and pulls him deeper, while beginning to move beneath him. He continues pounding on her for a few minutes until he comes, and they both stop.

“That was definitely different.”

“In what way?”

“You apparently really wanted me a lot.”

“I did. That was a thank you.”

“For what?”

“Do you remember, so many years ago, when I came to see you and asked you to take the case of that rapist and making sure he didn’t get away with it?”

“Oh yeah.”

“I wanted to see if I could offer something to thank you for what you did. This was it.”

“Oh, well, you’re welcome then.”

“Maybe you can tell me, I discovered that it’s more fun when I don’t move when a man is on top of me, but it’s more fun when we both move when I’m on top of a man. Any ideas?”

“Well, it could be positioning, perhaps one of them hits your, I mean, causes his penis to rub on your clitoris or G-spot more in one way than the other. Is it that it’s more pleasurable or that it is somewhat irritating?”

“It’s more pleasurable the other way. I mean, I’m not complaining, it’s still fun when I have sex and move with the guy on top of me, but it’s even more so when I don’t move.”

“Well, let me ask you this. Do you come during sex?”

“It’s not important.”

“Yes it is. And don’t lie to me, I’m seriously interested.”

“Okay. Sometimes I do and sometimes I don’t. It depends on a lot of things. Sometimes I don’t care, I’m just horny and want the feeling of a man inside me. Now, I didn’t just now, but it didn’t matter, I wanted to give you a thank you fuck in bed. And it still feels good even if I didn’t come. Now, you did great the last time I was on my back, and if I had let you eat me again I’m sure I would have come again. I mean, I came, and more than once, all three times we had sex before, so I’m not complaining. I figure if a guy is willing to make sure I get pleasure, either by fingering or eating me, I’m not that concerned if I don’t get to come during sex. That’s why I said it’s not important, I am coming, and fairly regularly, even if I don’t directly come during sex. That was the point I made, I can often come if I don’t move during sex when the guy is on top, but I hardly ever do if I move.”

“Well, what we can do is, after I’m able to do it again, I can try riding you high, and seeing if that makes it better for you.”

“How do you do that?”

“Basically the guy moves much higher up on your body than the usual position for sex, say 6 inches or more, then moves down from there. It tends to strike the clitoris or the G-spot more. Some women find it’s too intense, so I don’t use that unless she has problems or really wants to try it.”

“Oh that’s great, we’ll have to try that later, but I promised Lynn I wouldn’t monopolize you too much. Excuse me, I’m going to play ‘musical beds.’”

“Hmm, for some reason I think I should know what that means but I can’t think of why.”

“Well, what I’m going to do is go back and sleep with George again, and in the mean time Lynn wants to make out with you again.”

“So basically the two of you are swapping partners all day and night?”

“I guess you could say that. My husband says...”

“Uh, you’re married?”

“Yes. I’m not cheating on him, if that’s what you’re thinking. He knows what I was planning to do. As I was saying, My husband says he likes the arrangement because it gives him the opportunity to pick up hot 19-year-olds who like to date married men because there’s no commitment, just great sex. And he has me to come home to. So we can still love each other very much and don’t have to feel jealous. Plus, although he doesn’t know it yet because he’s not a zombie, if we ever decide life has become tedious because of illness or we’re in too much pain, we can go on to your world and experience some great stuff.”

“I see.”

“Anyway, Lynn wants another try at you and I don’t want George to feel too deprived. You’ve given me some great ideas I want to try on him. Actually I’m going to try your suggestion on him, then later I’ll come back and have you try it on me.”

“Okay.”

She leaves, and a few minutes later, Lynn comes in wearing a bathrobe. She drops the robe and gets into bed with 246. “Diane says you know a way that gives a woman more pleasure when she moves during sex?”

“Yeah, there’s something we can try.”

“Okay, let’s do some other things until you’re able again.” So they do, and after maybe an hour or so, he’s got an erection. He mounts her, then moves up very high. “Lynn, some women find this too intense, so if it’s too much, let me know and I’ll move lower down.”

“Okay.”

With that, 246 slides into Lynn. She gasps, then he begins moving in and out of her. She starts moving to match his strokes, and moans in pleasure with each stroke. Like Diane, she also grabs his ass. This continues for several minutes until, well, he’s finished as is the usual result.

“That was fantastic. I’ll have to get George to try that.” She gets up, picks up the bathrobe and leaves. A few minutes later Diane comes in, only naked, and slides into bed with 246.

“I don’t want to sound like I’m complaining, but I don’t think I’m capable of being a porn star or doing like one.”

“That’s what you think. George said they were careful to try to match your physical capacity with your libido. Anyway, Lynn says that you do some really marvelous soul kisses. And then I want to see how you are with the thing you did with Lynn.”

So they begin and she makes various noises indicating she finds the experience quite pleasurable. Over again the next hour or so he does various things to various spots on her body to return various responses, all of which give off indications that she is enjoying them. Once he gets hard, he decides not to even wait for her to tell him she wants it, he climbs on top of her, moves high, holds her face in his hands, kisses her, then plunges deeply into her. As he begins moving inside her, she moans, and slowly starts to move with him. Then she starts to move faster, and says to him, “Deeper. Longer strokes.” So he does, and she continues moving faster as he is giving her a very nice time. Unfortunately, after a few minutes, of course, as with any normal

man, he comes inside her, and gets soft, as expected.

She smiles. "That was great. My God it is so nice to be able to come while I'm moving! And that's on top of what you did to me before we fucked, which was pretty good. Now I know I have to get George to do that right away. And I thought he did very good before. She gets out of bed and leaves. Lynn comes in, and of course, slips into bed with 246..

"Uh, Lynn, I'm kind of curious, if you just finished with George, how is she going to have him do something right away?"

"Oh, well, uh, I told Diane I wouldn't be doing anything with George for a while so that she could try both of you right away with each other. So he's had plenty of time to recover. Anyway, let's get busy."

Meanwhile, Diane slinks into bed with George. "Do you think he suspects anything?" "No, we're both keeping him so busy that he doesn't have time to think about anything else except how to give us more pleasure. And man, does he know how! I mean, I first wanted to tease him, so I said to him that he'd need to wear a condom. He mentioned that he didn't use one with Lynn, and I said she has a diaphragm."

George laughed. "Now, that's really ironic."

"Yes, it was. I'm glad I do have contraception, it's a lot more fun when I don't have to worry about it. Anyway, while I'm still excited I want to try again. You did really good the last time, but I've got to show you what he did, it was fantastic. I'm so primed that we won't even need foreplay, just get on top and I'll show you. There, now, higher up, a little more. Aim that way. Move right there. Yeah, now, go ahead and pound on me, but make it long strokes."

So George slides into Diane and begins moving inside her as she begins moving back and forth in sync with him and making lots of noises. A few short minutes later, he also comes inside her.

"Oh yes, that was great, even better than the last time. I liked what you did before, but I still just couldn't quite come even though it was close. I'd never believe that a couple of inches distance could make that much of a difference. You know what, George?"

"No, what?"

"You and 246 are the only guys who were ever able to make me come during sex when I was moving under them. And you only did it right once I showed you how 246 did it. It's too bad Jack couldn't be here this weekend, that might have been something, to have 246, you and my husband do this to me and see who was the best. Although I don't think it really matters, this was damn good. No, actually, George, this was great, for the first time it's just as much fun to move during sex as it was when I stayed still. Well, when Jack gets back I'm going to have him do this. He told me he's sorry he couldn't be here to meet him, but if this deal goes through we could be looking at a couple million profit."

"That's a pretty good reason."

"George, how about if, next weekend we come by, and then we both try this with both of you, then I can see whether you or Jack is better at it, and maybe 246 can try some new things on me. And Lynn can see which of you is better. If it turns out Jack is, then maybe Lynn can show you better than I can and that way you'd be even better at it. How does that sound?"

"Okay, sure, as long as Lynn says it's okay."

She looked off for a moment. "George, I just flashed Lynn. She says that she'll give you a pass on me. We can have sex any time we want and you don't have to clear it with her. But if

you learn anything new from me, you have to do it to her so she can have fun too.”

“Oh. Okay.”

“You know, if we can find another woman who wants to meet 246 we could really play some serious musical beds, with three guys and three women, that would really be fun!”

“You know, if we get any woman as sexual as you or Lynn I think we’d need at least two more men, not an equal number. As it is I can barely keep up, and with 246 having to handle both of you, I think we really need more male attention around here.”

“If you can find a couple decent, nice guys I’d be willing to try them too.”

“Yeah, I’ll bet you would.”

“I have an idea about what I want to do.”

“Go ahead.”

“Well, if all three of you can be here next week, what I’ll do is have 246 do me while Lynn shows Jack how. Then while Jack is recovering, I’ll slip in with you and then finally I’ll have Jack do me and I can really see how good all three of you are. What do you think?”

“Well, if you can get the timing right I’ll bet you’ll have a lot of fun. So what do we do if 246 has to leave because, say, timing issues mean he has to leave in less than a week or can’t be here?”

“If 246 can’t be here, what I think we’ll do is have Lynn show Jack how to do this, and I can have you do me, we’ll do the whole thing the regular way with foreplay and everything but we’ll start a lot later after he does, then you can keep me wound tight until Lynn tells me he can get it up again, then we’ll swap and I’ll have him do me since he’ll have some experience how and I’ll bet it will be even more fun. I’m thinking I want to get him to do me right the first time so I can tell him he did. He can practice on Lynn and when he does me, he’ll be perfect. This is the first time in a long time I did sloppy seconds and it was really exciting. I’m thinking it might be even better with Jack this time. I mean, George, I love you but I’m in love with Jack. And it’s really funny to discover that I could have this sort of feeling in which I don’t have to worry about Jack running off with someone because I know he feels the same way about me. And we can still have fun and games like this with very close friends and not feel jealous or possessive.”

“I know how you feel, Lynn and I feel the same way about each other. And when Hugo first made us realize how much we were poisoned by jealousy and didn’t need to be, once we were aware we could - or at least I could - accept that the other could be involved with someone else and still know that she’d never leave me.”

“George, do you think that when you go see Hugo - well, his name isn’t Hugo any more, you know what I mean - and let him know what’s going on I could be there too? I know it’s probably going to be years from now but I’d like to tag along.”

“Sure. Let me guess, do I have the suspicion you want to get him to do this on you once we give him his memory back?”

“You know me too well. Especially since it will probably be on Pluto, that’s 1/3 gravity, that should be even more fun. You know, George, if it wasn’t for the fact I’m really excited by what we’re working on, and knowing what he did here, I’d be tempted to kill myself. I’m thinking if he can do what he does here, now, can you imagine what he’ll do to me when I die?”

“Well, I’m sure you’ll be able to handle it.”

“I’d be worried if I were you, though.”

“What do you mean?”

“He likes to treat his friends well. When you die he’s probably going to turn you over to some woman who’s even more sexual than me, and she’s really going to do a number on you. Just consider some woman who’s twice as horny as I am.”

“Well, I’ve got one advantage.”

“What’s that?”

“We can’t die twice.”

“True, but by the time whoever he throws you at gets finished, you’ll probably wish you could. What if he tosses you in with a woman who’s equipped with Endless Orgasm? Or what him and his team did to those thousands of Frontier rapists? I almost felt sorry for them. You know Wilfred, that guy you guys found that’s done all those amazing things with the computer system there?”

“Yeah, we really lucked out on him. 246 says that Wilfred might be even better than he is, and knowing how 246 thinks, that’s high praise indeed.”

“Can you imagine if 246 threw Wilfred’s main squeeze Terry at you? She doesn’t know who I am, but I’ve met her. I thought I was really sexual, but she makes me look like a nun.”

“I’m glad you pointed it out, I’ll be sure to ask whoever he gives me to make sure she doesn’t overload me.”

“Well, if you’re interested I’ve got an idea.”

“Okay.”

“The Administrator can pull anyone out of the queue if he wants to make the offer to Welcome them. And we as board members have override authority over him as much as the regular staff. So, if I die before you do, how about if I Welcome you? I’ll make sure you have regular, ordinary sex, only, of course, a lot better than what we have now, and give you a chance to be ready first. Or, if you want I’ll just tell him to make sure whichever woman he gives you to does that. Maybe you’d rather try whatever woman he picks first ahead of me. I mean - and I’m not going to be offended if you say you won’t, but - would you want to see me once we both die?”

“Why not? However I think I’d rather let one of the trained professionals show me what I have to do to please a woman there, it’s probably going to be different than here. Unless it’s because you want to be the one who pops my cherry there, just like you asked 246 to do it to you when you show up?”

“Oh, I see what you mean. No, actually I just didn’t want you to get too overloaded when you show up there, he might, because of an attempt to be nice to his friends, do too much to you.”

“Well, thank you, anyway, yes, I will come see you after both of us die. Maybe you can show me a few things then, too. I think Lynn will probably like it if 246 does her first too, what do you think?”

Diane looked off in the distance for a moment. “I just flashed Lynn, she agrees. I think that would be fantastic. Well, anyway, speaking of things fantastic, why don’t we try again, only this time I’ll be less aggressive and we can really enjoy it? I was just so excited before I wanted to try you while how it was with him was fresh in my mind.”

And so, they started again and had a marvelous time together.

Chapter 129

“We’ll try it both ways!”

At dinner, Diane broached the subject gently. Well, gently for her, anyway. “246, when we’re all dead, I’d like to have us all participate in a mini-orgy.” George sort of snorted. “Okay, tell me what you’re thinking about.”

“Let’s consider this: me, Lynn, Joan, Terry, plus you, George, Wilfred, Jack and maybe you can think of some other nice guys or girls to invite, then what we can do is, first, whichever guy we’re with does foreplay on us, then he has sex for a few minutes, then either the guys switch to the next woman or we all switch guys, however you want to do it. In fact, if it’s far enough forward we might even have Maria if you think she’ll be interested in it. What do you say?”

“I think that’s a wonderful idea. Joan has a couple of favorite boyfriends she can invite, and there are two or three women I know who’d love to participate. In fact, I think I can work with Wilfred and we can set up some sort of automated system where we switch on a random basis. But you don’t think you’d mind where some guy is on you and moving and then all of a sudden some guy with a different sized dick is now pounding on you like crazy, or a guy you got into a really good rhythm with suddenly swaps out and the next guy does it rather shallow?”

“I’ll bet it would be fun. I mean, you can set it up so that a woman can’t be hurt no matter how he fucks her, and as a result all she can get is pleasure?”

“Yeah. In fact, we could probably arrange it so that all the women come simultaneously and at that moment the guys all switch partners, so at the moment you come there will be a new guy inside you. And we could then trigger it so the guy comes after you. That might be interesting. You have sex with a guy, and he gives you a lot of pleasure, so then you come, he swaps out and then whoever lands inside you gets to come and sprays you, so as a result, the guy who comes because of you won’t be inside you and the guy who comes inside you won’t be the one who made you come. What we can do is delay orgasm on every woman who is in this, until whoever is last comes, then all of the women come in whatever way the guy did her, but it’s the next guy who comes inside her. Sound interesting?”

“Yeah, I’ll bet it will be. You could also have a random time, say after ten minutes the guy switches places. Or sometimes it’s the man who swaps out and sometimes the woman swaps out from under him. Hmm. I’m wondering, if we did this wouldn’t we all have to be having sex the same way, say, all of us having the man on top?”

“Actually I think we could set the positioning so that whichever way the man or the woman is it will put the next one in the same position. So if some of us are doing man on top and some doing woman on top, or doggie style, or whatever, it will move them to the same place. But then again, it might cause logistics issues.”

“What do you mean?”

“Say a woman is on her back, enjoying a guy who is moving on her. Then she swaps out to a guy who was on his back while the woman he was with was moving, now, both of them have stopped. Or they might both end up moving and maybe it’s harder than she likes. So we might have to go with either all of the women on top or all of the men on top, how does that sound?”

“Terrific. We’ll try it both ways!”

“Okay, What I might do is set this up first, and as some of you or others we want to invite die,

we'll bring in someone of the opposite sex to match them so we have the same number of men and women in the group."

"It's because of a couple of things. First, and it may sound strange, but I really like the feeling when a man comes inside me."

"Yeah. It's sort of a biological imperative to encourage women to mate, by having them like the feeling of being impregnated. Of course, nature doesn't know anything about contraceptives."

"Makes sense. I mean, I told Jack, my husband, that I only had three rules. First, since I want to feel him come when we have sex, I don't want him to risk that with someone else. So he's always to use a condom with any woman he's with unless he is absolutely certain she's clean and she's not going to get pregnant. Other than Lynn, the only other woman he's had sex bareback with was one of our babysitters."

"Diane, I think that's a bit sick, I don't think guys should be picking on kids, they're easily manipulated."

"246, she was 18."

"Oh. That's okay, then."

"She had a crush on him and he took advantage of her. She really enjoyed what happened, and went off to college with a very positive attitude toward sex."

"I see."

"246, I agree with you. That was the second thing. I don't want to lose him so I said there was to be no illegal sex. No underage girls and no hookers. I mean, we have the capacity to pull some stunts and could get him off, but it's better if we don't have to in the first place, it's a lot less trouble. If he was ever in rural areas in Nevada, I'd drop the last restriction, but any place he's visiting it's illegal, and in some places they're being very nasty in targeting customers of prostitutes."

"And what's the third thing?"

"No sex with anyone on the day before he comes home from a trip. I want him to get home and be hungry for me!"

"Good idea."

"Beyond when a guy comes inside me, the second is that I actually like it when I have another guy after I've had one. Of course, once I die and I'm able to have the same guy come inside me more than once, I may find I like that more. But I think I still want to try this idea of swapping guys out."

"Okay, we're all set to cheer you on when you show up."

"Great. One other thing."

"What's that?"

"I had a little chat with Lynn and with George."

"And?"

"Well, it's actually two things."

"Okay."

"First, Lynn wants the same thing I got from you. She wants either you to love her back into the world or to get some guy who'll give her an even better time."

In his fake Texas drawl, he turns to Lynn, and bows. "Well, shucks, ma'am, I shore am impressed that you picked little ol' me to be your first dead boyfriend."

“I agreed with Diane. With what you’ve been able to do just in the last couple of days with us, I’m thinking you’re going to do some really amazing things there.”

“The second thing is when George dies, you make sure whoever she is treats him easy, at least for the start. Like not tossing him on some woman who puts him under Endless Orgasm from the start.”

“Oh sure, that’s not a bad point.”

“I mean, you mentioned that you really only want to try it out on psychotics like child molesters and rapists, but since you’ve discovered we all are interested I think it might not be a bad idea if we didn’t make sure you don’t try it on us as a surprise. I mean, we know how you like to do nice things for your friends, and we didn’t want to have you overload us out of an attempt to do something really nice for us.”

Chapter 130

“... I’m not selfish, at least not in the conventional sense.”

246 went back to bed, and Lynn followed him. “Diane has decided she’s going to spend the rest of the night with George, since she taught him how to do what you taught her, and I get to have you all to myself tonight. Do you know any other tricks?”

“I know a few I can try. Not sure if they work as well as the one I did before, but we can try it.”

So he does a few things all over her body until he sees she’s ready. “Now, I’m going to try this, some women like it, some think it’s too intense, and some don’t like it at all. So if you don’t like it, say so and I’ll stop and do something else, okay?”

“Sure. Ugh, aah!” He stopped. “Whoa! 246, don’t ever do that again without warning me! I felt like my clit was put in a milking machine. Can you do that again only not as intense? Whee! Oh God, that feels good. Oh, oh, oh, can you do that while you’re fucking me?” 246 answers her by sliding into her and proceeding to do exactly that. “Oh, oh, oh, this is even better! Ung, ung, ung, whoo!”

A few minutes more of this, followed by “Oh, oh, oh yes!” as she felt him explode inside her. “246, I don’t think I’ve ever been so glad to have a guy come inside me as much as I did just now. It was fantastic but it was almost too much. It reminded me of what I felt George go through the first time we had sex and Hugo swapped us so we could experience each other’s sex. I mean, I’ve sometimes fingered myself during sex but this was incredible.”

“Well, I’m glad you liked it.”

“246, can I try something special with you?”

“What?”

“I’d like to give you the capacity to do it again, right away, so that I can feel you fuck me the way you did the last time, when you did that new thing that gives a woman a lot more pleasure when she’s moving.”

“Okay, then, I’ll get in position and as soon as I’m hard I’ll stick it..in...” he says as he discovers he is hard again, and slides deeply into Lynn, He begins pounding her mercilessly as she greedily accepts every thrust from him, as they again took pleasure from each other, she moving up to allow him to move ever deeper, and down to allow a longer thrust, him accepting this and matching her. This continuing for several delicious minutes until it ends with a powerful climax and another pumping of his seed inside her.

“You know, I don’t think I’ve ever wanted to be pounded on so much before. Is it really this good up there?”

“Well, Lynn, I don’t think I ever had sex this good when I was on earth the first time. And I don’t think my girlfriends at the time ever enjoyed it as much as you do. Or apparently so. I’m presuming you did, of course.”

“It was really good, not that orgasmic choking like it was the last time, it was just very very pleasurable, but not overloading. And yet I wanted you to pound me like crazy and I never used to like that, usually the guys who did me were so hard it hurt, but this just felt grand,”

“I’m glad you liked it. I’m not sure if it was me, or you, or the combination of both of us, but it was definitely quite an experience, at least for earth, anyway.”

“246, this was so much fun, would you object one more time to trying it again?”

“I’ll do it again, but I’m really going to pound you. I’ll move in position, I’m going to grab

your ass, and on the count of three I'm really going to stick it to you."

"I can hardly wait."

"One. Two. Three!"

What we have at this point was something similar to the really vigorous sex scene between James Spader and Susan Serandon in the movie *White Palace*: a man, attempting with each thrust moving in and out, as deeply and as long a stroke as he could, into a woman, who at the same time, with each thrust he pushed into her to allow him to go as deeply as he could by rising up to meet him, and as he withdrew, she backed off to allow him to pull back as far as he could, then the two of them coming together again, and backing off, this continuing for several minutes, with him finally deciding to just finish off, moving deep, very fast and very short, ending with a final blast from inside of him to the inside of her, the both of them very pleased by the experience.

"That was just as good as the last one. I'm just glad I never found you first, I might have fallen for you instead of George."

"Coming from you, that's high praise."

"You still didn't say, is the stuff you guys do up there as good as this?"

"Okay, first of all, this is the best sex I've ever had on earth. And I want you to know that you're terrific in bed."

"You said that already."

"This is probably about the best that can be done on earth, given the conditions involved."

"And?"

"Well, I can't speak for you, but from the standpoint of having been a man..."

"Yes?"

"Sex in the Afterlife is about ten times as good as this. That doesn't mean this wasn't great, but..."

"246."

"Yes?"

"When you take me to bed in the Afterlife the first time, don't make it any stronger than this right now, at least until I get used to it, okay?"

"Okay."

Meanwhile, George and Diane are just finishing up the fourth time in a row. While apparently not as powerful as what 246 and Lynn were doing, neither of them have any complaints. A very happy Diane feels even happier when she feels a strong warm feeling inside her, emanating from the general direction of George.

"I think we'll need to change the sheets."

"Okay, they're in the linen closet over there, I'll pull these off."

"And no problem on your part?"

"Lynn is very fastidious. We'd often have her put a towel underneath if she thought we'd be really busy. She'd talk about not wanting to sleep on the wet spot. I can't really blame her."

"I have never had so much fun in bed as I have this weekend. And what's pretty nice is it's fairly consistent. I feel you enter me, I start moving, then I come, maybe four or five times, sometimes as many as eight or nine times, then I feel you come inside me. And then we were able to try again. By the time we did the last one I was almost ready to tell you to stop, it was

taking you so long to come I was practically climaxing the entire last minute before you came. It was fantastic.”

246 Wakes up the next morning, and finds Lynn is still in bed with him. “Good Morning. I see you’re looking well.”

“So are you.”

“In that case, come over here and love me again, I wanted to have you do that thing to me again, it was a lot of fun.”

So he does.

A while later, Lynn is lying on her stomach, while 246 is on top of her, giving her a backrub.

“So you did this for Diane, too?”

“Yeah. First she thought I was going to do something else.”

“Oh. Did you want to?”

“Not really, I’ve never really cared for shagging a woman, I prefer to have regular sex if for no other reason I like to give a woman pleasure too. Personally I prefer to do her face-to-face but I’ll try other things if she’s adventurous and wants to.”

“Uh, 246, ‘shagging’ just means to have sex, it doesn’t mean anal sex.”

“Yes, I know that, but I use it that way, because there really isn’t a polite word for available use.”

“Oh.”

“But we can try the same thing as before if you want to do it doggie style.”

“Oh sure.”

So they do.

Out in the kitchen, Lynn says, “246, do you want bacon or sausage with your eggs?”

“Whatever anyone else is having is fine.”

“How do you want your eggs?”

“Scrambled or an omelette.”

“What kind of omelette?”

“Cheese, if you’ve got it.”

“Fine.”

George and Diane come out. “Cheese omelette and sausage for you and 246, Diane do you want sausage or bacon, and how do you want your eggs?”

“Soft bacon and sunny side up. 246, Lynn tells me you said that the best sex you’ve ever had on earth was only 1/10 as good as the stuff up there.”

“My own experience confirmed it. Look, I’m not complaining, but I decided a long time ago not to lie about sex and to accept honest corrections without taking them personally. I think it’s part of the reason I have such a huge reputation.”

“Anything else?”

“I also don’t make claims. I let other people say things about me.”

“What else?”

“Well, ahm, what else. Oh, maybe because I’m not selfish, at least not in the conventional sense.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, let’s see. I will go down on a woman but I don’t ask for it to be done to me. I prefer to have plain intercourse, I don’t express any interest in shagging her and I’ll only do it if she specifically says she wants me to. I’ll try just about anything she wants to do but I prefer to have a woman face-to-face so I can see how she reacts and so I can know what she wants. I mean, if I am with a woman I’ll want sex out of her, but I guess you could say that I’ll give her more than I get from her. If for no other reason than by giving her more, I’ll get more out of her, long term.”

“246, did George tell you that you’re going to see the Afterlife?”

“Uh, you want to try that again?”

“I mean, did he tell you you’re going to see the computer system that runs the Afterlife?”

“Oh, I see what you mean now. Not really.”

“Well, you are. You’ll be the only one there who knows what it looks like. And we will also show you the reason why you can be sure we are not going to change our minds and shut down the Afterlife.”

“Okay.”

“There’s another reason. I’ll be coming along.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah. You could say it’s my baby and I helped put it together. Once Jack gets back and I teach him how to do the thing you showed me and Lynn, we’re going. You don’t really know this world, so there’s no real point in you staying here. I figure you want to get on to your own world.”

“That’s true.”

“Well, anyway, Lynn is going to take you around sightseeing. I have to get back to work, and George has a department to run as well as other things to do.”

For several days, Lynn takes 246 around to see things. And every night, Lynn and Diane keep him busy.

On Friday, Diane calls 246 on the cell phone Lynn has loaned him. “Yes?”

“246, Jack will be back tonight. We’re going to come by for a little fun over the weekend. Well, maybe a lot of fun, but you know what I mean.”

“Sure.”

“By the way, Jack isn’t a Zombie, so don’t tell him anything about where you’re from, or our operation, okay?”

“Of course.”

Chapter 131

"I'm just quite amused that you still won't use your real name."

246 and Jack meet at George's place. "So you must be the Jack McCloud I've heard so much about."

"Actually, it's Jack Egan. Diane kept her maiden name for professional reasons."

246 thought quickly. "I'm David Rollins." George smiled a little.

"Well, it's nice to meet you, David." They shake hands.

"Nice to meet you. I'm curious exactly what you do."

"Well, you know how some people build houses?"

"Yeah."

"And most of the people that build new houses build expensive ones that most people can't afford."

"Yeah, I know exactly what you mean."

"Well, I got the idea to find where houses are vastly overpriced relative to what most people could afford, and then start selling houses which were reasonably priced, but still higher than they would be other places."

"Uh huh."

"When you tap into an underserved market you can make a lot of money. We're setting up an apartment building we're selling as condos. We're building them as just inexpensive, ordinary places, and selling them for about 1/2 to 1/3 of what most housing goes for in the areas we chose, but still anywhere from two to three times what these places would cost in areas which aren't ridiculously priced."

"So you're building slums?"

"No, not at all. Look..."

"I was kidding. But go ahead."

"Oh. Okay, let's say that a 3-bedroom, 1,000 square foot condo sells for perhaps \$1,800,000 in San Francisco. That's \$1,800 per square foot. Now, let's say that in a place like Boise or Cheyenne, it costs \$100 a square foot to build. Let's say, if we add in shipping costs and on-site set-up and assembly, we can ship completed modules cross-country by truck, then put them together on site for \$50 a square foot. So we can build each apartment for about \$150,000. So we buy up, say, six houses that cost us \$8 million to buy and bulldoze, and on the same space, we put up a 100 unit apartment building, which costs us \$15,000,000 to build, plus say another \$5 million for the separate costs such as adding elevators, corridors, and parking. So we spend \$28 million to build a 100 unit apartment building. We can sell those for \$60 million, or \$600,000 each, and sell them fast. Even if you consider most real estate in the area to be overpriced, when you can sell for about 1/3 of the market, and still be selling them for 100% profit, you can make a lot of money. And we're not talking about building substandard properties. We're simply buying where prices are low, and selling where they are high, and pocketing the difference."

"Oh I see."

"So we're essentially buying apartments that would sell for \$150,000 in Cheyenne and selling them for \$600,000 in San Francisco. And we're selling for 1/3 of what comparable places are selling for, so you can imagine how fast they will move. The only problem was getting

contractors and construction workers in small towns in the midwest where the last earthquake was 150 years ago, to understand why we were building apartment buildings to extremely high earthquake standards, or why we'd need such a large building in a town of maybe 3,500 that has perhaps 30% of the housing unoccupied because it's a depressed area and people are moving away. But in a depressed area you get more motivated people because they really need the work.

"Anyway, the numbers look like we're likely to make upwards of 5 or 6 million, not the 2 million we originally projected."

"Well, just as long as you're comfortable with the risk."

"That's the nice thing about it, I don't have any risk. Or very tiny risk, anyway."

"Huh?"

"The whole point is that we're selling participation shares in this. Once we get the shares sold in it, then we build the place, sell the units, and pay the investors off. Our group keeps a 10% share for setting up the deal and acting as General Contractor. Our only risk is the cost to set up the corporate, trust and limited liability company structures, SEC and various state paperwork and staff costs. Call it fifty grand. Which we only lose if we can't sell the project at all."

"Oh."

"The other thing is, you come into a community and offer to make affordable housing available and the city will usually bend over backwards to eliminate a lot of hassles they usually have because of developers who simply want to skim off the cream and build ultra expensive houses."

"You sound like a salesman."

"I guess I've gotten into it so much that I sound like I'm selling it to people. Well, when you're passionate about something you can sometimes be annoying to others. I mean, we already sold the last participation. In fact, it was better than we expected, we had to turn down a number of people who wanted to invest. But, once we're finished doing this one we can try another. And there's more cities we can do this in. Any place where real estate prices are much too high relative to what ordinary people can afford."

After dinner, Diane again broached the subject gently. "Anyway, honey, Lynn is going to show you something, uh, 'David' over there taught both of us, and then after you're able to get it up again, I want you to try it on me. I'm figuring that you'll be perfect when you do it to me. How does that sound?"

"Fine by me."

After he leaves, Diane confronts 246, "Low grade namestealing, eh, 246?"

"I'm not sure what you mean."

"Well.. Oh I'm sorry. Hold on a second." She looks off into the distance. "Oh yes, in your world they call it 'identity theft,' Mr. Rollins. I'm just quite amused that you still won't use your real name."

"Well, to be honest, it just occurred to me that I don't remember what my name was." Diane looks off into the distance again. "Oh, Jesus, 246, I'm sorry! When we were putting your memory together we had to pick and choose what we would give you, and since you never use your real name I didn't include it. So it's not really your fault you had to use some other name. Oh my. Well, I..."

“Diane, what do you do when you’re doing that ‘thousand mile stare’ like that?”

“Well, the first time, I flashed George and asked him what the equivalent term for ‘namestealing’ was in your world. In the second, I was going through the list of things I had decided to give you, and I realized that your original name wasn’t on them.”

“You ‘flashed’ George?”

“Yes, I spoke to his mind directly and he answered me the same way. Haven’t you done that back in the Afterlife?”

“Yes, on rare occasions. Mostly I talk to people because it’s more polite and respectful of their privacy. Now, if I’m with a woman I’ll read her mind to find out whether she wants me to read her mind or she wants me to ask her. If I’m not sure if she’ll mind that much, I’ll ask her first.”

“Okay, well, anyway, I shouldn’t have accused you of a crime when it was my fault you couldn’t answer his question in the first place.” She gets up and pulls on his hand. “Well, I guess what I need to do is formally apologize to you. On my back. And I can’t wait to feel it when you ‘accept’ my apology. And even more when I get to feel when you show me that we’ve finished apologizing.”

So they get undressed, get into bed, 246 kisses her and uses his hands to tweak different parts of her body, and proceeds to go down on her, when she stops him. “Go ahead and fuck me, now, 246.” So he gets inside her, and begins moving, and she moves with him, until they finish, or rather, he finishes. “Okay! Did you find my apology acceptable, 246?”

“Uh, yeah. I’m surprised you were so quick to want me to get inside you.”

“I decided to do the absolute minimum amount of foreplay to get me ready so I could just give this to you. I wanted to give you the equivalent of a ‘quickie,’ I didn’t really care if I came, but what you do is so good I still came anyway. You know, when we designed women’s bodies, in the Afterlife I decided to put more sensitivity in them because most women don’t come during sex. Having seen, or rather, felt, what just happened, I think maybe a lot of the problem isn’t so much that women have a hard time achieving orgasm during sex, I think the problem might be that most men are lousy in bed. Well, maybe not ‘most,’ but a lot.

She looks off for a moment. “Anyway, I’m going to have George do me while Jack is recovering with Lynn, then once he’s ready I’m going to have him do me and see how he is, I’ll bet it will be fantastic. If you’ll excuse me.” She gets up, grabs her clothes, and leaves.

Chapter 132

“Viagra? What kind of a stupid name for a get-it-up drug is that?”

The next morning, Diane and Jack come out to breakfast, and he turned to 246, “David, I want to shake your hand.” 246 stands, and does, then they sit down.

“Okay, for what?”

“You know, I never thought I’d be saying this, but I want to thank you for fucking my wife. I’ve had great sex with her before, but last night was incredible. What did we do it, honey, three times?”

“Four.”

“Okay, we did it four times last night and it was fantastic. And I know she enjoyed it even more than she usually does. And it’s all because of what you taught her, and then Lynn, too, and they both showed me what to do. I was thinking if we kept it up I’d have to start taking Stilfenyodell.”

“Stilfenyodell?”

“Yeah, that new drug they developed so that you can get it up a lot. People make puns by calling it Stiffen-your-drill. I’m sure you’ve heard of it.”

“Yeah, that must be the generic name, I always heard it was called Viagra.”

“Viagra? What kind of a stupid name for a get-it-up drug is that?”

George decides to interrupt before 246 accidentally releases more details about his world.

“David, anyway, you’re planning to go out to the 14joys computer center and see how it works, I heard they got you special permission to visit?”

“Oh yeah, that’s right.”

“So anyway, you and Diane have a plane to catch.”

Jack signals 246 to lean over, and whispers in his ear, “If you can think up any new ideas for things she can do, go ahead and do them to her. I’m hoping to find something even more exciting than the stuff we did last night. If it wasn’t for the fact I’m traveling a lot, I’d be tempted to lay off other women. But then it wouldn’t be fair to Diane, I love her very much but I know she’s more woman than I can handle, if I kept her all to myself she’d be miserable.”

After they arrive at the building, 246 notices the sign on the front. “14Joys.Com, *the* search engine of the Internet.”

“In my world, the largest search engine is called Google.”

“Yes, but unfortunately in this world some company that sells mathematical software got it first. It didn’t really matter, because search isn’t the real reason we’re running this place, although it does make us a lot of money. Come on in.”

A woman at the desk hands 246 a visitor badge. They go through a glass room with opaque doors. The outside door closes, then the inside door buzzes. They enter a very large room, about the size of a typical supermarket. Stacked, floor to rafter are thousands and thousands of computers, arranged in racks, along aisles, running as far as the eye can see. Further down the aisle, some technicians are pulling a machine and replacing it with another one. “This is our main facility, and we have more of these arranged around the world.”

“It seems awfully small, do you mean to say...”

“246, come with me.”

They walk into an office with “Diane McCloud” on the door. She closes it. “246, I don’t want to say anything where someone else can hear. Go ahead and ask your question.”

“I saw the size of the place and it seems like it isn’t big enough, is this is what you run the Afterlife with?”

“Hell no! You’ll find out. We actually use a lot less equipment than we claim we do, because what we do use is extremely efficient. This is a cover to explain why we buy such huge amounts of computer hardware. We look very inefficient by comparison, which explains a great deal. But we really do an extremely efficient search operation. But we compartmentalize a lot of things. Those who are involved in developing search algorithms don’t know how much computer hardware we have; those who know how much equipment we have are either Zombies or have no connection to the people who write software.”

“I see. What do you do about the potential for license audits?”

“Outside of publicly available software, what I think they call ‘Open Source’ in your world, we use nothing that isn’t developed in-house. We don’t use any software that requires proprietary licensing for use on our search systems. We don’t even allow any other computers that would use outside licensed software in this building. All office work is done elsewhere. Nobody has any reason to go into any of our search buildings unless they work here, and then, only if they have a need to know. In fact, every so often we burn down one of our buildings due to electrical overload in order to explain more hardware purchases. We’re self insured, so we don’t even have to file insurance claims so there’s no record of how much we lost. It also explains why we never recycle old hardware because it’s so badly damaged that it’s not usable by others, rather than trying to explain that the old hardware has disappeared into running the Afterlife. We also use the ‘burned hardware’ gag to dump all of the hardware in the Afterlife that has failed.”

“Why not just get rid of it normally?”

“It’s kind of hard to explain if someone examined it, why a piece of hardware less than a year old has the age and wear equivalent to ten or twenty years continuous operation.”

“Oh.”

“Right now, it’s still a hell of a lot cheaper to buy components than to build our own. Otherwise we’d do that. Actually in some places where the technology isn’t as high as it is here we do build our own computers. I’ll show you another thing.” They leave and step outside the building. “Take a look at the electric meter.”

“It’s running backwards.”

“We generate our own power. We sell the excess back to the local electric company. It keeps anyone from figuring out how much electricity we use and wondering why, for the number of computers we’re supposed to have, why we’re not using a hell of a lot more electricity. We can claim it’s cheaper to make our own than to buy it. And, in fact, it actually is.”

“Won’t someone notice the amount of diesel fuel you buy? I mean, I heard a story how the IRS discovered some people running a drug operation out of a coin laundry, to show that they were paying too much in taxes it was shown that they weren’t buying enough water for the amount of washes they claimed were being done by customers.”

“I’m glad you asked that. Get on the golf cart and I’ll show you.” They ride along to another large building. They walk in and go through another security gate. They walk down a corridor to a door marked ‘Power Room.’ They enter, don clean room-style plastic suits, hard

hats, then stand on a service elevator which lowers them to the basement. They step out onto what looks like an extremely clean garage. A cement floor, steel tanks marked 'Unprocessed Fuel,' other tanks marked 'Processed Fuel' and some generators. A man in a plastic suit is pouring a dark liquid into one of the 'Unprocessed' Tanks.

They walk over to one of the 'Processed' tanks, and she opens a lid on it. 'Go ahead and take a taste. It's actually non-toxic, I believe its toxicity level is somewhere just above salt.'

'I don't have to. I can tell from the smell which reminds me of cooked food. This is biodiesel, isn't it?'

'Yep. We take away, for free, all of the used grease and oil from every restaurant within a hundred mile radius. We process it, and we run the processed oil through our generators. You actually get better results as the equipment lasts longer than on diesel, and it's completely renewable. And the glycerin byproduct we have left over we sell to soap manufacturers. We make a nice profit because we sold a long-term contract for power when prices were very high, and we offered power for less than then current prices. Right now, we're a bit higher than what this would sell for open market, but the electric company admits in their Annual Report that the small difference in cost is worth being able to advertise stable rates and no danger of power shortages for years to come. Plus, on the books, this is a separate company unrelated to us, we simply hired them to sell us power too.'

'I see. It looks like you've covered your bases quite well.'

'We tried. In fact, we bought one of the companies that was doing waste pick-ups rather than go through the time and trouble of starting our own company, and getting people in the neighborhood mad because we drove someone else out of business. We also save money because we run the trucks off the fuel we use for generating electricity too. All it really costs us above processing is the state and federal fuel taxes for road use of special fuels. Even though it's basically used grease, we still have to pay road taxes on it as if we were using diesel fuel. So when we get to the other place, you'll see what I mean.'

Chapter 133

“This can’t be big enough.”

“246, I want to start out early tomorrow so I can get as much time as possible while I’m awake and fresh. We’ll have a stopover in town first before going on to the Afterlife. Here’s a nice place, wait here.” She leaves, then comes back a few minutes later with a card. “Okay, room 418. Let’s go.” They get upstairs and find a relatively nice room with a king-sized bed. As they undress, Diane says, “So I understand there were a few things you tried that were too much for Lynn?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, let’s see how I react to them.”

“246, this is a crossover system for transport. Please stand very still, we don’t want you to lose a leg or an arm. Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

“Diane?”

“I’m ready, Mary.”

There is a very sharp smell of ozone and the feel of electricity in the air. 246 was used to the visual effect from teleportations done within the afterlife, as the current area around him blinked out and a new area appeared. “246, we have to wait about an hour in order to make sure we have no affects from the transport and to ensure we don’t bring any airborne diseases with us. It will take that long for the air system to recirculate all the air in here. So I’ll give you a few pointers.”

“Okay.”

“I can’t eat or drink anything in here because I’m going back after we’ve visited. Since you aren’t, it doesn’t matter. When I go back, I’ll go through an even more thorough cleansing system. So that means I won’t be able to be around more than a day, but you can stay as long as you like before going on to your world.”

“You mean this isn’t my world?”

“Where we are going is not. How do you think the Afterlife could have the equivalent of 28 hours a day, 10 days a week, 1000 days a year?”

“I figured it had to do with the clock speeds of the system.”

“No. We’re not in your universe. Nor are we in mine. This is a third universe, separate from either. And you’ll see how this works once we get in the room. Anyway, 246, I’m glad we had that last time in the motel before we got here. That was really fun. You’re telling me that Lynn couldn’t stand it?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I’m surprised. I had a wonderful time.” She starts to cry a little. “246, it will probably be 50 years or more before I get to see you again. I’m half tempted to ask you to stay, but I realized that probably wouldn’t be fair. Instead, can I expect you to not to decide to recycle yourself before I die? I know that I can’t ask you to promise, but I’m hoping you will stay there for a while.”

“I have no real plans to leave any time soon. I once decided that if the country had some really bad, radical changes I might decide to take a birth back to earth, but I doubt that it would happen

any time in the near future.”

“What sort of changes?”

“Well, if we went in the direction of more government controls, sort of like having a police organization like the Mexican Federales...”

“Carlos is a miserable son-of-a-bitch, isn’t he?”

“Yeah. Five will get you ten that he gets thrown out within ten years. Especially since I shut down the safety valve by eliminating free rapes in the Frontier. When men can’t run out to the Frontier to get relief, sooner or later they’re going to tire of the frustration and overthrow him. That’s part of the same thing, though, Diane. Once a language section has the power of the computer system, there’s no way you can toss them out. Not unless you want to implement elections, in which case you can easily trick people. I know you took one of the classes, but I’ll ask if you’ve ever seen my fake election scam?”

“No.”

“Well, sometimes in an Orientation class, someone will ask why we don’t have elections. So I’ll have the ushers hand out paper to everyone who wants, and ask them to write in themselves to be elected to be speaker at the meeting. We collect all the ballots, then I ask them how many of them voted for me. Usually we get no hands up. Then we have someone open the ballot box, and every ballot has ‘246’ written on it, except one that has ‘me’ written on it. Thus I show them, as long as whoever is in power has control of the computer system, they can change the ballots to anything they want. As long as those in power can create untraceable election fraud, there’s little sense in having an election.”

“Cute.”

“It’s another way of showing them that we respect them as individuals, rather than allowing sham elections to take place, we admit that it’s impossible to have one that is impartial. Sometimes we’ll get someone real bright, who suggests using raised hands. I point out that eliminates secret voting, and thus makes vote-buying and selling possible. So I’ll grab a dozen people or so, including whoever made the suggestion, and tell them I’m going to get them to do something against their will. Then I’ll ask them to vote against me. I’ll ask them if they’re certain they’ll vote against me. They all say they will. Then I ask how many vote against me. Nobody’s hand goes up. I ask how many vote for me. All hands go up. So then I ask them how many of them voted against me, and they all say they did. Then we run the tape back and they can’t believe it. I point out that when I do that, there are some checks and balances to prevent ordinary people from doing this to them, but if the people running the election want to manipulate those voting into thinking they voted some other way, again, it’s going to be pretty hard to stop them.”

“Yeah, I know. I mean, we could do it for unimportant elections where we didn’t care who won.”

“True, but still, until and unless we find a way to allow decisions to be tamper-proof there’s not much point in kidding ourselves that impartial elections are possible.”

“Okay, what else might make you decide to recycle yourself?”

“Well, it’s part of the same thing. If we don’t make sure that someone knows what they are doing before they get a privilege, and we just hand them out like drivers’ licenses on earth, then I’d shudder what things would be like there if you got people who got mad and used privileges on people indiscriminately against someone they didn’t like. We’re very careful to

make sure people know how to use them and not to use them for spite or malice. Also, I think keeping the rule that you either have to have exemplary conduct over a long period in order to get serious privileges. Or prove you figured out how to steal a privilege and get away with it.”
“Which way did you go?”

“I first stole teleportation privilege by convincing a clerk I was someone else and had to have it temporarily in order to do some testing. Not only that, I got him to revoke it from the wrong person when he thought I was finished. The examiner who checked me out thought that was a cute trick.”

“So basically you’re saying you want us to keep a free society and be sure access to privileges is restricted to those who know how to use them properly.”

“That’s about it. But we still want to encourage people who are smart enough to steal privileges to try.”

“Okay.”

“This was actually the transfer station, we need to cross over first. This is where both of us will come back to when we’re finished visiting. So let’s step in here and we’ll transfer over.” They arrive and Diane says, “Again we need to wait but it will only be about ten minutes. Oh, I just thought of something. In case you have to contact me later I’ll give you a code to use but I’ll need to know a question and answer that nobody but you and I know. Let me think for a second. Oh, yeah, you used to do programming when you were on earth and I think you still did quite a bit when you were in the Afterlife. What’s your favorite programming language?”
“Hmm. As funny as it sounds, I’d probably have to say Fortran.”

“That’s an old language. I think it’s considered on the order of stone axes and bear skins. Why that one?”

“It was probably the second major language I learned. It’s funny but when I had to work on a problem, while I’ve found satisfaction doing programming, I always found I had the most fun fixing things that were in Fortran. I can’t really say why.”

Shortly thereafter, the green light came on, and the door unlocked. They stepped through the door. A room very similar to the one that 246 saw at the 14Joys computer center appeared before him. “You have to be kidding me. This can’t be big enough.”
“246, this is just the queue plaza. These are the machines that pick up incomings when their souls indicate they die and they telepathically communicate with us. It takes about three days for their soul to cross through. Allowing for 100,000 simultaneous people dying during any one day, we have to have enough units to cover for twice the limit, and two machines simultaneously for redundancy, so we have about 1,200,000 machines in here. Even when we had fewer machines we’ve still had lots more than any expected load. The only times we ever came close was during serious war events, like the firebombing of Dresden, or when they nuked Nagasaki and Hiroshima and something like 50,000 people hit the systems simultaneously during each of the events. Even during the ‘wild weekend’ of the Aztecs a few hundred years ago, over a three-day period they killed about 75,000, which still didn’t even stress the machines we had then. All these machines do is integrate the person into the Afterlife and allow us to collect information about what happened to them on the last day they died. But I’ll bet you want to see the real thing, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“This *is* your world. We have to cross over again to where the real computer system is. This one is used often enough we have it automated. Normally we would just go directly but I decided to show you this, first. Here’s the room we use. Are you ready, 246?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Here we go!”

Chapter 134
“Fields... Endless fields...”

When they exited the transport site after waiting a few minutes for the air to changeover, they stepped into what, for lack of a better term, is a ‘room’ but the term is woefully inadequate. 246 gasped. Diane smiles at this. “So what do you think, 246?”

“I’m reminded of Lawrence Fishburne in *The Matrix* when he describes how people were grown, not born. Fields... Endless fields...”

What 246 saw below him was a room, 100 meters deep, extending out to the horizon in three directions, again, with racks and racks of computers arranged in long rows.

Suspended from the ceiling are thousands of square cages on wheels. As he watches, cages drop down, others rise carrying computers, and move around. This continues all the time he is watching. Attached to each row in front of him was a plate with two characters.

“Each person, by the two character check code, is stored on a specific row in this place. There are 672 rows, from AA to ZZ. Each row is 1.4 kilometers long, not counting splits. You can see that each row is large enough to drive a truck along, they’re 5 meters wide. Every 100 meters, there’s a split in a column to allow a truck to turn to get to another row. So, does this place impress you, 246?”

“I’m absolutely stunned.”

“You see those cages hanging from the ceiling?”

“Yes. I notice they are constantly moving up and down all over the place.”

“Those are what we use to replace machines. Allows us to pack machines much higher than we could possibly do under normal circumstances. We can lower to a specific level and replace equipment wherever we need to. Let’s go down to the machine room floor.”

They take an elevator down, what is the equivalent of about 30 stories, and arrive at the ground floor. He walks out to the first row in front of him and sees the sign. “EA” He looks at the rack, where it has an LCD number on it: 00012. Starting at the bottom, the first machine has its own LCD display showing the number 000007, the next has 000010, and so on, occasionally two of them have consecutive numbers. He points at the unit. “So if I understand this correctly, this unit right here has whoever has code 00012 EA 000007.”

“Exactly. If you know someone, you can find exactly where their machine is. If someone changes their number, they move to the appropriate machine. We also have some spare capacity in the event of machine failure. One machine in each rack is available for a spare until their machine is pulled and replaced.”

“Do you happen to have a calculator?”

“Sure, I have one in my purse. Here.”

“Let’s see, there are 20 units in each shelf plus one spare, each shelf goes up for 100 meters, which means each rack has about 2000 units. There are 672 rows, so for each one meter that this building extends across, you can hold 1,344,000 units. Now, presuming there are 12 billion people in the afterlife, you would need a building 8.9 kilometers long. Am I correct?”

“No, actually we have capacity for twenty billion people.”

“Then, let’s see, you’d need almost double that. No, actually, just under 15 clicks, 14.79 kilometers of corridors times 672.. So if I understand this correctly, you actually have *ten* rooms like this?”

She smiled. “Yep. You got it. When a machine fails consistency checks, it is pulled and replaced automatically. Each machine simply holds the current state of the person in it. We have considerable redundancy so someone doesn’t get lost if the machine they are running on fails. In fact, swap-off is so fast, they never even notice.”

“What does the color of the lamp on the front of each unit mean?”

“Red indicates a machine check, the system has failed or is no longer reliable for some reason. Green indicates someone is using that machine. Yellow means it’s simply storing sense impressions, i.e. the person is on earth and is simply sending their memories to them. If the lamp is blue, it’s a spare and it’s just running consistency checks. If the lamp is off, the machine is off, probably because it hasn’t been hooked up yet.”

“This is amazing.”

“Oh wait until you see what else we can do. Let’s get on this cart.” They drive on for quite a while, until they come to an office, whereupon they disembark and walk inside. There is a large video screen, like an expensive television set. She turns the screen on, and says to 246, “Recognize this?”

“It looks like the view of Central Square.”

“That’s correct. Now, watch this.” She goes over to a computer screen, and types something in. The view changes, and it shows a man, who is moving up and down from the viewpoint being shown.

“I recognize that. It’s Wilfred. From what I’m seeing, he’s fucking someone. And we’re seeing it from her eyes. I presume it’s probably Terry.”

“Oh yeah? Let’s see.” She types something else. “Now we can see the person he’s with.”

“Oh, it’s Joan. So we were seeing through her eyes? And now from his?”

“Yes. Now let me show you something else.” She types something else in, and we can see the two of them engaged in passionate lovemaking. She turns up the volume and we hear the typical sounds of two people having wild sex.

“So you can watch anything, either through people’s eyes or take a visual on them.”

“Exactly. Otherwise when someone walked into a room, we’d have to redraw it since the image didn’t exist until they were there. It would cause slowdowns and make the Afterlife more obvious as a simulation instead of almost a perfect match to reality. Now let me show you something else.”

She types something into the keyboard, and the picture changes. Now, 246 sees himself, engaged in some really hot sex with Terry. “I think this is from about a week before you left.”

“Do you record everything that happens everywhere?”

“Yes and no. There is a 30-second capture of basically everything so we can do selective recording of various things. Saving everything would generate way too much material.”

“How far back do the recordings go?”

“Recordings we keep around for about six weeks or until we use them.”

“What do you mean, ‘until we use them’?”

“Oh that you will find out shortly.” She turns off the TV, and motions for him to step outside. They get back into the golf cart, and drive down the corridors a long way. She pulls up to a stop and they get out at a rack that has a sign on it that says “Special.” All of the units have yellow lights. On the rack, is the number “00001”. He looks at the first one, which has a tag “AP” on it, and the serial number “000003”.

“This is George’s machine?”

“Yes.”

He looks over and finds one with “XF” and the serial number “000014”. “And this one is yours.”
“That’s right.”

He looks above it, and sees a rack which, surprisingly, has only one unit (with a yellow light) in use on it; the other 19 units and a spare are marked with blue lights. He has a suspicion, and when he sees the number on the rack, “000000” he is, of course, unsurprised to find the serial number “000246.” “We had to put it someplace, and it’s easier to organize by number. We didn’t want to put our machines in with the others as we’d have to waste a whole rack for number 00001 in each group, so we put all of the 00001s together. If you ever decide to allow someone else to have a number starting with all zeroes, we’ll put their machine in the same rack with yours.”

“This place must have taken thousands of people to build.”

“21,332 people over a ten-year period. It takes even more to run the place. Remember, we have about ten of these rooms, all over this planet. People built this facility without necessarily knowing what it was, and the ones who did, assembled it without knowing where they were. We imported a lot of people from our world, so that when it was asked, they would admit that they saw this huge system. So it explains why we used so many computers. They just don’t realize just how many we really use in my world. A lot of people we hired from poor countries and paid them about 5 times local wages for work no where near as hard as the stuff they would have had to do there. And it was considerably cheaper than hiring people from the U.S. to do the same thing.”

“There are so many questions I’d want to ask that I don’t know where to begin.”

“Okay, how about how much did this cost? Take a guess.”

“Billions, I presume.”

“Net replacement value of this one building alone is 210 billion dollars. The total value of the Afterlife, or at least the hardware that runs it, is 2.1 trillion dollars.”

246 whistles. “How did you raise that kind of money?”

“You’ll find out. It’s a bit complicated so I’ll explain it later.”

“Well, I’m curious how you would keep the local government from noticing this operation and maybe confiscating it. Or taxing it at ruinous rates.”

She smiled. “Actually, as it turns out, we are the government here. We came in with superior firepower, outgunned the military and took over. Consider if the North, the Confederacy, the Dominion of Canada and Mexico were all fighting the War of 1812 for almost a decade with that level of ordnance, and we come in with 1990s military technology. Guess who wins.”

“I see. But the Confederacy didn’t exist in 1812.”

“What I mean is that the highest level of military technology was the ball pistol or possibly a single-shot ball-and-powder smooth-bore musket rifle. Cartridges hadn’t been invented. Shotguns or even repeating rifles weren’t even a distant dream. A couple of guys with machine guns, flak jackets, a transparent shield to stand behind and eight million rounds of ammo could take on any battalion of 10,000 soldiers and unless one of them is very lucky, you’d end up with two men with machine guns, still alive, and a field of corpses.

“I could probably write a book about the ‘War of the Afterlife’ and I probably will someday. But then, we had to do something to stabilize the world. We set up a government virtually

identical to the one in the Afterlife, with freedom of speech, freedom of religion, an unelected Queen who is not answerable to the people, etc. The only difference is that they do have elections here, and people get to vote for their politicians and their laws. And we throw a lot of bones to the people, free education, low-cost health care, social security and public pensions, plus no income tax.”

“Won’t people suspect something fishy if you’re giving away this stuff and not paying for it? You can’t get something for nothing.”

“Oh we solved that problem. The government owns all the banks, and uses the power of fractional reserve to make money off the spread from what it charges in interest and what it pays depositors. This essentially covers the cost of the national government. There’s still property tax and sales tax at the local level, we couldn’t eliminate everything, we still had to have some taxes. But in comparison the tax load for most people is about 1/10 of what it is in the U.S. back in my world. Everything else we pay for ourselves. There’s also only a tiny public military here, except for the people guarding our facilities, like this one. We do keep a small force around in case of potential civil wars, but we consider that unlikely.

“There’s no income tax, no military conscription, a reasonable minimum level of survival available even if you mess up, and no wars. So things are pretty peaceful here.

“Since we got rid of most of the low-level strife that causes people to revolt, the chance of a coup is rare. Also, since the level of weapons technology is very low and there’s no military conflict to demand new development, it’s unlikely they’ll have the means to develop new technology adequate to defeat us. But we watch people, if someone gets to the point they’re bright enough to develop something, we bring them in as a Zombie and they work for us.

“This building is on a military compound, and we’ve basically let the truth ‘accidentally on purpose’ slip out. A group of aliens from another world came here and left advanced technology behind and the military is covering it up. The truth is so crazy that it’s simpler to let it out than hide it since nobody will believe it. And they call this place the same thing as they do in your world. Guess what they call it?”

“Area 51?”

“Yes. I thought it was cute, myself.”

Chapter 135

“There is also one other thing I want to show you.”

“Now, you asked how we can afford the costs of building the Afterlife. Well, we started out one way, then we discovered another. To put it bluntly, we started selling video of what you guys were doing, especially the weird stuff. On 100 worlds, we sold pornography showing the people in the afterlife involved in all the various ways of doing things in bed. We sold it for whatever was best of value on our world, or on others, for use in making the machines. That’s how we finance the continued operation. That, plus some of the things I mentioned, such as selling electricity made from engines running on, basically, cooking oil.

“And there are above-ground deals we have. Let’s say you have a TV show that runs an hour each week. We can sell it to a network for maybe \$3 million a year. It’s still cheap compared to what most shows cost. Now, the show costs them exactly nothing to make because they don’t pay the actors anything, all they have to pay is the cost of the staff to edit the show, so maybe it costs \$600,000 a year to make, plus some expenses. So they make over \$2 million a year after costs. With that money you buy something that is cheap on that world, but expensive on another world.. In one place, gold sells for about \$2 a pound. So you can buy about 1,000,000 ounces a year. Now, if you sell that in a world where one ounce is worth about \$400, you can sell 1,000,000 ounces for \$400,000,000 a year. Do this...”

“Uh, Diane, aren’t you causing a danger here? You’re removing resources from one world and not replacing them, in fact it might be worse than typical consumption because you’re presumably transporting them out of one universe to another.”

“We did think about that. 246, if someone was strip mining the Sahara Desert, and basically eating all the sand in, say, one square mile a year, about how long could they go on doing that?”

“Uh, it’s pretty big, probably 50,000 years.”

“Well, still, that’s longer than we’ve been doing this, but actually the Sahara is more than 3 million square miles. So we really don’t have to worry about it any time soon. The size of the gold fields in some worlds are bigger than the Sahara Desert.”

“Oh. Okay.”

“We do keep count of it, however, as we don’t want to be a resource sink for a long time, but we figure a short time in order to do what we can is not that big a problem. I think once we’ve built afterlives for those worlds, people won’t be too upset that we used a small amount of a huge unused resource to keep them alive forever.”

“Yeah, I think you’re right.”

“Anyway, so you do this on 100 different worlds, and you can pull in \$40 billion a year, and we’re not even trying that hard. That’s enough to cover the costs of the Afterlife over the thousands of years it existed. You may not be aware of this, but this is not the original Afterlife. Do you want me to tell you the whole story?”

“Yeah, sure.”

100,000 years ago, people in your world became capable of independent thought. I guess you could say that’s when people developed a soul. But remember, a particular time in your world is not the same as one in ours. Well, it was at that time we decided to begin capturing people for the Afterlife. We also had to capture some of the animals in order to allow

them to replicate their behavior back on earth. You can't expect people who are used to sleeping in caves and hunting buffalo to be able to write software. So, for basically the first 90,000 years of the Afterlife, people lived pretty much as they did on earth, only they didn't have to fight for survival. We basically had people come in from another universe one day a month to replace equipment, only they didn't know that they were crossing from one universe to another. They'd come in, do the repairs and replacements, go home, then we'd advance the time in this world by 30 days. We had to do this with hundreds of worlds because otherwise people would have been curious as to why they were replacing equipment that was 1,000 years old or how the company could still be in business that long. Every time a civilization collapsed we had to start over.

As a result of doing this we let the afterlife operate without anyone bothering to interact for 90,000 years. Most people eventually went back for a simple reason that we still impose to this day. What's the one thing that you can do on earth that you can't do in the Afterlife?

“Have children, and watch them grow up.”

Exactly. And this one thing, this desire to reproduce, is what caused people to go back. Over and over again. Once people became aware of their world and realized that they could live for themselves, some decided not to go back. So we imposed a limit. You either had to go back to earth, or you had a limit of about 1,000 years of memories. Once you got to 1,000 years you had to lose some of them. There are so many things happening here and now that we've had to set the limit to 300 years.

“Yeah, I know. That was one of the things I bought an exemption to.”

“Other than getting your number all to yourself, I think that was the most expensive thing we ever sold anyone in the Afterlife, what was it, 30,000 favors?”

“53,144. I had to make arrangements with 300 people to buy space from them to get it.”

“So you raised your limit to 3300 years. You bought 10 years of space from 300 people.”

“Exactly.”

So anyway, up until about 10,000 years ago, the Afterlife was pretty boring. It was just slightly better than living on earth. And down here, it was pretty mundane. Clean out each machine once a year. Replace them every twenty. Plus replace the ten percent or so that failed early. So let's say that you have 50 million machines, which require an average of about 2 hours of maintenance a year, so you need 100 million hours of time. With the typical work week being 30 hours, and...

“30 hours a week?”

“Yes.”

“So you're only hiring people part time to do this?”

“No. Ten hours a day, 3 days a week. This is extremely tedious work, so we pay people enough that they can afford to work less than what is considered full time. Actually, we simply set a minimum figure that they had to service 15 machines a week. If they finished early, they

could go home early, as long as the work was done right. If they did more, they'd get a bonus. So we started out with paying people by the hour, when they weren't very good at it, then when they got good, we'd inform them we would now pay them by the piece, and the piece rate would allow them to make even more money. So they can afford to work fewer hours, and when they need time off, they can work more before or after. This work is very critical for survival so we have to hire people who want to do a good job, and the way to do that is you show them respect, and they respect their employer in return. Also, it gives the superstars the opportunity to be compensated for it, either in being able to take more time off or being able to make more money. "When survival is at issue, you want people to do the job right, not to just do the quickest job possible. But we did want to find some way to compensate the stars who can do a good job and do it fast, as opposed to ordinary people who can do a good job in a reasonable time."

So, anyway, divide 50 million machines by 750, the number one person can reasonably do in a year, and you need about 70,000 people. As we needed more machines as more people were born, we had to figure ways to automate the repair, maintenance and replacement of machines. Otherwise we'd need as many people to run the Afterlife as were dead there. Even though equipment got more reliable as time went on, you still have problems when you have enormous scales such as we use. With 16 billion active pieces of hardware, with even a 1/10 of 1% failure rate, that's still 16 million machines a year needing to be replaced due to failures. Even with replacing them every 20 years on top of that, it's still a lot of equipment. About a billion pieces a year, on average. In fact, we use so much hardware that we have factories on 5 planets that build all the equipment we use. We also try to recycle back to each planet the same amount of resources we use so we aren't a net resource sink to any world where we have systems built.

Now, maybe, you can see why we haven't done other worlds yet. We're still working out the maintenance issues running the people from one universe. But you're right about one thing, once we get the systems to where they are 90% self maintaining, then we'll set up another universe and try again. Right now, we don't even maintain them any more, we simply set up rooms like this, clean room style, with extremely low dust counts, and then replace the equipment when it fails or when it's scheduled for maintenance. We then send it back for recycling and it's melted down and made into new machines again. If we had to have one person handle 50% more, or 1,000 machines a year, we'd need about a million people. By automating service replacements, we can cut the number of manual builds by an enormous number. We still have to have people to load replacement machines into the racks and remove them, so given a billion a year, and maybe 20 minutes per machine, we need about 40,000 people. Once we can cut that down to 10,000 people, then we'll be sufficiently automated to consider starting another Afterlife.

"There is also one other thing I want to show you." They take the elevator back up to the top. She uses the exit door, and they are in another security room, similar to the one in the other two buildings. They exit into what looks like an ordinary building lobby at ground level. Out front is a large curved driveway, where a limousine and police officers are waiting. She walks over to the limousine, one of the police officers opens the door, and she waives 246 in. The two men gasp, as she gets in.

She waves at the driver to take off, and he does. She smiled. "I've just committed a major breach of etiquette here, and they know it."

"What did you do, use the wrong door?"

"No, I just let a commoner go ahead of me. 'The Queen waits for no one.'"

"You mean that...?"

"Yep. Her Worship, Empress Diane of North America, and Her Majesty, Queen of the United States. Mexico got mad at the U.S. over California, Texas was fighting Mexico for independence, Canada got caught up in a civil war with Quebec that spilled over into the U.S., and so all four countries were fighting. We didn't even have to kill that many soldiers. We mostly flew over battle areas and doused everyone with sticky foam, the more they fought the tighter it grabbed them. Then we blew up their forts and ordnance depots, captured their leaders and offered everyone the terms for surrender. It took us two weeks to end a war that had been going on for six and a half years.

"It was the last battle that convinced the generals. As I told you, two men armed with belt-loaded machine guns who were protected behind transparent bullet-proof shields, supported by one ammo loader each, and eight million rounds of ammo, took on ten thousand men. Four men against ten thousand. No dead or wounded on our side. 9,514 dead on theirs, 332 wounded. 54 men survived by either running away or hiding under piles of bodies. Most of them never saw it coming, they just heard the shooting and shot toward it.

"We told them we can send a hundred men out with this sort of capacity. And they would come after them personally. And we showed them some other things. Hand grenades. Planes. Planes equipped with machine guns. Bombs dropped from planes. Actually, nothing we showed them would have surprised a soldier back in say, 1925 or so except the planes weren't propeller driven. A group of a thousand people defeated the combined armies of four countries having perhaps a million soldiers between them. And then we went over to Europe and Japan, among other countries, and told them we'd do the same thing to them unless they left us alone. So things have been pretty quiet over the last two hundred and fifty years."

"What, have you been using clones to stay alive?"

"No, basically I visit about one hour a month. So I take two days and pop in and out, and cover a whole year. Other people do the miscellaneous grunt work that requires day-to-day attention. Every few years we have an announcement of a new ruler. Nobody knows what I look like except the small staff of Zombies we rotate in and out on a regular basis."

"I'm excited by our next project. We're planning our next site to move the Afterlife. We move it around every so often just to lessen the possibility of losing a lot if there's a disaster. We're thinking of breaking it down into lots more, smaller sites. We had the land available so we went with large ones."

"Ahh, here we are. This is a seminar I thought you might like to see."

Chapter 136

“If they don’t have vacuum tubes, how do they have television?”

They get out of the car, Diane first, then 246. They walk into a building reminiscent of a convention center, and walk down the hall to a meeting room. A man at the gate takes two tickets from Diane, and looks curiously at 246. Before the man can say anything, the two of them go into the hall.

A room big enough to have perhaps 500 or 600 people is maybe 1/4 full. A man is on stage talking about some subject which 246 has very little interest in. The room is dark because the man has a projector displaying slides on the screen behind him. As the talk continues, 246 notices that the auditorium is starting to fill up. Before long, the auditorium is not only full, but has people standing in the back trying to watch. The man talking comes to the end of his speech, and people applaud.

Another man comes on stage, and speaks. “And now, of course, the speaker you’ve all come to see, Ellen Richards.” Vociferous applause, cheers, shouts, whistles and stamping accompany the announcement. A lady walks out on stage, and up to the microphone. The audience becomes totally hushed as they wait for her to speak.

“Good evening, fellow fans! What can I do you for?” Everyone in the audience cheers

“For the benefit of the small number of people in the audience who’ve come because a friend of theirs dragged them along, I am talking about one of the most popular Science Fiction shows to come out on video, and eventually spawned four parallel shows. This, of course, is the *Afterlife* series, a fictional story of life in a world where people have died. I have come to discuss a few details about things I’ve been able to discover.

“First, I’ve talked to a number of experts in the world of animation and video, and they tell us that nobody else has come close to being able to duplicate the special effects that the development team at Trans-Universe Studios has been able to come up with in the making of the five shows that make up the *Afterlife* fiction universe: *Afterlife*; *Afterlife: Frontier*; *Afterlife: Law and Disorder*; the adult series *There is Sex Afterlife*, and of course, the show that made the series famous, *Afterlife: Instrument of God*.”

The audience cheers quite a bit after mention of the last one. “The one character that stands out above all of them, is of course, the star of the original show, none other than Supervisor 246.

“Now, first of all, the world he resides in is, of course, a total fiction, and our best scientists tell us the technical capability to create such a thing would be beyond the capacity of any world or worlds to reproduce. Even if you had the resources of many planets, you couldn’t build the equipment necessary, and the space would be enormous. The gears and levers alone of a difference engine, if such a thing could even work, would amount to potentially covering several hundred thousand to several million square miles. Basically something the size of the Sahara Desert.

“Many of you know the reason Albuquerque was chosen for this conference, because only a few miles outside of town is a super-secret government facility where some strange things are being developed. Nobody knows much about it except its name.

“The classified government research facility, Area 51, has thousands of people working in an area covering something estimated at 500 square miles. To give you an example, if we were to

imagine such a thing was there, it would take one thousand, perhaps ten thousand Area 51s to provide the surface space for something necessary to recreate what is involved to do what the story claims is being done.

“In fact, the idea of a computer system, a machine capable of human speech or of understanding commands of people is something that the best minds have admitted is impossible. The best technical development of 200 years ago, the Jacquard Loom, was one of the most technologically advanced form of computing device of its era, and today, even now, the bleeding edge of technology which they are working on in the scientific laboratories, the vacuum tube, may not even be possible. And yet the story claims the vacuum tube is ancient technology. Thus we must presume the story as it is portrayed is from a world potentially thousands if not tens of thousands of years ahead of us in the future.

246 turns to Diane, and whispers, “If they don’t have vacuum tubes, how do they have television?”

“It’s basically mechanical. I’ll explain later.”

On stage, of course, Ellen is continuing to talk. “The enormous complexity of the world depicted in these fictional program series implies a huge writing staff plus an enormous number of actors to handle the thousands of parts involved. I’d like to show you one of the more interesting scenes from an episode of the show.”

A film starts and it shows a huge crowd in front of the Administration building, rowdy and agitated, blocked from entering by police and Welcoming Department security guards. Joan is standing on the podium. The camera zooms in through the glass to show 246 and Barney teleport in. Barney speaks to 246, “What do you think they’ll do to me?”

“My guess is, nothing.” 246 holds up a copy of a document, which is, of course, the ordinance^{xxii} making assaults on Welcoming Department prisoners a special offense. “I’m going to stop this mob with a piece of paper.”

“Are you kidding?”

“Nope.” The camera pans back out to the front of the building and shows through the glass where inside the building, 246 is walking out the entrance door, escorting Barney by the handcuffs. The camera cuts to the inside of a television studio control room, where various people are viewing many monitors, directing video shots, and we see a video of 246 facing one monitor, him and Barney in another, and another one showing the back of his and Barney’s head and the crowd behind him as he speaks again, this time to the crowd.

The video stops, with the control room on screen. “This scene is supposed to represent a control room in a television station. The wall in front shows 15 separate monitors. Estimates are that the level of complexity capable of providing this level of technical capacity in broadcast television is decades in the future. To provide smooth, real-time switching of video like this in a room this small - about the size of an office - would require huge leaps in technology.

Basically, to handle switching of even four signals, today, requires electro mechanical switching equipment requiring a room bigger than this auditorium.

“In fact, that’s the reason we believe the show is done on film, in order to allow for quick camera cutting by physically cutting negatives and then processing the cut film. The technical quality of this show outshines anything that any other studio or television network has been able to produce.”

And now, the rest of the scene continues on screen. “I’m sure most of you know me, my name

is Supervisor 246, I am the Administrator of the Welcoming Department. I suspect a number of you are apparently very mad at this gentleman standing next to me. I also think a number of you would like to hurt this man. Is that the case?"

A very loud "Yes!" erupts from the crowd.

The camera focuses in on the view in the control room from behind 246 and dissolves into a "live" shot of the crowd in the front of the building. The video freezes. Ellen returns to the microphone.

She points at the image on screen of thousands of people. "A number of people, using very careful examination of the frames in this and other scenes, over many months, counted all of the different images on screen to estimate the number of people in this one scene. And we all came up with a number that surprised us, because we can't figure out how it was done, nor does anyone in the industry have an answer as to how.

"Does anyone care to guess how many people were shown in that crowd scene?"

Various people speak up. "5,000." "12,000." "18,326." Some people laugh at the exact number given. "25,000." "20,000" "50,000."

Diane leans over and whispers in 246's ear. "I know you had the computer tell you when you checked on it later. Go ahead and yell it out, they won't believe you."

So 246 does. "218,134."

Ellen responds. "Whoever said that, your answer is probably about right. We estimated more than 200,000 unique faces in the crowd. We have no idea how this video was produced. I'll tell you, whoever merged crowd scenes from films and tv shows has done an amazing job. You could actually believe that there are 200,000 people in the crowd in front of the building. As I said, the technical quality of the production values of this show are so high that the producers of this show have been besieged by other companies begging for the opportunity to have their shows made using the same technology which Trans-Universe has developed.

"In fact, as most of you know, it was the demand by the North American Broadcasting System that the company share its video technology through licensing or risk cancellation that caused the company to start their own cable network and carry the show, in four series, greatly expanded, with each program running for six hours a day. That they can produce a continuous television network with a full 168 hours of programming, without repeats, 365 days a year, implies a hell of a lot of people are involved. Basically we estimate that for a show like a soap opera that runs one hour every day, you can get by with perhaps a hundred people. Now, even if you have some savings in personnel because of jobs that can be done by one person over several shows, we're still estimating the production staff alone for a set of shows of this size, length and quality would be in the neighborhood of five to 10,000 people. The reports are that there are less than 900 people working for Trans-Universe, and nobody has any idea how a group that small can produce such massive amounts of programming.^{xxiii}

"In fact, the threat of cancellation turned out to be an empty threat. It has been announced this morning that because of a severe drop in stock price due to a loss of revenues from the show leaving the network, Trans-Universe Productions, Inc. has put in a tender offer to purchase the North American Broadcasting System Corporation, so it may be likely that the show will be returning to free broadcast television!" The crowd cheers.

"And now, I'd like to talk about the most significant character in the series, of course, Supervisor 246. I'd like to offer you some observations I and my staff at Queen's University of

Colorado at Colorado Springs ^{xxiv} have made about his character and what he believes in.

“While Supervisor 246 publicly claims to be agnostic, the values he expresses, his relative familiarity with scripture, his actions and comments, tend to show a strongly Christian bias in his beliefs. Even if you consider some of the statements he has made with respect to religion, we believe they are attempts to ‘winnow out the chaff’ and cause people to think carefully about their beliefs. It’s quite obvious that the production staff have set up the character in order to show a strongly religious person with a playful sense of humor.”

246 leans over to Diane, “She doesn’t know me very well. Spiritual, I’d agree with her. Religious, no.”

Diane whispers back, “There’s a difference?”

“Spiritual, as I see it, implies a belief system about one’s existence. Religious implies a belief in a correct answer as to one’s destination after one dies, or at least in a deity of some kind.”

“...and in coming to this conclusion I present certain points from the show.” Another clip runs, where Tom’s funeral is taking place, or rather, his sleep. 246’s Bible quote is featured. “And here is another.” A quote from a conference where 246 got into a discussion with another person on a religious issue. “It’s clearly obvious that 246 has an extensive knowledge of religious issues, which, based on his arguments are typically those of someone with deep religious convictions. Despite his claims of agnosticism, 246 clearly indicates a very Christian attitude with respect to his religious beliefs.”

246 forgets to whisper. “Oh this is utterly ridiculous, I mean...”

The man sitting next to him turns, “Would you mind, I’m trying to...Hey!” He stands up and points, “It’s him! It’s 246!”

Chapter 137

“Son, have you forgotten they don’t have money in the Afterlife?”

The whole audience breaks out in applause, as Ellen speaks. “We had a suspicion someone from Trans-Universe might show up, since they asked for tickets to this event instead of the usual license fee for use of clips from the show. But this, I wasn’t expecting at all. Come on up here!”

Diane leans over. “Go on, enjoy it!” So 246 stands and gets another round of applause. He walks out of the row, and steps up on stage.

Ellen steps back out of range to find a seat in the back of the stage, and 246 stands behind the podium, in front of the microphone. Noticing there’s a stool, he grabs it and sits down. “Well, I don’t know that anyone wants to hear me talk about things, would you prefer that I answer questions?”

The crowd roars with an astounding “YES!”

246 turns around to Ellen, “How much time do we have?”

“A little under two hours.”

“Okay, then, what I’ll do is this, I’ll go around the room, let people ask questions but they’ll have to be quick, concise and to the point, and I’ll answer them if it’s not going to take long. If it would, I’ll ask the question be written down and I’ll have an answer sent back here.” He turns back to Ellen. “Can you arrange to take written questions?”

“Of course.”

“Okay, then, what we can do is that if you have a long question or you don’t get called, write down a question and pass it on up here, and I’ll see that an answer is forthcoming, either I or a member of my staff will answer it for you.” He turns back to Ellen again. “I’ll have the entire set of answers sent back to you, I presume you can have them distributed among everyone who is interested?”

“Yes, we can have it included in our newsletter.”

“Okay then. Let me know when there’s ten minutes left. I’ll start down here.”

“I’ve read many of the books that follow the series, and I’ve even looked at the *Legal Code of the Afterlife* and thought it was amazing. What I’m curious to know is, why does section 1320 provide for the game “Rock, Paper, Scissors” for settling disputes?”

“Well, what would you use?”

“I’d flip a coin, of course.”

“Son, have you forgotten they don’t have money in the Afterlife? Your question?”

“What’s your real name?”

“If you know anything about me, you should know - and know why - I’m not going to tell you. Your question?”

“How do they get such seamless visuals on TV? Your show’s images of people are so crisp and clear compared with most other shows.”

“I don’t know technical details. Have someone write that down and the technical people can try to answer that. You.”

“In the story at this point, how long have you been in the Afterlife and how old were you when you died?”

“55 standard years. I was 35 when I died. You.”

“Exactly how many women did you have before you died and how many after?”

“I had four girlfriends, one at a time, and probably a dozen one-night stands or women I saw a few times but didn’t have a long-term relationship with from about age 16 or so. I have no idea how many after but it probably exceeds a quarter of a million, maybe close to half a million. You.”

This continues until Ellen informs him that they have ten minutes left. “So, anyway, I’ll give this lady time to finish and they can hand me all the questions.” He walks off stage to thunderous applause and returns to his seat. Ellen returns to the podium. “Well, this I didn’t expect, and I’m really at a loss for words now. I guess I should ask, will you stick around after the show and sign some autographs?”

246 yells back, “Of course.”

“Thank you. Well, anyway, I guess that’s it, then, we’ll set up a table out front since we have to vacate the hall within the next half hour. So, anyway, thank you for coming, everyone, and I guess we have to thank 246, whomever he is, for showing up for our little meeting!”

The audience breaks up into applause, and a large number come over to 246, wanting to shake his hand.

246 ends up out in the corridor, where a table with chairs has been set up. People stop by, handing him copies of various books to sign, and some just to shake hands. This continues for quite some time, until Ellen, who has been sitting next to him, announces that they have to leave. A number of people moan or boo in disgust, but the crowd is otherwise restrained.

The two of them walk outside to what would essentially be a large parking lot, although the term is a bit misleading, unless you consider a dirt lot, with about a hundred horse-drawn carts, a parking lot. She leads him over to one. 246 realizes that Diane has disappeared. He looks around. “Uh, I’m curious, there was a…”

“Oh yeah, she left. But she left me with a letter for you.” She hands over an envelope.

“Oh” He opens it and reads:

246, this will give you instructions on how to continue your trip. I didn’t really want to say goodbye, I know I’d be really sad about it. So this gives me an excuse not to. But I will see you again, someday, when you love me back into the world.

Diane

Chapter 138

“It... reminded him of... *Little House on the Prairie* meets Wal-Mart.”

Within the envelope are some slips that look like money, and some instructions to tell the person where to go and what he is to do once he gets there. Someone comes out with a large sack. “Here’s all the questions people asked.”

“Thanks.” She makes a noise and uses the reins to signal the horses to move. As they roll along the street, she turns to him. “So, can you tell me who you are or do you plan to stay in character?”

“I don’t tell anyone my name, they have to figure it out from the clues.”

“Oh come on, I’m not going to tell anyone.”

“No, sorry.”

They continue to sit in silence for a few minutes, until they arrive at the train station. A locomotive is sitting, giving off steam, while passengers are getting on and baggage is being loaded. Ellen pulls up in front of the “Hertz Rent-a-wagon” return aisle. She gets out and he does the same. She walks over to a counter, and hands the clerk a card. He picks up a phone handset. “Operator, would you get me Toll Free 403362 please. Hello, this is Hertz Rent-a-Wagon location 1571, I have a charge from an Ellen Richards, number 7702633.”

He hands the phone handset to her. “Hello? Yes. 7322. Thank you.”

She hands it back, he returns it to his ear. “Thank you.” He hangs up the phone. “The transaction was approved, I just need you to sign there.” She does. “Thank you for choosing Hertz, and I hope you’ll rent from us again.”

“I probably will.” They leave and walk into the station. She points to the counter. “You’ll need to buy a ticket on the northbound express. The train won’t be leaving for another ten minutes, you’ll have enough time.”

He walks over to the counter and waits behind about three people. After they finish he gets to the front of the line. “A ticket on the northbound express, please”

“Eighty-seven fifty.” He hands the man one of the bills that has “100” written on it. “Uh, no, sorry, it’s eight thousand, seven hundred and fifty.” So 246 hands him one of the bills that has “10,000” on it. “Thank you sir, here’s your change.”

He takes it and walks out to the platform, where Ellen was waiting. “I was afraid you were going to miss the train!” The gate agents examine their tickets, but do not take them, and they get on board. 246 walks into the coach, and he thinks he must have been taken back to 1850 or something. The coach has wooden bench seats, horizontal windows and apparently no air conditioning. As they sit down, he mutters to himself, “Where on earth did they get such ancient equipment?”

Ellen looks at him. “Ancient? This train is only four years old! In fact, the engine is brand new, it’s one of the new coal-burning locomotives they just got off the assembly line this month. There was a big article about it in the *Wall Street Journal*, it may mean the end of wood-burning locomotives.”

“I’m surprised they haven’t gone to diesel locomotives.”

“Diesel? What’s that? Oh, let me guess, you’re going to continue to pretend you’re from another world and don’t know this one? So I guess you’re still in character from the Sci Fi program you work on. I suppose you’ll be telling me about things like airplanes and computers

and all the stuff they made up for your show. All right, I'll play along."

246 realizes that maybe he'd better not say anything, if he told her the truth she'd probably think he was nuts. The train jerks forward as they roll along. A man in the bench across from them leaves his newspaper behind and walks out of the car. So 246 decides to pick it up and read. When he reads the headlines and some of the articles, he understands.

Basically most of the technology of the society he was in has been frozen somewhere in the 19th century. However, the prices of everything are about a factor of 100 from what he would expect. Even the front page of the newspaper where the price is "fifty dollars."

He continues reading the newspaper and then begins watching the farms go by. He notices the train seems to be going exceptionally fast for a coal-fired train, then the train reaches a very fast speed and the engine goes quiet. "How the hell did they do that?"

Ellen turns back to him, "Oh, that's the new feature of the new coal engines, it's a two-step process. The coal-burning engine brings the train up to above 60 miles per hour, I think it's 62, then the other half kicks in and brings the train up to 165 miles an hour. That's what I was reading about in the *Journal*. It's really amazing."

While 246 wasn't really big on technical details of a lot of things, he knew a few things and he figured out what she was describing. ("Yeah, it ought to be,") 246 was thinking. ("From what she was describing, they'd developed some way to make a ramjet engine that could start at less than 500 miles an hour.")

"I have an idea. Why don't you read some of the questions in this bag, and the ones you can answer, do that, and the ones you can't, take with you and have the studio send them to me."

"Sounds like a good idea." So he starts reading the papers she has, and most of them he can answer. Which makes sense, since most of the questions were about him, personally. Every so often the conductor walks by. "Taos! Drop coming up for Taos. Passengers dropping at Taos need to move to the last car!" He repeats this as he walks down the car and out the back. A few minutes later 246 hears a clank and a screech from behind the train.

At the same time, the train seems to be going faster. "Is it me or does the train seem to have sped up?"

"Well, of course, silly. When we dropped the last car, the engine has less to pull so we'll go a bit faster. By the time we hit Colorado Springs we'll probably be above 200 miles an hour."

"Wait a minute, the train 'dropped' the last car. Doesn't the train stop?"

"On an express, are you kidding? About an hour or so after we get into Colorado Springs, a local will come by and pick up the cars and take them back to the start of the line. Haven't you ever ridden a train before?"

"Not like this, no."

"You've got to be kidding, but I'll play along. Okay, if you're in a small town, you take a local to the largest major city, which provides an express to several communities along the way. For example, for me to catch this express to go up to Albuquerque, I had to travel over to Denver. There's an express in each direction serving all the major towns along the route, one car or so for each significant town. It drops the car at each town, which rolls to a stop and people and baggage unload. Then the local comes by, collects the car and anyone wanting to go that way, up or down the line until it reaches the major city where the train is reassembled for the express run. I mean, twenty miles an hour is fine if you're shipping coal, but would anyone want to take something like a whole day to travel from Chicago to Kansas City? Or two days to go from

New York to Los Angeles?”

“I see.” 246 did see; it was exactly how airlines ran “hub and spoke” routing in which they had smaller towns feed into larger hub cities. You might have two or three flights a day to a particular town, but it meant you could get from any point to another, although in most cases you had to change planes. Or trains in this case.

The conductor announces another stop - Pueblo - and the noise of a car detaching behind them. Then, “This drop is Colorado Springs, Drop coming up for Colorado Springs. Passengers not dropping at Colorado Springs need to exit this car immediately.”

“Ah, good, this is our drop.”

This time, a much louder clank and rumble, and then a slight jerk as the car veers to the left.

There is some rumbling from the floor, presumably the brakes, 246 thought, then a loud thump as the car shook a little, then slowed almost to a stop. It then rolled a bit, and came to a rest.

As they got out of the rail car, 246 noticed it was sitting on a bed of wheels instead of a truck as it was when they got on. Then he notices that the bed of wheels extends all the way in front of the platform in place of rails. 246 bends down to take a closer look, and Ellen notices.

“Actually, I don’t know how that works, I just know that it’s supposed to be more efficient than the old system.” They saw a man in an orange vest using a long stick with a hammer at the end, doing a “knock test” on the wheels. “Oh, here’s the station engineer, maybe he can tell you.

Excuse me.”

“Yes, ma’am?”

“My friend here is curious about how this works.”

“Oh yeah, sure, you see it... Wait a minute, you look an awful lot like that guy on TV, the funny one from the show about some imaginary future world where he’s always picking up women all the time.”

“Yeah, that’s him.”

“My wife loves that show, she really hopes there was such a thing. Well, anyway, what happens is the coach rolls in, probably doing about 210, 220 miles per hour. The coach rolls into a series of rollers, which causes the carriage underneath to detach. Now, what would normally happen is they’d use some kind of friction on the wheels to brake them, wasting the energy as heat. Instead, the rollers here are connected to a flywheel, which requires resistance to move, as the coach rolls along these wheels, it forces them to move, that slows the coach down. They absorb energy, and transfer it into a storage battery. We don’t get all of it, but we do recapture about 90%. It’s how we light the building at night without having to buy electricity.”

246 thinks for a moment. “I’m curious, what would happen if it was going too fast?”

“Well, if you were to look down the track either way, you’d see that there is a steep incline at each end. It would slow the car down, and it would then roll back to the platform. Never happened yet, we’re very careful to be sure we can capture all the energy we can get.”

Ellen says, “Gee, thanks.”

“You’re welcome, ma’am.” He walks on, resuming doing pounding on the wheels.

246 came to the conclusion that they had some interesting combinations of very old technology and stuff that didn’t even exist in his world. As they walked into the station, she walked over to the counter. “You need to turn in your ticket for the refund.”

“Refund?”

“Oh come on, didn't you think the price was expensive for a trip of under four hundred miles?”

“I have no idea, I don't know prices here.”

Her eyes roll around in her head. “Movie stars! Okay, when you buy a ticket they charge you the price to the end of the line. If you go anywhere else, you turn the ticket back in and they then reissue it for as far as you actually went, and they give you a refund for the difference. It's why they don't collect tickets along the way. Prevents fraud. Prevents employees from giving away trips to friends.”

“Well, what about people who can't afford the whole trip, but who could afford the short trip?”

“That's what you take a local for. Or you buy a round-trip on credit, then when you finish you turn it in and the difference is credited back. That's what I do. Besides, it isn't really that much money, it would be expensive but it's not like, at least until I got back and got the refund, that I couldn't afford it.”

“I see.”

He steps up to the counter and hands the agent his ticket. The agent looks at it, pulls a ticket out of a stack, cancels it, then hands it to 246. “Okay, the actual price is 693, so here we go, 8750, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight thousand, fifty, and seven. Thank you for choosing Amtrak. Have a nice day.” He does the same thing for her, only giving her a receipt instead of a cash refund. They walk out of the station, and over to, what for lack of a better term, would be a cable-car terminal. About six rail tracks with overhead wires run in front of the station, about half of the tracks are in use, having cars stopped on them, looking very much like the ones 246 had seen in the ads for Rice-a-Roni, as he had never been to San Francisco, and thus had never seen a cable car up close.

They walk over to one of the empty tracks, and Ellen stops at a signboard. She pulls a pocket watch on a chain out of a pocket on her dress. “Looks like it will be about twenty minutes.”

Sixteen minutes later a cable car arrives with “94 - W Cimarron - E Powers - Constitution - US 24 to SR94 at Yoder” on the front.

He gets on, and the operator says, “One seventy-five.”

246 gets an idea, looks over the cash he has, and drops a 200 in the farebox. The operator looks at him. “Gee thanks.”

“I am correct it's only twenty five more than the fare?”

“Yes, that's correct. Under the rules, I get to keep the difference as a tip. That's why I said ‘thanks’.”

“You're welcome.” He sits down next to Ellen, about ½ way back. A few minutes later, the cable car rolls off. At a leisurely 35 kilometers an hour, the car rolls along its track, and some people get on or off without waiting for the car to stop. Every so often it does and people get on and off. After about 15 minutes, the car has no more seats left and people getting on remain standing.

As 246 was watching the tram roll along, something about the trip bothered him but he couldn't put his finger on it. Other than that the street was very clean. Since he only saw the rails and bicycles either passing or being passed, the street it was using probably exclusively for trams and didn't allow cars.

At one stop an elderly woman, leaning on a cane, walked on to the tram. She dropped some money in the farebox, and started to walk past the people in the front of the car. A man stood up, grabbed hold of a bar, and motioned to his seat. The woman sat down, and very faintly

thanked him.

(“Well, that’s something very different,”) 246 thought, and quite refreshing. (“A white man just gave his seat to a black woman. Looks like they’ve come quite a ways in race relations, even if some of the technology seems old.”)

A while later, Ellen taps him on the shoulder, and they get up. They reach a stop, and get off. The car rolls on. They walk about two blocks to a bicycle store with a sign in the window saying “Murph’s Bicycles.” They go in and walk up to the counter.

“Hi Ellen, I have your bicycle here. As it turns out, I was able to rent it to someone for the day so I owe you a hundred instead of you owing me anything for storage.”

“Gee thanks. Just keep it on account, I’ll probably end up using it for something.”

“Okay, then, can I maybe find something for your friend here?”

“Yeah, he’s going to need a bicycle too. Probably just a rental though.”

The man smiles. “Well, let’s see what we have. Based on your height, I’d say, here’s a nice 26 inch fifteen speed, it’s new, and I can rent it to you for thirty-five hundred a week or sell it for, oh, eighteen thousand. I also have some customer-owned rentals if you’re willing to take a used bicycle, they’re less expensive.”

246 notices a motorbike at the front of the store. “What’s that?”

“Son, you are looking at one of the finest pieces of transportation technology out there. Brand new, first of its kind, only been out two months, and hard to get. It’s an electric bicycle from the best cycle maker in the country, Harley-Davidson. Only made a few thousand of them, and very expensive. Only five of them available in all of Colorado Springs and El Paso County, and I had to fight to get one. I don’t expect to sell it any time soon but it’s been very good at getting people in the store to look, and I’ve rented it out a few times.”

Ellen looks at it longingly. “Yeah, I’d love to get one. I wish I could afford it.”

246 looks at the proprietor. “How much is it?”

“Young man, before I tell you, let me explain something to you. It’s fully electric, self-powered so you don’t pedal it. Runs off house current and you can get about fifty miles before needing to recharge, or you can change out the battery in ten minutes at a store if you’re going a longer distance. And it seats two. This thing will go as fast as forty miles an hour, which is amazing if you’ve never ridden anything on the ground at that speed. Now, if you rent it the charge includes unlimited battery exchange here at the store if you don’t have time to recharge it fully, and I’ll even loan you an extra one if you want it. Now, because it’s expensive I rent it by the day, or the week, and by law the rental includes insurance. Right now it rents for ninety-two hundred a day, forty-nine thousand a week, and it sells for eight hundred seventy-three thousand.”

“I see. “It reminded him of the charges at a car rental place. Although most car rental companies wouldn’t sell you their cars directly. He wondered what cars rented for, if this was the price to rent a motorbike. Of course, the numbers don’t mean anything if he has nothing to compare it to. Well, what really matters is how much things cost relative to what someone makes. If people make, say, a couple thousand bucks an hour, then prices are probably close to what they were back on his earth, if the prices he remembered from the TV ads that came up to the afterlife were comparable. If people make a couple thousand bucks a *day*, then prices are very expensive. He turned to Ellen. “How far do we have to go?”

“About ten miles, not far.”

He looked in the envelope and realized from what was there, that he had about 4 ½ million “dollars.” So he thought for a moment. He could have bought, right off the floor, four of them - if the man had had that many to sell, that is - but if they’re brand new, it would be hard for him to explain how he knew how to ride one. If he were to admit that he had been a motorcycle courier to support himself in college they’d never have believed it.^{xxv} “Do you know how to drive one of these things?”

“Well, yeah, I do, I was one of the first people who rented it from him, but don’t think you have to rent one just to impress me.”

“I’m just thinking I don’t know if I want to pedal 20 miles round trip.”

“We could rent a bicycle for two. That might be fun.”

“Sir, if you’re not into exercise, I can rent you a spring loader.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s a big spring, attaches to the pedals, and you just ride along. Gives a push on them and keeps you going at a reasonable speed. I’ve actually got one model that’s good for about fifteen miles on flat terrain. I could rent you two of them for an additional eighteen hundred a week, basically you have to wind it for about twenty minutes for a full trip. And if you have an electric butter churn or ice cream maker it can crank one of these in about three hours. Ellen, don’t you have one of these on one of your commuting bikes?”

“Actually I have the regenerative one, to provide extra power going up hills. I like the exercise but when you hit a steep hill it can mean the difference between making it uphill with reasonable effort and having to get off and walk.”

So 246 decides to get a bicycle with a spring. Which he puts in the basket in front instead of hooking it up to the drive train. As they roll on down the road, she asks him, “Why did you buy a spring loader if you’re not using it?”

“I bought it in case I get tired or can’t keep up with you.”

“Oh.”

As he passed by a bakery, he got an idea. “I want to stop in here for a moment.”

He parked in the large bicycle rack. He walked in and went inside. He looked around until he found the item he was looking for: “Stone ground whole wheat bread, \$115 a pound.”

He then left - without buying anything - and went back out to his bicycle. “Is there a lumber yard or a construction site near here?”

“Yes, there’s a Home Depot about five blocks that way.”

Arriving there, if he hadn’t realized the difference in this world from his from the parking lot back at the show, he would have been surprised. It kind of reminded him of something like *Little House on the Prairie* meets Wal-Mart. Consider a typical big-box hardware store but where the parking lot - which really is a lot, as in, made of dirt - and customer loading area are full of horse-drawn carts. And like so many other stores he had noticed, there is considerable rack space for bicycles.

He walks in and surprisingly enough, it reminds him a lot of the typical large hardware store he remembered from when he was alive before and from video on tv. One thing he noticed was that every appliance was electric. Even the chain saws all had cords. There were no gas appliances anywhere. Neither natural gas nor gasoline. A lot of battery-powered portable items, but nothing which could run on any form of fuel.

Now he understood. This world had never developed petroleum. Or liquified or gaseous

hydrocarbon-based technology such as Diesel engines or natural gas. Probably ran power plants on coal or water power, maybe wind. Don't know if they have solar power. So all transportation systems are either run by catenaries - overhead electrical wires like the cable car - or they're powered by battery, or by coal, or by human or animal power.

He wouldn't be surprised if Diane's limousine was an import from earth. Probably had to import the fuel for it, too, if it ran on gasoline.

But that brought up another question. A lot of people think about equivalent things at the same time. The only reason that the old AT&T before it was broken up wasn't called the Gray System instead of the Bell System was that Alexander Graham Bell had gotten to the Patent Office ahead of Elisha Gray. Edison had discarded the idea of the wireless some years before Marconi had independently re-invented it. Then later the Supreme Court overruled itself and ruled that the true inventor of the wireless was Nicola Tesla. If Otto Diesel - or whatever his equivalent was in this world - hadn't gotten the idea of an engine that could run on oils, why hadn't someone else thought of it? Come to think of it, he hadn't noticed any airplanes or anything related to air travel. But he still wanted to find out something, the real reason he had come into the store in the first place. He walked up to the customer service counter.

"Can I help you, sir?"

"Yeah, I need some information if maybe you can help me, or maybe tell me where I can find out."

"I can try. What can I do for you?"

After decades of hearing it in reverse, and using it that way, 246 stopped himself from correcting the clerk. Ellen smiled a bit; she understood, or at least to the extent of thinking 246 was staying in character, not knowing that 246 *wasn't really acting*. "What I was thinking about was having some work done on a place, and I wanted to get a rough idea of how much a journeyman carpenter makes per hour."

"Well, actually, we do provide estimates on various types of work, if you're interested."

"What I am thinking about is if I call a local carpenter to do some work, I just want to get an idea of how much a journeyman carpenter would charge per hour."

"Oh sure, let me see if my manager would know. Hey, Andy?"

"Yeah, Carl?"

"The guy here wants to get a rough idea of what it would cost per hour to hire a carpenter."

"Well, I suppose if you had a small job and it didn't require a permit, I suppose you could probably get one for around four grand an hour."

Now he knew. The way he remembered for determining the general standard of living: how long in minutes or hours would it take for a journeyman carpenter to earn one kilo of the standard bread for the area. This determines the minimum standard for survival. And it means that it would take about four minutes of labor a day. This implies a fairly good standard of living, so he presumed wages are about the same as they were back on his world, adjusted by a factor of 100. He guessed that they must not have change, like coins, so everything is a factor of 100 higher than what you'd expect. The only question was why powered transport was so expensive, as witness a minibike being priced at about the equivalent of a small automobile. But he'd figure that one out later.

He thanked the clerk and they left the store. "I found out what I wanted to know. Where are we going?"

She pointed. “It’s about 10 ½ miles that way, with some turns.”
“Lead on.”

Chapter 139

“Nice girls don’t do that.”

So they rode on, and on, and on, and 246 started to realize that he hadn’t used his leg muscles this much before, so he started to get a bit of a cramp. So he stopped for a few minutes, then decided to hook up the spring thingy he had bought, or rented, or whatever it was. He tried it, and when he released the spring, it worked, just as the man said, his bicycle picked up speed until it was moving about as fast as it had been when he was peddling. He started to go past Ellen, so he decided to slow down. Only problem was, it apparently didn’t have a speed control. So he tried moving the stick that released the spring back, only to find it wouldn’t go back.

“How do I stop this thing?!” he yelled.

“Push the lever down and back.”

“It doesn’t go down!”

“I mean, push in on the lever, then push it across.”

That worked, and the bicycle slowed to a stop. “When they first came out, people would run their leg past the lever, or otherwise brushed against it, and caused it to stop. So now you have to push the lever in and back in in order to make it stop.”

“I see. How far do we have left?”

“Oh, another two miles.”

So he started it up again, and off they went, with him slowing down his bicycle from time-to-time. At one point she signaled for a left turn, and he followed. Several more turns lead to a road, and a dirt driveway with a mailbox. She stopped. He did the same. “Your place?”

“Uh huh.” They continued on up to a fairly nice looking home, a typical one-story brick ranch type home, minus the usual garage as would be expected in homes in our world. They came to a stop at the front door, and dismounted their bicycles. She walked up to the door, and turned the knob, pushing open the door. (“Small-town environment,”) he thought, (“where people still leave their doors unlocked.”)

He followed her in, and she closed the door. She took off her shoes, and put them by the entrance. He did the same thing. She walked back toward the bathroom, turned on the light, and went into the medicine cabinet, where she pulled out two t-shaped objects, one green and one orange, and held them out in her hand. He looked at them for a moment. Finally she said, “Just take one!” So he did. She took the other one, put it in her mouth for a second, closed her mouth, then opened it and removed the object. She looked at him. “Are you that dense? I’m sure you’ve used these before, unless you’re really stupid. Put it in your mouth, push it in until the cross bridge touches your teeth, press the edge against the inside of the cheek, and bite down.”

He did, and he felt a small sting, not unlike a small needle. He reached in and pulled it out, and looked at it. She took it out of his hand and set it down. “It takes about 5 minutes to register. Anyway, let’s have something to drink.” She shoos him out of the bathroom, then turns around and walks back to the kitchen. He follows. She turns a dial on a kitchen timer. She opens the refrigerator and takes out a pitcher of water. She reaches into the cabinet and removes two glasses. She pours the water and hands him one. “Cheers.”

“Cheers.” They clink glasses.

She stands there looking at him. He knew, from who knows how many women, that she was sizing him up for something. But he wasn't sure what. Not having the ability to read minds any more, or at least sense emotions, left him feeling a bit like he was blind. He drank the water, which he recognized as being filtered. She broke the gaze and looked away, drinking hers.

They stood more-or-less in silence until the alarm went off. She turned and walked back to the bathroom, then came back holding the two objects. "This one is yours," she said, pointing to a series of eight dots which appeared in a row. The second dot appeared on the right, the other seven all appeared on the left.

He looked at it. "I'm pregnant?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Is this a pregnancy test?"

Her eyes rolled around. "Okay, I guess I should have expected this, since you're staying in character I'll play along. This is a venereal disease test. Of the eight major venereal diseases, you're clean of seven. The one you do have is Herpes I. Cold sores. I have no idea why it tests for that, over 95% of the population has the virus that causes cold sores. Maybe it's a cross-check, I don't know. Well, anyway, you're clean. As it turns out, see, mine is the same. So I won't have to have you use a condom." She takes his hand. "Okay, let's go." She walks toward the bedroom.

When they get there, she draws the blinds, then steps into the bathroom. After a few minutes, she comes out, naked, turns out the light, pulls open the covers, then gets into bed and draws them over herself. "Aren't you coming to bed? And why are your clothes still on?"

"Because you're not ready yet." He walked over to the switch, and turned the light on.

"Please, I like it dark."

"I want to be able to see you."

"That's not necessary."

"Yes it is. Why are you covering yourself?"

She frowned. "My body is ugly."

"Probably not. Let's see it."

"Really? I don't think you want to."

"I do. Let go of the cover so I can see you. In fact, get out of bed and stand up, come over here." Timidly, she does so. She is about three inches shorter than him. What he sees is a rather ordinary looking woman, no less attractive than most others. He puts his arms around her, leans over, and kisses her. He feels her tremble a bit. So he realizes what he needs to do. He leads her into the bathroom again, reaches in and turns on the shower.

"I've always wanted to do this first, but it seemed like every time I took a guy home with me, it's like he couldn't wait to get inside me. Some of them didn't even want to wait five minutes for the VD test. Basically I'd tell them either they wait or they use a condom. That's about all it takes to make them decide they're willing to wait."

"So that's why you were staring at me, you were surprised that I wasn't trying to get into your pants like, immediately."

"Yeah. Why did you think of taking a shower before having sex?"

"I've often felt that a shower first is a good way to get to learn about someone." Now he takes his clothes off. Pulling the shower curtain aside, he motions for her to get in. She does, and

he follows. So he picks up a rag and soap, and begins washing her front, then back, then under the arms. Then he hands her the soap and has her wash him. They rinse, then he grabs a towel and dries her, and she does the same to him. They get out and go toward the bed. She gets into bed, lays down, with her arms by her sides and legs spread.

Again, he begins passionate kissing. He's not sure if he's getting much in the way of a response but she does seem to be enjoying it. He starts working down her body, placing his mouth on one of her nipples and sucking on it. She responds with a sucking sound as well, like a really strong gasp. So he tries the other nipple, and gets another similar response.

He decides to go whole hawg, and work directly on oral. So he moves his head toward her crotch, when she closes her legs. "What's wrong?"

"I don't think you want to go there, that's nasty."

"Let me ask you something, didn't any other guy ever try that?"

"Well of course not, guys don't do that."

"Did any of them ever use their hands on you there?"

"Uh, no."

"What did they do, basically just kiss you for a while, then proceed to have sex?"

"Most of them don't bother to kiss. I mean, I figured when you followed me home that you'd want sex same as every other guy I've met. So I go along and give them what they want."

"Do you get pleasure from sex?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you come during sex?"

"Of course not, only guys get to do that."

Now he understood. Basically she put up with sex, and the guys she was with were as ignorant as her, and as a result, she didn't get much. "That's going to change, right now. Have you ever seen your vagina?"

"Why, no. I'm sure it's ugly. Why would I need to see it?"

"So you can know how to pleasure yourself, or how to show a man how to do it if he doesn't know how. Do you have a small mirror, like a hand mirror?"

"Top of the end table." He got out of bed, got it, and got back in. He held the mirror so she could see her sex.

"Look here. This is the outside of your vagina, and let me tell you something, there is no such thing as an ugly vagina. Vaginas are beautiful things, they give men like me so much pleasure. And see this part right here? This is the clitoris, that's what gives *you* pleasure. You're entitled to have pleasure just as much as a man. And I'm going to show you."

Using his tongue, he begins licking her clit, then, feeling her vagina and noticing it's fairly wet, he inserted one finger inside her, and started stroking until he found the G-spot.

Then he worked on both, to the sound of her moaning. "Oh God, I feel like I'm being double penetrated! Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh! Ohhhhhh!"

This continues for about half an hour. He slows down and stops. "So, what do you think?"

"You know, I always thought all those women who did stuff like that were faking it just to make guys feel good about themselves. I had no idea how much fun it would be to really feel that. You're the first guy who ever made me come."

"So I presume that since guys didn't, you did it to yourself?"

"What did you mean?"

“I mean, stimulating yourself to give yourself pleasure.”

“Nice girls don’t do that.”

“Oh yes they do. Are you saying you never had an orgasm before now, today?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Well, that’s going to change too. I’m going to show you how to do something for yourself in case a guy doesn’t. First, I want you to reach down to your vagina and get your finger wet, especially the tip. Now, what I’m going to do is have sex with you, and you’re going to do something at the same time, okay?”

“Uh, okay.”

He climbed between her legs, and slid inside her. “Now, what I want you to do is put your finger on your clit there, and what I want you to do is rub on it with the wet finger, just rub up and down on it. Keep rubbing on it. Or go to the sides. Or rub in circles. Whatever feels good. Now, I want you to keep doing that while I’m moving, okay?”

“Yeah.”

So he begins moving. She continues to make various noises. He continues for a few minutes, then he comes inside her. “Well, was this any better than the previous times you had sex?”

“I never thought that would be possible. I never would have believed it was possible to come while a guy was having sex with me. I thought it was just a story like the other fake things they do in porno.”

“Oh, and there are other things a guy can do. Would you like me to show you some of them?”

“Do you think you have to ask? Of course!”

246 smiled. Over and over again, he’d found the best sex was training sex. Whenever you had sex with a woman and were training her how to figure out how to please herself, she does all the work of making herself come, all you have to do is fuck her without caring whether she comes (because if it doesn’t work she’ll tell you), you get to come inside her, if you can talk her into using a non-invasive form of birth control you often get to do her bare (or every case for women in the Afterlife), and on top of which, she’s so glad and grateful for what you’ve done for her, she wants you to do her again! And three women in a row had confirmed it: Lynn, Diane, and now Ellen. Realizing he can’t do anything for a while, he plays around with her until he discovers he can get it up again.

He decides to show her something else. As he had learned that if you figure out how to give good oral sex, a woman will go nuts over you, he figured if he taught her how to do really good fellatio, she’d never have a problem with getting a man to do what she wanted. Not that he cared much, personally he’d always preferred intercourse, but a lot of men do and it would certainly help her in making sure a man would give her what she wants. He puts his clothes back on.

“Let’s go, I want to show you something. Bring a pillow.” They arrive and stand in the living room. “Start with your finger, pretend it’s my dick, and you slide your mouth up and down on it. I want you to get used to the idea of not letting your teeth touch it. Here, look, give me your hand.” He takes her hand, and folds all the fingers down except for the index finger. He takes her finger in his mouth, and begins sucking on it. He then takes it out. “Now, you felt how I used my tongue on the bottom of your finger? Now, you’re going to do that to me when we’re ready. But first, I’m going to have you try that on my finger, just like I did to you. Yes, that’s nice, you want to use your tongue to move around on the bottom.

“Now, I’ll show you something else, give me your finger again.” He starts sucking on her finger again, slides it in and out a few times while he’s doing that, then removes it. “Now, you felt how I ran my tongue below your fingernail? Well, on the penis there’s an opening at the tip, it’s very sensitive and you can really impress a guy by doing that. I just want you to understand to be very careful not to allow your teeth to touch him, if you aren’t careful you can hurt a guy. Do this right and he’ll really appreciate it. How about I show you a way you can really impress a guy? Put the pillow on the floor, and kneel on it. Unbutton my fly,” he said, thinking about the fact that they didn’t have zippers here, either, “and pull it out. Now, normally, you’d just take it into your mouth, but I want you to see what you’re doing, first. You’re going to put your tongue on the bottom, here. What’s wrong?”

“Well, I don’t know, I, uh…”

“You’re thinking it’s dirty, perhaps?”

“Well, uh, yeah, I guess so.”

“All right, get up, and follow me into the bathroom. Here’s a rag. Wash it, not too hard, oh, that feels good. If you’re not sure if it’s clean, use a little soap and another rag. Anyway, we’ll try this here. Put the seat down and sit on the toilet. Now, go on, you know it’s clean, run your tongue around the rim, here.” She did, and then looked up at him and smiled. “Now, you’re going to learn where to put your tongue. See this here? That’s the tip, it’s very sensitive. This area directly at the bottom is called the frenulum, it’s very pleasurable for a man if you lick on it. So I want you to try that, yes, that’s good, oh yes, now you’ll wiggle your tongue a bit, ah, yes. Now, what you can do is run your tongue over the top and around the edge here. Ah, yes, very good. Now, you see here, where the skin is kind of lumpy? That’s as far as a man gets pleasure, everything on the penis from there to the end is basically just skin, it doesn’t feel any pleasure from contact so there’s no point trying to work on it. But you can do something else. Now, we’ll try the real thing. Put it into your mouth, and let it slide in. Don’t let a guy push it in so far that it chokes you. Now, form your mouth around it like you’re sucking your thumb. Good, excellent. Now, rub your tongue up and down on the bottom, and while doing this, slide your mouth up and down, and at the same time, use your cheeks and suck on it like you’re sucking on a piece of candy. And if you want, put your hand on the rest of the penis and move it up and down following your mouth, this does twice as much stimulation as just your mouth alone. Ahh, yes, that’s great.” A few minutes later, he comes and feels her sucking it off him.

“You swallowed! I’m amazed.”

“Yeah, that actually was kind of fun.”

“Well, then, I have to show you something else. Let’s go back to bed.” They do. “Now what I am going to show you is to tell a guy how to perform oral sex on you. Anyway, here’s the mirror, I want you to see this so you can understand exactly what to tell him. Now I’ll show you something. Watch this.” He curls his tongue along the middle, and shows her that it forms a circle. “Now, not every guy can curl his tongue that way, but if he can, he can do some amazing things to you. Now, watch. As I said, this round piece at the top of the vagina is the clitoris, it is the same as the head of the penis on a man, it gives you pleasure. Now, what I’m going to do to you is the same thing you do to me when I have sex with you, I’m going to run my tongue around your clitoris so that it slides in and out of it. Just remember, be sure to tell a guy to do things gently until you know whether or not he can do so not so hard that it doesn’t feel

good. So I'm going to start now."

He starts envaginating her clitoris, sliding his tongue up and down on it as if it were a miniature penis - which, in actuality, it is - sliding inside a vagina, and listens to her making a lot of noise. After he's done her for a few minutes, he tells her about another thing. "Now, I showed you how to finger yourself, I'm going to show you how to tell a guy how. First, I want you to get your finger wet, and slide it into yourself. Now, you feel that rough area? That's called the 'G' spot, it's actually the nerve endings at the bottom of the clitoris, rubbing it for a lot of women is extremely pleasurable. Now, you can rub that up and down while rubbing your clitoris with your thumb." Hearing her making noises, he decides to take over. "So now, let me do this, and I'm going to try something." He tries various things on her over the next half hour or an hour or so until he's able to get an erection.

"Now, what I'm going to try here is to find a position so that it gives you pleasure just from sex, so that you don't even have to finger yourself. If we can find it, it should really make things nice for you. So, what I'm going to do is try sliding in and out of you, and what I want you to do is this, when I find the right position, that what I'm doing gives you pleasure, you start moving too, move up and down while I'm doing the same thing, and I'll stay with that."

He mounts her, slides inside, and tries a medium position for a few strokes, but she doesn't move. So he pulls out, moves a little higher, and tries again. Still no response. He moves out and a bit higher, then slides into her and begins stroking. Now, she begins to move in response, so he decides to be just a bit more aggressive, and move a bit faster. She stops moving. ("Aha,") he's thinking, ("I've found her 'sweet spot' that determines how fast she likes it.") He slows down back to the previous speed, and she resumes moving in concert with him. This continues until he comes and spurts into her.

He rolls off. "So, I noticed that some of the things I did didn't give you pleasure?"

"No, and it's funny, because before you showed me, I'd not have said anything. I wouldn't have known and I'd have just let the guy do whatever he wanted. I thought sex was okay before, but now, it's absolutely fantastic."

"Just remember, if a guy isn't experimenting with you like this, and you're not getting pleasure from him, you have to tell him or, in the worst case, make him stop until he does. You can decide how you want it from him, maybe he just does oral on you, or you might not say anything and just finger yourself while he's on top of you if he can't seem to get the right position, or you might have him finger fuck you like I've done where I just use my hand and slide my finger inside you. Or you can try getting on top. Every guy is different, some might have conflicts in their head, remember like you did when you thought performing oral sex was dirty?"

"Oh yeah."

"Some guys might not know any better. Or might think they're not supposed to. Or might be afraid. Or might do you harder with his tongue than you like. Or you might not feel comfortable with the guy doing oral sex on you. So you can have him finger you. Or you do it to yourself. But the main thing is, there's no reason for you to ever have sex where you don't come unless the guy is really clueless and so fast he comes almost as soon as he gets inside you."

"Okay."

"And when you have sex, again, like we were doing here, if he's not experimenting or something where you're signaling to him how you like it, if he does you in a way that makes you stop having pleasure, or he's too hard on you, then you tell him to slow down or not pound on you as

hard or as deep, got it?"

"Yeah, that's a good idea. That's happened a few times, where I actually did have to tell the guy to stop, he was hurting me. I only wish I had known when I first had sex, the guy was so rough that he probably hurt me a lot more than he would have if I had known then what I know now. And just from what you've showed me, I've learned a great deal."

"I'm kind of nosy and curious, I'd like to know, tell me about your first time."

"Well, I met a boy in school, he was really good looking, and he asked me out. I guess he kinda impressed me, and I let him have sex with me. I found out later from some of the other girls in school, that when you have sex with a guy for the first time, you make sure he's slow and gentle. Well, he thought in order to break my hymen he had to do it really fast and hard, and that's exactly what he did. Then, I guess I was sore for a while but he just pounded right along until he came."

"I see. Basically a guy is supposed to do it easy and only use more force if it won't break."

"Yeah, I know that now, but I didn't then, and all I knew was it was supposed to hurt the first time. I think if I had known it probably wouldn't have hurt as much."

"Well, let's see if I can find a way to make you feel good."

Fortunately the show had been on a Friday. Ellen spent the weekend learning how to pleasure herself during sex in different positions. And 246 spent the weekend enjoying her enjoying him.

Chapter 140

“...Evel Knievel had broken more bones than most people *have*...”

It was Monday morning. 246 thought about it. (“I’ve gotten in a rut. What did I do while I was in the Afterlife? Hang around with easy women and have sex with them. What have I been doing since I was reincarnated?”) He smiled. (“Hanging around with easy women and having sex with them.”)

If all he wanted to do was spend his vacation having sex, he could have stayed in the Afterlife, and probably had more sex than he had been having. But finding a nice lady and allowing her to learn her own sexuality - and profit from the experience - was still fun. So it wasn’t a complete loss. But he still needed to continue his vacation and go back to his own world. He had a thought. I have a chance to change a world in a way it’s not expecting. Ellen was already up and about, apparently getting ready for work. 246 got out of bed, and decided to leave. “I’m going to do something that I’d like to show you. Do you mind if I leave and come back?”

“Mind? I’d love to have you come back any time you want. But, unfortunately, I have to work for a living so I have to head back over to the university. Anyway, there’s food in the pantry if you want something. If you’re still around I’ll be back about five.”

“I’ll go along, I have no idea how to get back into town.”

“Go out to the driveway, turn left, at the second road, turn right, when the road dead-ends, turn right again, and it’s a bit under ten miles. I happen to be going in the other direction.”

“Oh. Okay. I will definitely see you later, then.”

246 had some pancakes and left. Writing down the address, and each street he was on, he finally ended up back in town. First things first. He stopped in at the bicycle store where he decided to turn in the bicycle he had rented. He noticed it was still in the display. “I’d like to rent that motorbike.”

”Motorbike? That’s an interesting name. Anyway, sure, I just need to see your charge card.”

“I don’t have one. I only want to rent it for a couple of days.”

“Well, sonny, I don’t know you. Now, you may be a friend of Ellen’s, and I know her, and I’d rent it to her without one, but since I don’t know you, I can’t really do that without having security.”

“Okay, fine. Here.” He opened up the envelope and counted out some money. “Here’s nine hundred thousand dollars. When I bring the damn thing back you can give me a refund for the difference, how does that sound?”

“Young man, you got yourself a deal. If I had known you had that kind of money, I’d have tried a whole lot more to talk you into renting this in the first place. Here’s your receipt and proof of insurance.”

“Thanks.” He rolled out and back over to the Home Depot. Turning the key off, he got off, and someone came over.

“Hey mister, what’s that?”

“It’s a powered bicycle.”

“Cool. Where’d you get it?”

“At the bicycle store, five blocks that way.”

“What does it cost?”

“From what I gather, an arm and a leg.”

“No really, what does it cost?”

“I think it rents for just under ten grand a day and sells for around 875,000.”

“Holy shit, that’s as much as my house costs! When you said an arm and a leg, you weren’t kidding.”

“That’s what I figured.”

“Well, anyway, thanks, mister.”

“You’re welcome.” 246 walks into the store. Going down the aisles, he finds a number of items, including the drive controller for a washing machine, belts, various screws and nuts, steel plate, plus some power tools. He gets the stuff into the storage box on the back of the motorbike, then rolls back over to the bicycle store. He decides to purchase four batteries and some battery cables. He is surprised to discover that they are actually smaller than the lantern batteries he remembers from his world. But, I guess it makes sense, if technology went in the direction of battery technology instead of engine technology, they’d develop smaller batteries. He’s able to carry the remainder of the stuff in the front storage container.

Following the directions he wrote coming out, he was able to get back to Ellen’s place. On the back of her house in the storage shed, he finds, not one, but five bicycles. He could see that some were different types. Probably makes sense, where people might have a car and a truck in his world, they’d probably have different types of bicycles here.

Picking what looks like a plain single speed, he goes to work on it. Using the power tools, a soldering iron and a miniature welder, he cuts and splices various pieces together. He would have preferred to get a bicycle from the store, but there was no way he could have transported it back here.

He is still working on it when Ellen gets back. “I don’t believe it! You actually rented the electric bicycle. I’m touched. But how did you figure out how to get it out here? It took me three days of practice to be able to handle it.”

Before he can answer, she comes out on the back porch, and sees 246 with one of her bicycles, in a state of partial disassembly. “What on earth have you done?”

“I’m making you something. Don’t worry about it, if you don’t like it I’ll buy you a brand-new bicycle. Fair enough?”

“Well, okay. But what are you doing?”

“I don’t want to spoil the surprise. You’ll know in about a couple of hours.”

“Okay, but I hope you’re done before sundown.”

“I think so.”

Considerable effort and cursing follows, and only 90 minutes later, 246 is finished. He comes in the house and asks her to come out. She looks at the contraption, and shakes her head. “I haven’t the slightest idea what that is, it looks like, oh, I don’t know what except it’s weird.”

“Watch.” 246 gets on, connects the power, and the cycle takes off. Using the improvised throttle, he increases the speed on what is, for lack of a better term, an electric motorcycle.

Ellen’s mouth drops as she sees how fast he is going. He does a couple of turns, then rolls around and comes back to the back of the house. “Want to go for a ride?”

“Uh, yeah!”

“Grab your helmet and get in back of me.” She runs in to get her bicycle helmet, then gets on behind 246. “Hold on to my waist,” he says, as he turns the throttle. They speed off down the

road, passing some horse-drawn carriages, and various bicyclists, all of whom are more-or-less completely shocked. Other than the tires rolling on dirt or gravel and the chain moving, the cycle makes no noise. They go about four or five kilometers, then he stops, and gets off.

He motions for her to get in front, and he gets on behind her. "Now, what you want to do is see this here, that's the throttle, you want to ease it out just a little bit. Not too much, because if you run this too fast and you don't know how, you can run into a tree or something and get killed. So take it easy until you get the feel of it. That's right, easy to start." They drive on about another couple of kilometers, until they get to a crossroad. "Okay, stop here." He gets off. "I'm going to give you a chance to try this solo. Now, remember what I said, take it slow. Go down this road a piece, then do a u-turn and come back." She does, and when she comes back she has a great big grin on her face. "It is fun, isn't it?" She nods. "Just remember what I said, take it easy and work up to it as you get better at it. There's an old saying, just like..." he stopped himself before he said 'pilots' as she'd think he's kidding again, or still in character, "people who work with dangerous equipment. There are old motorcycle riders. There are bold motorcycle riders. But there are no old, bold motorcycle riders." That probably wasn't true, he thought, but then again, Evel Knievel had broken more bones than most people *have* in their bodies.

"This time, ride down as far as that road there, then, without stopping, I want you to make a u-turn and come back. So you'll have to slow down to do it, but not so slow that the bike comes to a stop or you have to take your feet off the pedals. So try it." She does, and comes back, again very happy about trying something that nobody else in the world had done before. Well, nobody but 246, but then again, he's not from her world either so maybe it also applies.

"Anyway, I'll get back on, I want you to drive back, and you can have some fun and go a little faster, but remember to take it easy, you don't want to get killed, okay?"

"Okay!" They take off, she then turns around and rolls back to her house.

As is a quite common reaction in this sort of situation, she's gotten very excited, and 246 takes advantage of it, and her, and enjoys more "training sex" as he shows her yet another way to do something quite pleasurable. For him, anyway; the sounds she makes implies it also is for her.

Chapter 141

"I think they got rid of them after the War of North America."

The next morning he decides to test his idea. "Can you arrange to take a little time off, like a couple of hours or so?"

"Sure, I'll call someone and have them take over my classes until this afternoon." She goes out to the kitchen, and picks up a phone. As 246 suspected, it was the typical hand-held receiver and horn-style mouthpiece like he remembered seeing in old films depicting phones from the early 20th Century, except it apparently didn't require cranking. "Hi, Operator, would you get me the University please? Hello, Patricia, this is Ellen Richards, I need someone in my department. Thanks. Oh, hi Mark, can you get someone to substitute for me until this afternoon? I want to take a little personal time. Yeah, it is kind of unusual for me, isn't it? Uh huh, yeah, I know him, do you think he's ready? Well, let's do it then, toss him in, sink or swim, see how he does. If he messes up, it's only one day and we can fix it, but if he does okay, then we've got ourselves a really good faculty member. All right then, I'll see you tomorrow." She hangs up. "We've got a teaching assistant who's been chomping at the bit to have a chance to try teaching a class, so we're going to let him do a whole day all by himself, and see how he does. So I have the rest of the day off."

"Go get the," he starts to say motorbike, "electric bicycle, and follow me, we'll take it back. No, wait a minute, I'll let you ride the motorcycle, so you can get more practice. Just remember not to go too fast until you get the hang of it."

The two of them roll on down the highway as far as a couple blocks from the store. He stops and she does the same. "I'm going to roll over there just out of range. Then I'll take that back in. So follow me and stop when I do." They get to within three stores of the bicycle shop, and he stops. He gets off and she does the same. He walks it in to the store.

"Oh, you're back. Considering you paid for the price of the bike, I half expected you to keep it."

"Not necessary, I don't need it any more."

"Well, anyway, let me do a test and check and we'll be done." He rolls the bike over to the end of a treadmill, starts it up, then starts the bike and rides it onto the treadmill. "Okay, rides fine, no problems, brakes okay, all right then. Hold on while I calculate your refund. Two days rental minus the amount you paid, plus tax. Okay, here you go."

"Thanks." He starts to leave.

"Did you still want the extra batteries? I'll buy them back if you want. I mean, I don't see what much use you'd have for them without the bike."

"I have a use for them. I made my own."

"You *what*?"

"I built my own motorcycle, from parts I bought at the hardware store. Not including the bicycle it cost 75,000 dollars."

"You're kidding me."

"It's sitting outside. We rode it over here."

"This I have to see."

They step outside, to where Ellen is standing in front of the motorcycle, and a crowd of people have stopped to take a look. "Does it actually work?"

“Watch. Ellen, do you think you can take it around the block and come back?” Ellen gets on, and rides off. She goes around the block and comes back. As she stops and dismounts, a number of people applaud. One of them asks where he can buy one and how much they are. “Leave your name and address with Murph, here, and we’ll let you know when they’re available. But I’ll tell you, they won’t be cheap, this will probably cost about 300,000 dollars.” One of the other people standing there says, “If you can actually sell something that does what you just did and can get at least 40 miles between charges, I’ll buy it myself.” Someone else says “me too,” and a couple others say they’d be interested if they could buy it on time payments. “As I said, leave your name and address, and we’ll let you know.” He turns to Murph. “We need to talk.” The three of them walk back to the bicycle store.

“Now you understand, if I can build this, at retail, for \$75,000 plus the cost of a bicycle, which I think you said sells for 18, that means, at retail, someone can build one for a hundred grand or less. So the fact is, if we can build this by buying wholesale, we can probably cut the cost by a considerable amount. But the problem is, if we can build them, anyone can. So I’m wondering, I’m thinking that if someone hasn’t done something like this it’s probably patentable.”

Murph looks at him. “What’s that?”

Ellen turns to Murph, but she starts to cry. 246 looks at her. “Ellen, why are you crying?”

“I’ll tell you later.” She calms herself down as she turns to Murph. “He’s staying in character from his TV show. There’s been a lot of talk about the idea because of your show, but we don’t have patents. I think they got rid of them after the War of North America.” (“Which explains why there isn’t much invention,”) 246 thought. “Okay, then, we have to figure a way to disguise what this does or else make the price so attractive that we can practically pay for them with the first few payments. About how many people purchase new bicycles for cash?”

“About half, if I count the people who pay by charge card. The rest buy them on lay-a-way.”

“Okay, then, what you can do, is figure out how much it will cost to build one of these from wholesale purchase of parts plus however much a new bicycle costs, and have that as the down payment. The difference between that and whatever you can sell it for will be the profit on it. So even if someone stops making payments and you have trouble repossessing it, you still haven’t lost any money.”

“Well, there might be one problem. Only thing is that under the law, any vehicle operated other than by human or animal power has to be insured. Since most people don’t own one, places that rent them have to include insurance. To own one you have to carry at least 250,000 in coverage. And to become an insurer requires at least 100 million in assets. The insurance I carry is the reason it’s so expensive to rent an electric bicycle, about 1/4 of the rental price on the electric bicycle is the cost of insurance, about 3 grand a day.”

“Do you know anyone who might be able to help you raise the financing to do that? As well as the funds to build these in quantity?”

“Not really, but I suppose I can talk to some people I know who might be able to get in touch with some people who could raise that kind of money. We’ll need to build some more of these, if for no other reason than to show that this isn’t some kind of rigged demo or something. I

mean, I've been working on bicycles for something like thirty years, but I haven't the slightest idea what the hell your thing here is."

"It's basically the rotator motor from a washing machine, I stripped off the gears except for the spin cycle, then put in a throttle to reduce how fast it spins the real wheel."

He looked shocked, "I'd never have thought of that."

"Anyway, I'll make you a list of parts, if you can get them in wholesale do you think you can make a few more of these?"

"Yeah, I suppose. Have to wait a while, I really don't have the available cash right now. But I think I can probably do something in a couple of weeks."

"I can solve that. Ellen?"

"Yeah?"

"I'll help with this if you're interested."

"Of course. I mean, I do love my job and teaching, but this, something like this is going to be worth a lot of money. There's nothing even close to this available, I mean, I saw how fast we went, it was a lot faster than that electric bike."

"I'm guessing probably close to a hundred klicks an hour. Oh sorry, about 60 miles per hour."

"Wow!"

He opens up the envelope. Keeping about a half million, which, based on what he saw, should be more than enough to get back, he pulls the rest out. "Looks like I can contribute something around 4 million dollars. That should be enough probably to build, say, 30 of these, what do you think?"

"Yeah, at wholesale rates, probably could get that much in parts."

"So you can actually give some of these to investors to try out, and if they toss in enough money, they get to keep one, how does that sound?"

"Yeah, I think that would actually work. I suppose a lot of these people see half-baked ideas, but something like this might knock their socks off."

"Now, I think one thing we can do to make sure we have less trouble with people having accidents and actually having to pay claims is that we can include a training course when buying the motorcycle. We can make it like a package deal, include the first year's insurance in the price and provide training so they know how to use it, that will cut the risk down."

"You've thought of everything, I don't know what to say."

"So I guess the three of us are partners, then."

"Yeah. But, look, you've contributed all the ideas and the money, obviously we can't be equal partners on this, I don't think it would be fair to you."

"Well, I'll take half and you two split the other half."

"Gee, that's mighty nice of you, I figured you'd want a bigger piece, but, I'm not going to complain."

"Okay then. Oh, I guess I'll get this back to you later, we have to get back to Ellen's place."

"Look, why don't you borrow the electric bicycle for the time being? Not likely I'm going to be selling it once we start making these things. I'm going to need time to figure out how this thing works. In fact, what I'll probably do is, one of the other bicycle stores wanted one of these and couldn't get it, I'll sell it to him wholesale, that will raise probably another half million."

"Sounds good then." 246 and Ellen leave, and ride back to her place. They get inside, and she

immediately hugs and kisses him, passionately. She pulls him back into bed, where, while still kissing him, takes off her and his clothes, and rolls over on her back, inviting him to get on top. Never failing to take advantage of a good situation, he does, then slides into her. She immediately starts moving while he's on top of her, and he proceeds to ride this wild woman for everything he can get from her. He starts pounding on her aggressively as she continues to roil and writhe under him. Enjoying this immensely, he continues sliding inside of her while she's aggressively riding him. He enjoys it even more immensely when, a few minutes later, he comes inside of her and blasts his load into her.

"246, I didn't know how to really thank you until now. I remembered how, when you figured a way to move so I could come while we were having sex, you started to move a lot faster and I stopped moving because I stopped feeling any pleasure, I figured you wanted to do that, so I decided to let you do that now. I mean, you remember when I started crying over at Murph's, you asked me why and I said I'd tell you later?" He nodded. "I realize now, all the stuff you've done, if you were just some actor visiting some groupie, you wouldn't have gone through all this just to impress me, especially since you'd already gotten to have sex with me, if you'd figured out a way to develop something like this, and the fact you had the money to do it yourself, you'd have started a business of your own to develop this, not pick some woman you hardly even know in some small town in the Midwest and give her 25% of it. It kind of just hit me: you're not really acting, you're actually from some other world, aren't you?"

246 has never been the type to lie when confronted openly. He thought about what he had promised George, and realized that he could say something about the afterlife, but he thought he probably should caution her. "Well, if I tell you, it might be best not to say anything about it to others."

"It's one thing for me to discuss the show as a show with other fans. I'm not going to be telling anyone that it's real, nobody would believe me, and if I insisted, they'd probably lock me up."

246 was reminded of a scene involving Avery Brooks in *Star Trek: Deep Space 9*, where he's playing a prisoner in a mental ward trying to convince his captors that he really was a captain of a space station. "Okay then, you understand. I'll tell you then. Yes. I don't know how much of my history you know, do you know how I got to be Administrator?"

"Yeah, you got the Chairman to appoint you after you quit."

"Do you know any of the other terms I asked for?"

"No, not really."

"I am guessing that they edited some of the details out. Okay, one of the things I asked for was to be able to take some time off in the real world, to come back to life without having to be reborn, but to take my memories of what I had been through with me for the period I'd be alive."

"You know, this is a bit much to take. You mean to tell me you're not really acting, you people are all dead, really, as in actually died?"

"Yes."

"You know, that does solve one issue that had always bothered me, the show has been running for something like 30 years, and none of you ever aged. Well, it's a show, that's to be expected, they're doing something to do with makeup, but this does explain it. It also explains how come the pictures that they get are so much clearer and more vibrant than anything else on TV.

You're using technology not from this world, probably something a lot more advanced. I mean, it's sort of like that expression, when given two points of information that are conflicting, the

simplest answer is usually the right one.”

“Occam’s Razor.”

“Yeah, that’s it. But it was the other point I remember. When you have a piece of information or a question, which, when you get rid of every other conflicting solution, no matter how strange or unusual it is, the remaining one has to be the correct answer.”

“Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.”

“Oh, is that who it was? I see. Well, much as I’d otherwise dismiss it as total fantasy, this makes a whole lot more sense.”

“Ellen, I have to tell you something, though.”

“What’s that?”

“Just because I existed even after I lived, does not mean it applies to you. The people who did this captured my world and allowed our people to continue. They may not have gotten to this world and there may not be anything here, or it could be that whatever would happen when you die does happen in this world, but not in mine. Do you understand?”

“I think so. Are you trying to warn me about something?”

“What I’m saying is that I don’t want you to kill yourself thinking you’d get into my world or that there would actually be something there if you did. I don’t know if your world has anything beyond existence. I mean, I’ve seen it in mine, but I do not know if it applies to yours.”

“I see. Yeah, I guess that makes sense. If any of this does, that is.”

“Well, I just wanted you to know because I didn’t want you to consider that you’d get out of this so-called ‘veil of tears’ and into a better world, because in your case there might not be any better world to go on to. It might just turn out that you and all the people in this world die dead. Or maybe they do go somewhere but it’s probably not my world. But there’s no way to know and I don’t want you to try it thinking you might find out.”

“Oh no, no, I wouldn’t have wanted to kill myself anyway, and after what you’ve shown me here, I’ve got more reasons to want to stay. I mean, you don’t know him, but I’ve known Murph probably 15 years, back when I bought my first bike from him when I was a little girl. I’ve never seen him as surprised or excited as he was tonight when you showed him that, uh, what did you call it?”

“Motorcycle.”

“When you showed him that motorcycle. You might not have noticed, but you impressed the hell out of him. If we can get the money to do this, I think there is a lot of money to be made. A lot of people would be helped by being able to go places on their own using powered equipment. Cripples who could ride but can’t walk and can’t use a bicycle. Older people. Bicycle messengers. People going shopping, now you wouldn’t have to restrict yourself to what you could carry in a front basket on a bicycle, you could pick up fifty or sixty pounds of stuff and not have to go to the trouble of having to get a wagon and team out.”

“You know, it’s funny because when we were first looking at the motorbike in the store, I was remembering how it would have been hard to explain that I knew how to ride one because I was a messenger delivering packages and important letters by motorcycle when I was in college. So I know how significant and important improved speed for transport is. I’m curious, when they developed the ramjet engine for trains to allow them to go a lot faster, did they first use it on freight trains?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“Well, I’m thinking, I’d like to finish my vacation. I am going back to the real world where I came from, in order to see how things have changed after I died.”

“Uh, okay, but, what do I do about your share of the money from this?”

“Oh, well, look, you keep it. I may never be back or if I ever did come back it might be decades, and I might not know where you are if you’re not here. Or I might not get the chance to meet you again.”

“Oh.”

“I’m thinking of something else. Since it’s obvious I left with you, if you just suddenly drop out of this thing with looking at the show, and then become involved in some radically new invention, people might guess something fishy.”

“Oh yeah, you’re right. I wasn’t planning to give up my work on television and its effects on society but if this thing really does become something we can develop, then it would be very valuable. We’ll see what happens, then.”

“Okay. Anyway, before I go, I would like to actually see your television.”

“Well, actually, I usually watch most television at the office. I’ll show you. As you can see, this is the 12 inch model, it’s what I can afford. We have a massive 41" model TV at work, but it’s very expensive. It’s the color separator that costs so much. Watch.” She turns it on and as it starts up, it makes a horrible racket, until it gets up to speed, then becomes about as loud as a window fan. “Some people have these where the equipment is in another room, to cut the noise down.” 246 watches a screen, and he notices the pictures are about what you’d expect of TV from about 1940 or 1950, with occasional flickering. “Now let me tune into one of the programs from your network.” She changes the channel, and the picture comes in fairly clear, about the level of 1960s or 1970s television, and by comparison, a massive improvement over the usual images. Nothing compared to digital television in the Afterlife or what he saw at George’s place, but a lot better than the regular stuff he saw when she was changing the channels.

“I see why you noted the difference.”

“Yeah, in fact, what some people do is a group of them buy a larger set, and they share it.

That’s how they’re able to watch a show like yours and really be able to enjoy it. Or they go to a theater where they watch the show which is then projected from the TV onto the screen.” She turns the TV off and the large disk stops spinning.

Chapter 142

“Are you seriously claiming that you’re calling from Area 51?”

“Okay, well, I guess I’ve done everything I wanted to do, more or less, let’s see.” He turns to the instructions he has, and it says to call a certain number. So he goes to the telephone. “Hello, Operator, let’s see, I need Albuquerque, New Mexico, Pueblo 2-81462.” The phone rings.

“This is a classified government number. We already have the number you’re calling from, so if you’ve called by mistake, hang up now. If you are authorized to call this number, at the tone, leave your message, we will return your call shortly.” It beeps.

“This is Supervisor 246, I was instructed to call this number by...” he realizes he’d better not say Diane’s name with Ellen listening, “a friend. It just said to call and say who I am. Okay.” He hangs up.

“I’m not sure how long it will take before whoever I called will call me back. But I’ve got an idea of something you can do in the mean time. Go get a pillow off the bed and come back out here. He wasn’t sure why, but somehow the idea of a woman in a subservient position was somewhat exciting. She immediately knew what to do. Kneeling on the pillow, she unbuttoned his fly, pulled out his penis, licked it, then put it in her mouth and began sucking on it, strongly. “Stop for a second. There’s something else I want to try. Just hold your mouth tight, don’t let your teeth touch me, and allow me to move.” He held onto her head as he began fucking her mouth. Then she got an idea, and started moving at the same time. “Oh, yes, that really feels good.” A few minutes later, he said, “Here it comes!” She then brought her mouth down to the base of his penis, began to flex her throat, and run her tongue along the bottom of him. He then disgorged into her mouth, and again, she swallowed it.

“I feel like I’ve changed you, not just from a timid little lady who just did sex because she had to, into a fully functioning woman who enjoys sex in its own right, almost into a porn star. You’re fantastic, did you realize that?”

“Really?”

“Really, really. A week ago, you’d never have even tried that, would you?”

“No. I’d thought it was sick and dirty. Now I realize that it can be fun, plus I’m sure it’s fun for you to do, or rather, for you to have it be done to.”

“Uh, yeah. So let me try that for you. You stand up.” She does, he kneels in front of her and proceeds to unbutton her jeans and do her for a few minutes, when the phone rings.

“Talk about mood killers!”

“Do you want me to answer it?”

“Well, it’s my phone, it might actually be for me.” She goes over and answers it. “Hello?”

“This is the main operator at the Albuquerque Military Research and Development Facility. We received a call on a restricted classified telephone line from this number. Do you know anything about this?”

“Uh, let me get this straight. Are you seriously claiming that you’re calling from Area 51?”

“Well, we don’t call it that. But anyway, do you know anything about this?”

“Hold on a second. 246, if I didn’t believe you before, I believe you now. It’s from the people at Area 51. One of them wants to talk to you.”

He takes the phone. “Hello?”

“This is the main operator at the Albuquerque Military Research and Development Facility. We received a call on a restricted classified telephone line from this number. Do you know anything about this?”

“Yeah, I was told to call it when I was ready to leave.”

“By whom were you told to call?”

246 wasn't sure if he should say who it was, with Ellen around. Nor did he know whether this person was authorized to know that either. On the other hand, he might be overreacting, he'd been so used to keeping secrets that it's hard not to remember that sometimes you don't have to.

“Your boss.”

“Major Trapp is off duty, I doubt that he authorized you.”

“Who's Major Trapp?”

“He's base commander.”

“No, whoever is the highest ranking authority, that's the person who told me to call.”

“You've got to be kidding.”

“I'm not.”

“I don't have anything from General Ryland.”

“And who is...”

“He's the Commander of the Army, the highest ranking military authority in the country.”

“And who's his boss?”

“That's impossible.”

“Look, sonny, I don't particularly care. I was told to call that number by someone who I believe is in charge over everyone there. Now, if that's not the case then I've made a terrible mistake.”

“Well, okay, but you're going to have to specifically identify who told you.”

“Queen Diane.”

The man on the phone gasped. “Uh, I don't have the authority to verify that. Hold on a moment.”

“This is Major Trapp, who is this?”

“Supervisor 246.”

“Supervisor 246 of what?”

“Just Supervisor 246. Look, I was told to call a number and leave a message.”

“By whom?”

“Queen Diane.”

“Listen fella, don't make jokes. This is a serious matter.”

“I am serious. Look, if you can't either verify or not this call, then get someone who can or stop wasting my time. Either you have the means to verify what I'm saying or you don't. If you don't, then put me through to someone who does.”

“Listen, right now I can treat this as a crank call, and we can simply let it go by just telling you not to do it again. But if you're really serious, I can call Colonel Watkins at Regional HQ, but if I do, and you're kidding or what you said can't be proven, you'll be looking at prison time, do you understand?”

“Yeah, I understand, and I'm not kidding.”

“Okay, it's your ass. Hold on a moment. I'll let you sit on the line, but don't say anything until I tell you.”

“Wichita Regional Headquarters.”

“This is Major Trapp, at Albuquerque, I need Colonel Watkins’ adjutant.”

“Office of Colonel Watkins.”

“This is Major Trapp, at Albuquerque, I have someone on the line who claims to have authority to make a request and I am unable to verify his authorization.”

“Is he on the line?”

“Yes. Please identify yourself.”

“My name is Supervisor 246.”

“On whose authority are you authorized to make a request?”

“Queen Diane.”

“Major, you may drop off, we’ll take it from here.”

“Thanks.”

“You understand, that if your claim cannot be verified, you will be subject to arrest and prosecution?”

“Yes.”

“Please hold.”

“This is Colonel Watkins, did you say your name was Supervisor 246?”

“That’s correct.”

“Well, we get this kind of crackpot commentary from people all the time, but I’ll try this. On whose authority were you contacting the Albuquerque facility?”

“Queen Diane.”

“I’m going to ask you a classified piece of information which you shouldn’t be able to know. What’s her full name?”

“Diane McCloud.”

“I don’t believe it, someone who actually does know it. Hold on a moment. I’ll cut you through in a moment, just stay on the line, okay?”

“Sure.”

“Pentagon Switchboard, how may I direct your call?”

“General Ryland’s office, Colonel Watkins at Wichita calling.”

“Office of General Ryland.”

“This is Colonel Watkins at Wichita, Service Number 706223. I have someone on the line who passes verification for a Class I request and I need the general to provide full verification.”

“Please Hold.”

“Ryland.”

“Walt, how are you, this is Tam Watkins at Wichita, how are you doing?”

“Not too bad, colonel, how’s your wife’s tennis game coming along?”

“She’s gotten a whole lot better. Actually beat me last week.”

“That’s quite an improvement.”

“I was really surprised. How’s Denise?”

“About the same.”

“Let me guess, you’re still taking most of your meals at the officer’s mess?”

“Uh, yeah, unfortunately. I don’t want to put too much stress on her until her surgery heals, so I’m actually bringing extra meals home so she doesn’t have to cook for herself either and can just attend to the baby. Well, anyway, now that small talk is over, Tam, what’s the problem?”

“To go by the book, Sir, I respectfully report to you that a civilian has called a classified military telephone number and purports to have Class I authorization on behalf of Her Worship, and who has passed a preliminary verification, and requires a secondary verification beyond my authorization.”

“He actually knows her name?”

“That’s right.”

“Is he on right now?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Okay, you on the phone, what’s your name?”

“Supervisor 246.”

“Colonel, mute my end for 5 minutes so you can’t hear me or him while I’m talking to him. Identify when you reconnect.”

“Understood, sir. I am muting now.” A two-tone sound occurs.

“246, I don’t know if you’re real or just someone who got some information from someplace. Let’s see, I have six questions. I don’t know the answers, but I’m just reading the envelopes, then I open it to see; if you get the answer right, I go on to the next one; you get it wrong, you’re probably going to jail. Okay, it says here, What is my name?”

“I’m not sure which way you’re asking. You’re General Walt Ryland, if I understood the last guy right. The person who told me to call was Diane McCloud.”

“Yes, you were right it was kind of ambiguous, if you had said just my name, I would have corrected you. Technically my full rank is Field Marshall, but I never go by that. From the tone of these questions I think they’re phrased as if she’s asking them of you. Understood?”

“Yeah.”

“How old are you?”

“200.”

“Well, that’s actually right. What’s your favorite programming language?”

“Fortran.”

“Masochist. That’s not me, that’s what it says to say on the note. How many women were there back at the house?”

“Two.”

“Who was the other one?”

“Lynn. I believe that question should have been phrased, ‘whom’.”

“Uh, no, in this case it is correct. Do you want me to explain why?”

“Yeah, sure, I’d love to know.”

“I remember this one from my English class. If you try to replace “who” or “whom” in the sentence, and if you would have used “he”, “she”, or “they”, then “who” is the correct word; if you would have used “him”, “her”, or “them”, then “whom” is correct. ‘Who’ is used when you refer to a subject, ‘whom’ is used when it’s an object case. I can rephrase the question as a sentence of the form ‘she was the other one.’ I can’t rephrase it to use ‘her’ or ‘them,’ and therefore ‘who’ is the correct word. How is that?”

“Gee, thanks, I always have trouble with that one.”

“So did I until I learned, but, again, I didn’t write the questions, I just read them. And now, the last question. Which one was.. Oh Christ! Which one was better in bed? Jesus, mister, you sure get around. Anyway, sorry, I didn’t mean to comment. Go ahead and answer.”

“They were both about the same.”

“It says, ‘246, that was a cop-out of an answer. Pick one of us and say why.’”

“Okay, Lynn. You were more assertive and probably more fun in bed, but she didn’t tease me about her diaphragm.”

“Well, according to this, I’m just supposed to take down your answer, then have someone take you back there. So as soon as Colonel Watkins comes back on line I’ll tell him. My guess is they’ll probably send a car for you from Albuquerque.”

“Not NORAD? I’m in Colorado Springs.”

“246, I’ll tell you something. I’m authorized to tell you that I’m not from this world, I’m from hers, and I am aware that you are from a third world. Actually, that sounds like you’re from some backward South American country, but you know what I mean. This world doesn’t have airplanes and never had the atomic bomb, so Cheyenne Mountain is just a mountain, they never built NORAD. In fact, they have so little problems I have no idea why they even have much of a military here. I feel like I’m basically a chairwarmer, she put me in here because we have to watch the military to keep them from trying to take over. Sometimes I think maybe I shouldn’t have asked for the job.”

“I’m curious, do they have solar power in this world, or do they run power plants on coal?”

“They do have solar power and it’s a lot more efficient than it is in your world or the one I came from, and we use wind power here a lot more than we do there. However, some areas have to use coal because of power losses in transmission. Also, large vehicles like trains and...” There is a two-tone on the line.

“This is Colonel Watkins.”

“Okay, I’ll finish what I was saying. Large vehicles like trains and ships run on coal power. Anyway, colonel, send a car down to him and have them escort him back to the secure facility. You know where he is?”

“Yes, I have the address from the note I just received. I’ll call Albuquerque and tell them, sir.”

“Tam, I might be out there in a month or so for an unscheduled inspection. Do you think we can sneak in a round of golf sometime?”

“Sir, with all due respect, fraternizing with lower ranking officers is a violation of military regulations. I’d love the chance, I’ll bet you five grand I can beat you by two strokes.”

“If you’ll make it by four strokes I’ll make it ten grand.”

“That’s a bet. Think it will be next month?”

“I’m horribly swamped in paperwork but I’m going to try. I try to do at least two sites a month, and Wichita happens to be one that I haven’t been to in at least a year.”

“Walt, how much notice can I give them? You know how they feel when the big brass comes down here if they don’t have enough time to make things ship shape and Bristol style.”

“Tam, it’s an unscheduled inspection, and you know me, it’s not to correct or punish, it’s just to see how they’re doing and whether they need improvement. You can tell them at the beginning of the month, and I want you to let me know what they changed, if you notice.”

“I’ll do that.”

“Anyway, how soon can we get this gentleman where he has to go?”

“It will take about five hours for a car to get to him.”

“Do that, then. In fact, give him anything he wants. Unlimited requests. 246, would you be able to do me a favor?”

“Maybe.”

“Can you mail me your autograph? Actually, it’s for my wife, she loves the show. Could you do that?”

“Yeah, sure I can do that.”

“Good, it’s for Denise Ryland, and write something in about how you appreciate her being a big fan of yours.”

“How do I get it to you?”

“You can just mail it to General of the Army Walter Ryland, The Pentagon, Chicago. Or better yet, Tam, can you put an Interoffice envelope in the car you send him, and have it addressed to me?”

“Yeah, sure. Or rather, Yes, sir!”

“Down boy, down! Anyway, it’s been fun talking with both of you, but, unfortunately I have to get back to work in order for my report to get back to you know who. 246, since she gave you authority to call me, I presume you have her ear?”

“Yeah.”

“Tam, this ties into one of the things you’ve mentioned in your reports here, and apparently unlike my superiors, I *do* read the stuff you send me. I keep sending reports upstairs and all I get is silence. 246, the note I got about you was probably the first thing in six months that Her Worship’s office sent down here that wasn’t just form letters and routine correspondence. I’m thinking of finding a way to flatten the bureaucracy, and maybe give more control to some of the local commanders, or the regional ones like Tam here. As it is, most of the major decisions, in fact, far too many, get pushed up to command here instead of delegating them to the field. Tam tells me, they have to approve all purchases over ten grand...”

“Sir, actually we have to approve all purchases over twenty-five hundred dollars. *Your* office has to approve purchases over ten grand.”

“So you can see, the local limits are way too low, looks like basically if they have to order much more than a couple cases of nails or some lumber they have to send requisitions upstairs. I have some ideas I’d like to try, if nothing else, I’d like to pick one of the small units and try it there, to see if it will work. Maybe the San Diego or Phoenix bases might be appropriate. I mean, if the Imperial Palace would say, ‘yeah we like your idea, but we can’t do it,’ or ‘your idea stinks,’ at least I’d know that someone at least read the reports I send them, even if they didn’t agree. But I never hear anything one way or the other and it’s frustrating. So, maybe you can get them to consider letting me try this, or if they don’t agree, at least have someone let me know.”

“If I get the chance, I’ll pass it on.”

“I appreciate that, thank you.”

Chapter 143

“... not just our country... but to defend and protect our very existence.”

A few hours later, after the two of them had showered and changed, the “car” shows up. It looks like Diane’s Limousine. 246 gets in, and he rolls down the window. Ellen leans over. “246, I don’t know how I can thank you for everything,” she starts to cry. “Let me give you a hug before you go.” So she hugs him through the window, and waves goodbye, as the limousine rolls away. She turns around and walks back into the house. 246 turns to the driver. “Stop and go back for a moment.” So he does. 246 gets out, goes back to the house, and knocks on the door. She opens it, and smiles. “Why don’t you come along. You’ll never have a chance to ride in a limousine, so here’s an opportunity.” “You don’t have to ask twice. Oh, wait, how do I get back?” “They can store the electric bicycle in the trunk.” “All right!” She gets in, and the chauffeur loads the motorbike. They ride off. “My God! This is so luxurious!” “In my world, wealthy people have these and some large businesses.” “Looking at how fabulously roomy and soft it is in here, would I be wrong if I thought that people have sex in these things?” “I’m sure they do.” “In that case, 246, why don’t you do me here? As you said, I’ll never have the chance again and I’ll bet it would be fun for you.” “Okay.” He reaches under her dress and takes off her panties, unbuttons his pants, pulls them down, gets on top of her, fingers her for a minute or so until she’s wet, gets in position, “Now remember, if you’re getting pleasure, you move with me, if not, you don’t.” “Oh yeah, I remember.” So he slides into her at the position he remembered she liked. He begins stroking back and forth inside her, and she confirms he’s doing the right thing by matching his strokes. This goes on for a few minutes until he comes again. They put their clothes back together, sit up and decide to watch the view from outside the windows. Suddenly she yells out, “Stop! 246, ask him to stop!” “Driver, would you pull over, please.” The limousine comes to a stop and she tries to get out, then 246 finds the handle and opens the door. She gets out and runs over to Murph’s Bicycle Shop, where the store is dark and there is a sign on the door, “Closed until further notice.” 246 looks at the sign. “I guess he decided to take the money and run.” “I can’t believe that. I’ve known him for, what, over 15 years, I can’t believe he’d just run away.” “I suppose if someone gets enough money and figures they can get away with it.” “Four Million? Come on, I make that much a year as a professor. I’m sure he does at least that much business in two or three months, this is one of the most popular bicycle stores in the county. I can’t believe he’d just run off. Anyway, I guess you need to get going.” “Do you want to come along?” “No, I’m going to see if I can find out where he went; if his house is abandoned, then I’ll know if you were right. But I can’t believe that he’d just run. I’m thinking that maybe he got hold of someone who could arrange financing and has gone to see them.”

“Well, if he did run off, you’ve still got his electric bicycle. I’ll have him get it for you out of the trunk.”

“Oh gee, thanks. Anyway, let me hug you goodbye, again, 246.” So she does. After her (well, his, if we presume Murph didn’t run away) bicycle is unloaded, the driver gets back in and the limousine rolls on down the road. 246 writes out a note for Denise Ryland on the letterhead that was provided in the envelope.

Several hours later, the limousine rolls up at the entrance to the base. The driver rolls down his window and shows his ID. Then he rolls down the window where 246 is. An MP looks in.

“May I see your ID please?”

“I don’t have one.”

“May I see your papers, then, whatever note you have?”

246 thought for a moment. (“I left them at Ellen’s. I remember now, I had it on the counter, and forgot to take it with me.”) “Uh, look, I wasn’t told to bring anything, is there a pay phone around here? I’ll just call General Ryland at the Pentagon and have him tell you to let me in.”

“Could I have your name, please, sir?”

“Supervisor 246.”

“Hold on a moment.” He steps inside the guard shack and speaks on a telephone, then returns.

“Oh, I see.” He turns to 246. “Sorry, sir, the reason they didn’t put anything here was that when you showed up, the Major wanted to see you anyway.” He turns to the driver, and hands him back his ID. “Drive him over to Major Trapp’s house.”

The windows roll back up and the limousine continues forward. It rolls to a stop in front of a fairly nice bungalow. 246 remembers this time, to take the envelope with him, as he gets out. He walks up to the door and it opens. “Come on in, come on in!” He offers his hand and shakes it. “You can probably guess, I’m Major Jason Trapp. Have a seat. It isn’t too often we get VIPs down here. Can I get you a drink or something? I have bourbon and scotch, and if you want a beer or something, if I don’t have one you like I can send the driver down to the officer’s club or the PX.”

“No, thank you.”

“Well, anything you want, you just ask. Anyway, I’m supposed to get some letter from you?”

“Yeah, here.”

“Thank you. You know, they basically told me to give you anything you wanted. I said to Colonel Watkins, ‘Look, I know it’s, “when they say jump, you say how high,” so I’m curious, do you really mean *anything*, sir?’ and he said, ‘If he says he doesn’t like one of your buildings, you hand him the keys to a bulldozer, chase everyone out, and point him in the right direction.’ So, can I interest you in maybe not liking our mess hall?” He smiled. “I’d love to get a new one. And so would our cook. Otherwise, can I get you anything else before you go?”

“No, thank you.”

“Oh, something’s bothering me. What was your name again?”

“Supervisor 246.”

“Oh, that’s what it was. Look, I’m sorry if I was harsh on the phone with you, you wouldn’t believe the number of crank calls we get a day because of that Area 51, oh excuse me, the ‘Albuquerque Military Research and Development Facility’. It’s so secret they don’t even let *me* in there and I’m supposed to be in charge of this base. I hope you understand that I have to screen out as many of the crackpots as we get before allowing them up the food chain?”

“I understand. Back home I have thousands of calls a day that my staff has to screen or I’d never get anything done.”

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Man, you really get a lot of phone traffic. Where’s home for you?” 246 thought about that for a moment. Realizing that this is a military area, he could get away with not saying anything. “Actually, I’m afraid that’s classified.”

“Oh. Sorry, I’m not trying to pry.”

“No offense. Anyway, that’s where I’m going is Area 51.”

“Oh. Okay, then just tell the driver to take you there. No, wait, I’d better do it, he might not believe you have the authority.” They walk outside, and he walks over to the driver. “He needs to go over to RDF, so drive him over there.” He comes over to 246. “I’d like to ask you something, maybe if you have some pull with the brass, you might be able to pass on a suggestion?”

“Go ahead.”

“What I’d like to do more than anything else is see if you can get them to maybe raise our funds limit. Right now, we can’t spend more than 2,500 without passing it through Wichita. I mean, seriously, the other day I wanted to get four cans of paint from a hardware store so we could do some touchups on some of the barracks, and I just decided the hassle was too much just for 6 grand worth of paint. I was almost tempted to pay it out of my own pocket, but I thought, they don’t pay me enough to be spending my own money. I mean, basically if they’d either give us about a 10 grand limit or give us a general repair budget of about 200 grand, we’d eliminate about 90% of the requests we have to send to them, and we could buy stuff locally. The limits are so low, and the paperwork necessary to requisition anything is so lengthy that we usually end up waiting until we have a huge order, we put in everything we can think of that we might possibly need, and we probably end up spending more money than we would have if we had better local management of our expenses. I know they have to be careful against fraud and waste, but I think the over micromanagement might cost them more than they’re saving.”

“I have a suggestion for you.”

“What’s that?”

“Write up what you just said and pass it on in that envelope to General Ryland. He more-or-less said the same thing to me. He wants to try something like that at a couple of smaller bases out west, and if he gets independent confirmation of what he’s thinking it might bolster his argument. In fact, you put it in there that I recommended you mention it to him.”

“Why gee, thanks, but I’m mostly just grousing and bitching, I’d never have dared actually recommend it to him. Tam Watkins would have my ass on a transport to command a base in the Republic of Texas or in Mexico for going over his head.”

“I’ll fix that. Do you have a couple pieces of letterhead?”

“Certainly.” He goes and gets several pieces of paper.

246 writes on it. “Read it.”

“Dear Colonel Watkins. I’m telling the major here to send his suggestion to General Ryland. If you don’t like it that I told him to go over your head, well, maybe I’ll come visit and decide I don’t like the way your house looks. Supervisor 246.” The major smiles.

“Can you make copies and send that along with a copy of what you just told me to the colonel and to the general?”

“I sure can. Mister, I like the way you think.”

246 writes on another piece of paper. "You'll like this even more. Read."

"Dear General Ryland. Pick ten places including Albuquerque, and give them each a 200,000 general maintenance budget or an increase of that much, as the Major explains, and see whether that causes problems. Once you get some experience in seeing whether this reduces costs, then you'll have some ammunition to argue more of what you wanted. Or you'll find out you were wrong and the way they're currently doing works better. Supervisor 246.' Mister, I have to believe you're some sort of manna from heaven, or something."

"Well, anyway, I'm going to get going now."

"I want to shake your hand again, and say thanks, thanks a lot."

"You're welcome."

246's limo arrives at the checkpoint for "Area 51." The guard looks in. "You'll have to get out of the vehicle, I will drive it in." So the chauffeur gets out, and another MP goes to the guard shack, while the first MP gets in. He drives back to the front of the entrance. "Sir, they have instructions inside for you. I want to be sure that I'm correct, you're crossing over to another universe and won't be coming back any time soon, so you won't need the car further?" "That's correct. I'm surprised you know any of this."

"Sir, anyone who has anything to do with these facilities here and in the other locations isn't from this world, they're from one of the other ones. I'm actually from *your* world, not this world or the world of Queen Diane. We know what we're protecting and how important it is. If I have even the slightest doubt about someone who might threaten this facility, I can and will kill them, possibly without warning, and I would so do and act without hesitation. I also won't take unnecessary risks to myself because if I am killed, it's just a minor inconvenience to me personally, but I can't protect this facility if I die. However, I know that if necessary I can and will die to protect this facility, since when I do I know a beyond a shadow of a doubt and an absolute certainty that I'm going back there. Being fully aware of all of this means I, and all those involved are far more motivated than even regular soldiers. We're defending not just our country, we're doing much more than that; we're not just fighting to protect our own lives, but to defend and protect our very existence."

"That's a good point."

"Okay, then, I can drive the car back and have the driver return it to the garage for recharging. Good luck on your trip., sir "

"Thank you." He walks inside. "I'm Supervisor 246, you have something for me?" She hands him an envelope. "Thank you." He looks at the instructions, which tell him to go to a specific floor, then walk to a certain room, and use the phone there. So he arrives, dials a number, then hangs up and waits. About 5 minutes later, the phone rings. "Yes?"

"246, there is a red square in the next room. Stand in it, and make sure no part of your body is outside of the red area."

"Let me guess, if it is, I'll leave it behind?"

"You're right on the money. So obviously, don't."

"Okay, Mary."

"You've got two minutes to be in position, so you should have plenty of time. Bye."

As he stood in position, he saw the world flash around him, and the strong smell of ozone.

“246, don’t move! I don’t want you to contaminate anything.”

“Diane, nice to meet you.”

“Thank you, 246. There is a chair on your right, you can sit down in it. So anyway, did you get in much trouble?”

“I don’t know yet. I tried suggesting something, I don’t know if the guy is going to do it or if he just kept the money and ran. Oh yeah, the chairwarmer you have at the Pentagon, General Ryland, he’s actually trying to do something. It sounds like they have a big bureaucracy there even in that world.”

“That’s the whole idea, I’m trying to keep the military busy so it doesn’t get ideas about trying to do things.”

“Yeah, that’s what he said. Well, anyway, from what I got from a number of people, a base commander can’t even buy three cans of paint without a ton of paperwork. So, using the unlimited authority you gave me, I told your boy at the Pentagon to pick ten places, give them 200,000 in budget to do general maintenance, and see if that isn’t cheaper than filling out paperwork over minor things. Oh, speaking of minor things, the Pentagon is in *Chicago*?”

“It is in their world. They built it there when the great fire burned a large part of the city. They needed some way to encourage rebuilding, and as it already was a major city and had significant infrastructure, so it was decided to build it there. Actually, 246, the Pentagon in that world is about 1/10 the size of the one from yours. Their military there is much smaller.”

“So that’s another reason to let them keep busy doing maintenance. You can use them to do repairs to places damaged by natural disasters when there’s no local capacity left. Keep them busy on other things, and they’re not sitting around wondering when the next war is going to occur. Or trying to start the next war.”

“Hmm, I hadn’t thought of that. Okay, then, I’ll let your suggestion go through. Anything else?”

“Yeah, General Ryland is complaining that he sends all sorts of reports to your office, and basically it’s a vacuum. He said something to the effect of, ‘It wouldn’t even matter if the Imperial Palace told me “we don’t like your idea” or “good idea, but we can’t do it”, at least I’d know someone is reading the reports I’m sending.’ I think apparently he wants to do some things, but without direction he really can’t.”

“246, maybe I should appoint you General of the Army and let you take a crack at it.”

“No thank you! I had enough of that crap growing up on military bases, I don’t want to do it again. What you can do is give him authority to delegate some decisions down to the regional and base commanders, and reduce the amount of paperwork they have to go through.”

“Again, the whole point is to keep them busy, as you so succinctly pointed out, so they don’t have time to think about ways to start more wars.”

“Then cut the number of people to the minimum instead of keeping lots of them involved in busy work.”

“246, I have to admit, me, George and a lot of the other people on the Board, are probably what you’d call ‘liberals.’ In fact, that’s probably the reason your afterlife is the way it is. So we can’t just dump those people on the street to starve, in fact that’s why a lot of the social features of that world are there. A lot of these people probably aren’t qualified to do anything *but* busy work.”

“Then put them in overalls and give them a brush or a hammer or a shovel, and have

them out fixing latrines or something. Or set up one agency to build pyramids, and another agency to demolish them. Or split the department and move all the pseudo soldiers into some new government department, and make a smaller military force of what's necessary to defend the country. Anything but turning the military into a dumping ground. Wasting a good military by filling it with bureaucracy is stupid and defeats the whole purpose of having one in the first place. It's why I've always opposed conscript militias. Being a soldier is a professional job that is as difficult as any highly technical operation, you don't want to have people who resent being forced to do it. Otherwise you get the sort of situation they had in Vietnam in my world, where ersatz soldiers, believing themselves to be considered expendable cannon fodder, drank and drugged themselves into a stupor to escape."

"Okay, I'll offer your suggestions to Ryland and see what we can come up with. Anything else?"

"Yeah, there's supposed to be a bunch of questions they're going to send me from that meeting, can you do something about allowing them to be answered?"

"Yes, we can have them scanned or typed into the main computer and sent to your office. You can send them back to the Board when you're finished with them. Is that it?"

"One more thing. I'm curious, the guard outside told me that he's from my world and that all the people who have anything to do with these places is from outside the world they're in now. I tell you, if I had to get into a fight, I'd want people like that around, he isn't just motivated, he's almost a devoted fanatic. From where do you get these people?"

"Okay, 246, I'll tell you, but it's part of the 'Afterlife Assurance Company'."

"Meaning it's absolutely privileged. Go ahead."

"Do you know what happens when someone gets involuntarily recycled?"

"No."

"Any ideas?"

"Presumably, you strip them of their memories and send them back to earth to be reborn."

"That's what we used to do. Have you seen a Life Warrant lately?"

"Life Warrant?"

"When someone is involuntarily recycled, it's by order of a Life Warrant, same as a Death Warrant is used on earth."

"No, actually I've never seen one. I've never handled an Involuntary Recycling case."

"Well, what it says on the order is the person subject to Involuntary Recycling is to be 'Removed From the Afterlife' then 'Expunged of memories' and 'Returned to Earth'" It's actually three orders. It used to be 'Returned to Earth' which encompassed the other two. So now, we only perform the first one. They get sent here, then we basically offer them a chance to 'atone for their sins' by doing a service here before returning to the Afterlife, or being sent back to earth. Haven't had one refuse yet. We do an extensive check of their personality and block off the parts that made them break promises or would otherwise be untrustworthy. We actually have you to thank for it."

"Me?"

"Yeah. When we were trying to figure out how to be able to salvage someone who was keeping their memories from the Afterlife, we had to practice on someone. We couldn't very well make you the guinea pig. So we practiced on, basically, the couple hundred or so people who get involuntarily recycled every year, since, if we messed up and lost their memory, it didn't

matter since they would have lost it anyway from being recycled. We haven't had any problems in years. We did yours manually, however, because we wanted to take extra care and caution; you're our friend."

"Gee, thanks."

"We also block their memory of the Afterlife because while we want them to be aggressively defensive of our facilities, we don't want them to be suicidal or to take extreme risks. What they remember is they went there, but they got sent here for doing something really bad. And how exemplary their conduct is determines whether they get back in or go back to earth. What we don't tell them is that they'll always get back into the Afterlife. As I said, we're a bunch of - what was the term they use in your world - 'bleeding heart liberals.' They'll also be unable to remember being recycled, so when they get to the Afterlife, it's all new to them, again. They also won't be able to tell anyone what happened once they die. So now, we don't have to waste a lifetime of experience throwing someone back to earth, we can use it much more effectively for our own purposes. And since it was their choice to take the offer, they're fully motivated to cooperate. Of the two or three thousand we've captured since we started this 'research project,' we've had about fifty die from various causes. They've all gone back to the Afterlife and as far as we can tell, they've either been exemplary members of society or they've gone back to the Frontier to be, as Freddie put it, 'Reprobates who infest the Frontier.' Only difference is, they're *respectable* reprobates who do all sorts of bad things, but they don't break the two rules."

"I see."

"Anything else?"

"Hmm, at the moment, nothing else I can think of."

"So are you ready to go?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Okay then, stand up, and step to your left, we're going to transport you to your world. Mary, any time you're ready."

"Here we go!"

Then he goes on to his earth. And thus he arrives.

Chapter 144

“I guess maybe being dead has kind of cheapened my respect for life.”

“So anyway, Supervisor 246, before you catch the flight to Los Angeles, here are your plane tickets, drivers license and international drivers’ license, Visa and MasterCard, American Express, Discover, Diners Club and as well as the equivalent of US \$500 cash in dollars and Canadian Dollars. You did say you wanted Canadian, right?”

“Yeah, I plan to visit Toronto my last week. Never got the chance when I was alive. The first time, that is.”

“Okay, and US \$5,000 each in Thomas Cook and American Express travelers checks. You can sign all the checks while you’re on the plane, it will give you something to do. The Visa and MasterCard have a limit of US \$15,000 each, Discover has a \$5,000 limit, Diners has \$50,000. The American Express has a limit of \$500,000 so watch it carefully that you don’t leave it somewhere. You also have three 1,000 minute telephone cards from AT&T, those were mere pocket change in comparison. That should last you a week or so. If you actually do come close to running out of money on your cards, call me and I’ll have your credit limit raised. Or I might just get you another card. I’m setting it where it is in case you lose a card we’re not into a huge loss before I can stop transactions on it.”

”Good idea.”

“I mean, I could sell you more money if you want it but I think it’s better that you’re not a big target for robbery, at most someone can get less than \$2,000 if they did take everything you have since everything except cash can be stopped or replaced. If you decide you do want something that’s too expensive or you get into serious trouble, call me. Almost anything can be fixed with cash and we’ve got plenty of it. I’m authorized to get you anything up to US \$2 million on your say-so alone. I just want one thing from you.”

“What’s that, you want me to sign a receipt?”

“Oh no, not even that. Just your promise that if the office asks you what I sell you or spend that you tell them exactly what I’ve done so that it confirms that if you ask me for, say, \$300,000 in cash, and I sell it to you, that you tell them I did exactly that. Apparently the people I do jobs for are so well trusted that I’ve never had a problem as long as I get their promise to accurately tell everything. One of your auditors was in my office once and was very impressed, he said I hadn’t stolen so much as a dime, that every charge and every cost was exactly accounted for, that I didn’t pad anything. It was right after that they raised my authorization from \$100,000 to \$2 million. I figure I keep this up and eventually I can personally authorize anything up to 8 figures. I would love to have the opportunity to have a request from someone to buy, say, an office building and I just go in and write a check for it, plus the check for my own override on the deal.”

“Oh sure, I promise to let them know about anything you give me.”

He frowned. “246, you know better than that. I don’t *give* you anything, just as you never give away anything back home. I *sell* you everything you get from me and I charge the company for it plus a commission. I think you owe me an apology for that.”

He smiled. “I’m sorry, you’re right.”

“Thank you. I understand that people up there trade favors and in your case you’re the equivalent of a multimillionaire. In a place where most people’s net assets of that type amount

to less than 500, and you've got millions. Since I understand you don't cheat people, at most you charge them all the traffic will bear, and some of them even come back to you for additional work, it probably means you're very good at what you do. And I would say based on that, that you almost never give anything away, would that be correct?"

"Yes, you're right."

"Well, anyway, say you call me and ask for \$500,000. I'm going to charge the company \$550,000 if I have to deliver it to you as a suitcase full of cash as I'm taking a big security risk and probably have to rent an armored car. Might only be a couple hundred if all I have to do is write you a check, but otherwise it's cost plus expenses plus commission.

"Leave this Sprint PCS cell phone off until you get off the plane and are in the airport as it's only good in the U.S. and Canada anyway. You have a car charger and desktop charger in your bag to refresh the battery when you're not using the phone. If you want to be reachable, leave it on all the time. If not, the phone has voicemail. You have hotel reservations at the Bonaventure for a week, and we booked you a Lincoln Town Car for a rental vehicle which you can pick up at the airport. Sound good so far?"

"Very nice. I said to George I wanted to travel first class and it looks like he's come through."

"You mean *I* came through. He told me to give you the best VIP package I could think of and I've done exactly that, and charged a nice override on everything I spend for him. I was considering getting you a limousine but he said you'd want to drive yourself. We're making so much money that drug dealers are envious. Inexpensive electricity can be extremely lucrative. Especially when it ends up that you get someone to pay you to take the raw materials off their hands, you charge someone else to process them, and then charge a third party for the results of the processing. Enron never saw it coming when we destroyed them with rates half of what it costs them. Of course if they and their accountants hadn't been crooks to start with maybe they wouldn't have fallen so hard.

"I run a very lean operation here so I get to keep a nice chunk of the profit. And I don't have to worry about my boss being upset that I'm greedy because he isn't even in this Universe so he really can't do anything to me and knows what I'm doing anyway. As long as I have whatever he wants done he doesn't really care what I charge. And I'm not really all that greedy. And since it's all generally done outside the U.S. the IRS doesn't get a dime in taxes and very little goes to any other country either so I get to keep that part too.

"Anyway, you have ten days in Los Angeles, then you fly on to DC where you have four weeks there, and two weeks in Toronto. Just curious and you don't have to tell me if you don't want to, but why did you want to visit LA anyway? But also I like to know if there's anything else I can do for you which I can charge to the company."

"I used to live there, I wanted to see how much the place has changed. And a friend of mine robbed a bank in Long Beach, I wanted to see the place where he died. And while I don't really gamble I might want to see Las Vegas, maybe play some slot machines just to see what it's like, you know, maybe drop ten or twenty dollars just to see how it feels to have done it."

"Oh. Well, anyway, I get a percentage on everything I give you, oops, sorry, now I'm doing it. Anyway, I'll get you anything you want if I can find it or have it made, just ask. I normally have staff do these jobs but when George tells me I have unlimited funds and a big override to give you anything you want I decided to handle everything on this contract personally. So name it and it's yours. And you don't pay me anything at all, the override covers it. And let

George know I said that. I like what I'm doing and want to keep on doing it so I want to make sure you're completely happy with whatever arrangements I make so you'll tell him how nice I did.

"If you're interested in firepower I can get you just about anything you want from mere handguns to shotguns and rifles to fully automatic machine guns almost immediately, up to and including nuclear weapons, although I need a few days for those and I'll be happy to tell you they are *very* expensive and I hope you want one. I don't issue people guns or any other weapons unless they ask for them as some of them do not want to handle firearms so I respect their wishes. But everyone loves cash and credit cards. And you're going to love this," he says, as he hands over a passport to 246.

246 looked at the passport. "Holy shit, a Mexican diplomatic passport!" He smiled. "Yeah, it only cost us \$75,000. Before my cut, anyway. I just told the officials I had to bribe the truth, that you were an American who has been out of the country for years, is listed in the U.S. as dead, that you wanted to go back and take a look, and you couldn't afford to have it be discovered you were still alive if something went wrong. Since I wasn't trying to get one for smuggling drugs they gave us a discount. I was deeply disappointed since I get a percentage of what it costs me but I do try to get a good rate when I can." "Uh, don't I need a Letter of Credence or something?"

"Actually, no. Your appointment is as *Chargé d'affaires ad interim* for the Mexican embassy in Washington. We simply offered the existing ambassador 5,000 euros to take a couple weeks vacation in London so that there would legitimately be a reason for you to show up and the American officials wouldn't get suspicious."

"Oh. Okay, then. Ha! This is cute. My name is Señor Dos Cuattro Seises. Mr. 246 in Spanish. Did George think that up?"

"No, actually I did. If you need to get cash out of your credit cards, the pin code is 6420" "My number backwards."

"I thought it would be easy to remember. Now, for cover, what happened was that you were raised by expatriate Americans which is why you speak English so well."

"Ees sat so? Meester, youse theenk I spick Ingles pretty goot?"

"Not bad, not bad at all. Really terrible accent."

"Tank ewe meestar, I'm tying all de time to eemprov my Ingles so I won' soun' lyk some egnorant toorist from Mejico."

"Keep that up and that's exactly what they'll believe."

"On the other hand, I could simply have been properly educated in Mejico by Amurricans. Dose gringos will do anything for money."

"As a professional gringo who does exactly that, I think I should feel insulted, wetback!"

"Hey! I resemble that remark!"

"Anyway, you need to catch your plane in about three hours."

"So long, and thanks."

"Any time. You know, when I actually discovered there really was a Heaven, it changed my whole outlook on life. I have probably one of the best jobs around. I get to spend money like crazy, do anything I please, and when I die, I get to go to Heaven and have as good a time as I'm having right now. Maybe even better if the women are as hot as I've heard they are. I mean, what I experienced was really fantastic but I've heard it can be even better than that."

“I always thought if I ever had to tell someone the truth about the Afterlife they’d never believe me. Almost all the women are stunningly beautiful, uninhibited, like sex a lot and are very receptive if you ask them nicely. There’s no disease and she can’t get pregnant so you always have sex bare. Plus, since you can’t come until she decides you can, you don’t have to worry that you’re doing her wrong, every time she lets you come it means you’re doing exactly what she wants. And you don’t get soft so you can fuck for hours or days, coming over and over again as she does the same thing.

“Sex is much stronger there than it is here. A lot stronger. I had forgotten how much different it was when I had the opportunity to get laid in this body, and, while it was good, very nice, it was no where near as powerful as what I’ve been having back home. But I’m not complaining, it’s still fun to make love to a nice lady, especially one you care for.

“Anyway, as far as the women back home are concerned, since she can usually come no matter how you fuck her, you can do her just about any way you want, fast, slow, hard, soft, whatever. If she doesn’t like it, she’ll come right out and say so and tell you what she does like. So if you’re doing it wrong, she’ll tell you. If you’re doing it right, you’ll know every time you pour the pork and spray her again.

“In the first hour with her, you’ll probably come ten times or more, maybe as much as thirty times, depends on how often she grants Climax Privilege to you. She’ll probably come over 100 times or more. And if you want it more often, ask her and she’ll almost always give you another one as long as you’re giving her lots of them. And you can do this with just about any woman, as often as you want. All you have to do is ask nicely, if she turns you down, you’ll find another who will accept fairly quick.”

“If it wasn’t for the fact I’m enjoying this job as the undercover Consulate for the Afterlife and all other Universes, I’d probably commit suicide and go.”

“You don’t have to do that. It’s messy and probably painful. Anytime you don’t want to live anymore, just contact the main office and they’ll have a professional mercenary kill you right away, and do it so fast you’ll never feel a thing.”

“Oh gee, that’s mighty nice of them.”

“Well, it’s not just being nice but we do try to help our people out any way we can. They’ll want you to insure yourself heavily with them as the beneficiary since being murdered counts as accidental death, they don’t have to wait to collect, and they get double indemnity.”

“Oh, I see.”

“George even told me, anytime I want someone killed just let them know and they’ll be on their way to my Department within 24 hours.”

“Whom is he using, CIA, KGB or Mossad?”

“Hey! You used the wrong word there.”

“What do you mean?”

“The last place I was at, I got into a discussion with someone over ‘who vs. whom’. You’re using it wrong. If you can rephrase the sentence to use ‘he’ ‘she’ or ‘they’, you use ‘who’ and if you use ‘him’, ‘her’ or ‘them’, you use ‘whom’.”

“Uh, yeah, you’re right, I could say, ‘He is using’ instead of ‘whom is he using’ so I should have said ‘who’. I usually just remember the ‘m’ rule. If you could say ‘him’ or ‘them’,” he says, emphasizing the ‘m’, “then you use ‘whom’, if you’d use ‘he’ or ‘they’, then you use ‘who’.”

“Hmm, yeah, that’s even easier to remember.”

“Well, anyway, *who* is he using, CIA, KGB or Mossad?”

“Mostly CIA, either current or ex-members if I understand correctly. You know, it’s funny, but I never thought I’d live to see the day when I discuss having someone murdered in the same sort of casual context as if I was ordering a fax machine from Staples. I guess maybe being dead has kind of cheapened my respect for life. Sometimes I feel like an undertaker, wanting to see people I care about or find attractive die.

“It’s funny, but years back when I was back home every so often I would wish Christiane Amanpour would get killed in one of those wars she covers so I can have the opportunity to love her back into the world. But as far as some of the other still-living women that I’m interested in, at least I think I have changed as I don’t want it to happen while I’m here as Incomings Support might release some of them from Limbo and let someone else have them while I’m gone.

“In fact, I’m not going to trust them in that case. If I hear any woman on the top ten of my list dies while I’m on vacation I’ll kill myself. Gee that sounds so funny but it’s exactly what I need to do.”

“Oh, that reminds me, I do need you to sign this.”

“A medical power of attorney? Oh, so that’s what your name is.”

“No, actually, that’s the name of one of my employees. I’ll explain it to you in a bit. I’m thinking if anything happens to you we want to make sure they pull the plug on you as soon as possible, correct?”

“Oh, yeah, of course, I’m just here on vacation, I don’t want to be stuck here as some vegetable for 20 years.” He signs the form.

“I didn’t think you would. Let me check my list, I think I’ve covered everything. Oh, yeah, here’s a portable bottle of oxygen. If you start to get dizzy or think you’re going to faint, take a puff or two.”

“Is it that bad?”

“I run this room with high oxygen so I and the staff can breathe, but, when you’re about to leave I’ll try and reclaim most of it because it’s expensive to waste. You’ll notice it when you step outside. Mexico City not only is 7,300 feet above sea level, but it has a smog problem worse than Los Angeles.

“Now, I know you’re sort of the same way as I am, you don’t tell anyone what your name was when you died. Well, I try to do everything as legal as I can, but to be on the safe side, nobody knows my name and I almost never carry ID. If I travel sometimes I have to but other than that, I don’t. You don’t know where I live or anything about me except a phone number of a pager and voice mail system. I keep a bunch of pagers around and I assign a different one to each client. And when I finish with you I throw that pager away, I never renew it and it’s a dead link. I am making it as hard as possible to be found if I have to do anything seriously illegal. In fact, once I have finished with anything I have to do down here, I and the staff here go back to the States, and this office will disappear about as fast as a gypsy roofing company and be about as traceable.

“Tell me more about the Afterlife. I was so overloaded when they invited me for a visit that I don’t think I remember a whole lot, so remind me, especially if it’s about sex, which I understand you’re one of the experts on that subject there.”

“If you say so. Anyway, one nice thing you should remember is that, when you die they roll

your effective chronological age back to about 20 or so. You have the memories of years and years of experience on earth, but the horniness and stamina of a 20-year-old. Forever, or until you decide you want to come back.”

“That’s why I’m going to wait until I really die, or I get really sick. I have a standing DNR order in my wallet. I figure as long as I’m having so much fun here, I can wait before Crossing Over.”

“Yeah, which reminds me. I had to fight tooth and nail with George to allow us to let people release some information to that guy on TV who talks to the dead. I said that if we do it fairly and don’t tell too much, most people will never believe it but a few will, and it will calm their souls and maybe make them feel better. So he agreed.”

“Do you think George will ever come over to this Universe? I’d like to meet him in person.”

“I think he’s afraid of cross contamination if he brings something from our world over there. That’s why I visited his world first, he doesn’t have to care if I contaminate this universe with something from there. But we did try very hard to prevent that. But in any case, you will when you die, he teleports in by holography on a regular basis. And I’m proud to say that the entire board has put their own consciousnesses into our Afterlife, so even if they capture other worlds, they’ve chosen ours to die into. Which is a good sign; when the people running the world have chosen yours as their preferred place, it means they’re not likely to decide it’s too expensive or not worth the effort and shut it down. So we can really expect to live forever. In a really nice place.”

“Is it true what they tell me about you and the Board?”

“Yep. I’m the only person from the Afterlife ever to be offered a seat on the Board of Directors. And of all the people ever offered it, the only one ever to decline. I’m having too much fun with what I’m doing, I didn’t want the hassle or the responsibility. I suspect George wanted to dump the job of running our Afterlife on me. Oh if he was really going to quit or might appoint some cruel bastard in his place I’d take the job, I’d rather have someone who knows what they are doing there than someone who might mess things up. And it’s probably safest this way if it did happen. I don’t want the job, therefore I’d do as little as possible and leave well enough alone so I would have plenty of time to do my own job and the things I want to do.”

Chapter 145

“Well, it only took 25 years...”

“Hello?”

“Eric, hi, this is Joan, the Watch Commander, how are you doing?”

“Hi, Joan. What can I do you for?”

“Well, 246 is out at the Frontier working on something, so I can’t tell him. But I would have called you anyway as I have something that I think you’re going to be really happy to hear.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, I just got a copy because I’m supposed to have it served on the French Consulate. But I’ll let you read it before I deliver it.”

“Thanks. Central Computer Fax me to the other end of this phone call.” He arrives, and takes the paper from her hand.

Court of Appeals of the English Language Section of the Afterlife
Les gens de la Section de Langue Française de la vie après la mort

v.

Larry 16634

(“*People of the French Language Section of the Afterlife v. Larry 16634*”)

7129 App. 611307

Advisory opinion on behalf of the Department of Criminal Prosecution, in and for the French Language Section of the Afterlife.

Unanimous opinion, authored by Donald 10302:

The case as entitled here is one in which the highest court of the French Language Section was presented with an appeal pursuant to §173(a) of its Penal Code which prohibits the imposition of Involuntary Recycling upon a person who is a citizen or national of another language section if such penalty is prohibited by the laws of the Language Section from whence the person arrived.

Larry 16634 was an Incoming who arrived in the English Language Section, had never been loved into the world, who crossed into the Frontier, visited the French Language Section, returned to the Frontier, then became involved in a scheme which ended up betraying a resident there by wilfully breaking a solemn promise within the Frontier, a crime which - as is here in the English Language Section - is punishable as a Capital offense.

As the French Language Section was the last one the defendant had visited, his case was tried there. He was convicted and sentenced to Involuntary Recycling. Defendant’s Counsel argued that it was not permissible to impose that punishment because it was not permitted here in the English Language Section.

As the argument in defendant's case represents a determination of the meaning of our laws, we were asked to determine if this was the case, and as such a question was presented to us pursuant to §201 of the Legal Code of the English Language Section of the Afterlife, in which a court of another Language Section may petition this court to inquire as to the meaning of a statute.

The question which is presented before us is, "Do the statutes, laws and customs of the English Language Section of the Afterlife permit the imposition of Involuntary Recycling upon Incomings?"

In looking at this issue we have discovered that this is basically an issue of first impression as such a case *has never occurred*. In the entire time of the operation of the criminal courts of the English Language Section of the Afterlife, no Incoming has *ever* been sentenced to Involuntary Recycling. We have discovered that it has generally been the policy of the Welcoming Department not to impose Involuntary Recycling upon Incomings and to make private arrangements to salvage them rather than imposing regular criminal trial proceedings.

There has been only one case, *Ex Rel Miller 12 v. Adrian 55*, 7104 Appellate 926, where an Incoming was ever put on trial for an offense punishable by Involuntary Recycling, and we found on other grounds that the acquittal was valid and could not be appealed, without even reaching the issue of whether or not the imposition of Involuntary Recycling upon an Incoming was or was not valid.

As it has never come before this court before - despite the fact that on the order of more than 100 Involuntary Recycling cases not involving Incomings do come before this court every year where the sentence is approved - we find this to be a strange situation, probably because it is considered that the imposition of Involuntary Recycling upon Incomings to be unacceptable.

For the reasons we will explain below, we will answer the question in the negative, and find that the imposition of Involuntary Recycling upon an Incoming within the English Language Section of the Afterlife constitutes an unusual punishment which is prohibited by subsection 8 of Section 9920 of the Legal Code of the English Language Section of the Afterlife.

To the Supreme Court of the French Section of the Afterlife, Greetings. Per your question, "Do the statutes, laws and customs of the English Language Section of the Afterlife permit the imposition of Involuntary Recycling upon Incomings?" we respond and answer your question "No."

Pour la Cour suprême de la Section française vie après la mort, salutations. Par votre question, «Ne les statuts, lois et coutumes de la Section de langue anglaise de l'au-delà

permettre l'imposition de recyclage involontaire sur Incomings?» nous répondre et répondre à votre question «Non».

Tears streamed down Eric's face, as he looked up from the paper. "Well, it only took 25 years, but the Court of Appeals has finally admitted what I've always believed in, that Involuntary Recycling was not a valid punishment. At least for Incomings, anyway."

Chapter 146

“...if I didn't know better I'd say... they came... from another universe...”

It is rumored that the U.S. Intelligence Community, that is, the “Alphabet Soup Organizations” such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), and several other government organizations, monitor all international communications traffic that passes to or from the United States. With the release of some alleged details about a system of what may include spy satellites and other land-based equipment which is believed to be called *Echelon*, it is suspected that they have the capacity of capturing, on a worldwide basis, all international communications traffic. Perhaps even all communications traffic everywhere, including domestic communications inside the U.S. The Intelligence Community obviously isn't saying anything about this system, whether it exists or not, so in general the public does not know for certain what they do or do not know or what they can or cannot do.

By law the CIA is not supposed to operate within the United States, that's the FBI's job. According to public reports, the FBI does do some work outside the U.S., ironically enough it opened a field office in Moscow, but most intelligence work outside the U.S. is generally done either by Field Agents (“Spies”) or independent contractors (“Mercenaries”) of the various intelligence agencies, and the government agencies cooperate with one another. In actual fact the various agencies usually hate each other about as much as they hate their so-called enemies because each of them is afraid the other is going to encroach on their turf and get more power and authority. They co-operate to the extent they are ordered to do so or where they have to, and fight among each other on everything else. Like most big families, they are unhappy with each other and hate their siblings. Where anything usually gets done is where some of the people who work for these various agencies like each other and pass information back and forth through unofficial channels. Historically, we refer to this system of friendships among various individuals in government agencies that hate each other as the “Old Boy Network.”

I'm going to break the Fourth Wall for a moment and actually enter the story myself so I can tell you something that really happened to me, Paul Robinson, the narrator.

I used to have sort of a joke about the intelligence community and my connection to it. Over ten years ago I lived in Washington, DC, and had a Post Office Box. My box was the one directly above the one belonging to the National Photographic Interpretation Center, otherwise known as NPIC. Because my box was directly above theirs, and I got a lot of mail, sometimes the mail clerk would put some in the wrong box, and I would get some of NPIC's mail by mistake, which was always junk mail or ads. (As if there's a difference between the two.) As most of the mail I got was the same thing, it was easy to understand how the clerk made the mistake. I'd collect the stuff that was wrong and hand it back to the counter clerk to have him or her put it in the correct box, NPIC's, the one below mine. Some of the mail was specifically addressed to 'US CIA' at NPIC's post office box number, which was physically directly under mine, but the box number was like 15 or 25 higher than my box number. Later it would be noted in at least one TV newscast that NPIC is part of the Central Intelligence Agency, so I'm not telling anything which isn't public knowledge.

Anyway, back then, whenever someone asked me for my address, I generally only gave out my

post office box, never my home address, and mentioned the above story. As a result, because I was just as secretive then of my own home address as the intelligence community is about what it knows, people who knew me used to talk about how Paul Robinson lived in the post office box above the CIA.

You might want to ask if I've ever worked for or been involved with the Intelligence Community for real in view of what I talk about in this chapter. Well, as they say in the business, "I could tell you but then I'd have to kill you." I can admit that I have been on or near the main campuses of both the NSA and the CIA, have had in-person contact with people who work for some of the Intelligence Community, and one time I was even given a pen with the CIA seal and a tie pin also having the seal, by the CIA contact person as a thank you for some papers that I wrote. (I found it amusing that CIA tie tacs are packed in little plastic bags marked 'Made in China.')

Now in saying that, maybe you'll think the statements above mean more than it does, or maybe you'll think it means less than it does, which is the whole idea: I'm probably trying to really confuse you so you don't know what, if any connection I personally have, to the Intelligence Community. Or perhaps I should use the standard answer of the Community when they don't want to answer your question one way or another, because answering it might tell you something they don't want you to know, and they might not want to lie, or might fear getting caught lying: "I will neither confirm nor deny that statement."

Now, I will exit this story and resume where I left off.

One advantage we have about the people in the Intelligence Community not knowing everything about us, is that if an intelligence service is picking up everything indiscriminately and checking it later, that they have lots of material needing analysis, and the more material they have, the more time it takes to process all of it. And the more time they need, the more likely that something they get becomes worthless by the time they find it or figure out what it is for. Or that some of it gets lost in the mountains of data that they have to process.

The most famous example being the telephone conversation picked up by a couple of people discussing an important event the next day. But the conversation couldn't be translated by the agency that intercepted it until two days later, on September 12, 2001. We don't really know if it had anything to do with the people who flew the planes into the buildings the day after it was recorded but there was nothing that could have been done about it even if it was, because it was analyzed after it was too late to be of any use.

What the above also means is that the people who work at these places are not superhuman, they are government employees, bureaucrats working at desks (it's said that back in the 1960s, 20% of the employees of the U.S. State Department were there primarily to throw "memo grenades" at each other, i.e. send paperwork back and forth), many of whom are the typical office worker who does okay, but sometimes makes mistakes and misses things, and these people have the same intra-department political battles, like who gets the best parking space, or better office, inter-organizational turf battles where someone worries about whether someone else might get credit for his or her work, and infighting and backstabbing as goes on same as at non-classified government agencies. (It's more or less identical to the same activities happening at commercial businesses too, as people who can recognize characters from the cartoon strip *Dilbert* can relate.) As well as the intelligence organizations fighting between each other over who gets what, and who gets blamed when there is an intelligence failure and something bad happens. This works to the advantage of those who don't want to be spied upon.

Another problem with indiscriminate monitoring is that it's hard to separate the wheat from the chaff. If you are spying for a country, you probably want to capture the contents of a conversation between a foreign contact who is known to pass information on to a group of people who engage in killing noncombatants in their wars with whomever they are fighting this month, but you're probably not interested in someone calling home from one country to another to wish his grandmother a happy birthday. (With the exception of the occasional high-profile alleged terrorist like 'Carlos the Jackal' or Osama Bin Laden.)

All these things take time. Milk isn't the only thing that has a short shelf life before it rots and becomes worthless, information can sometimes have the same characteristics. (As in the recording captured on September 10th that I mention earlier.) So you may need to know some things as quickly as possible before what you know reaches its expiration date. One of the ways to get around this time problem is to automate the search process, have a computer look for keywords. Certain words or phrases that are of interest to you that may be relevant to what you are looking for. Computers can scan text messages like e-mail and voice messages such as phone calls, then flag those items for review by an actual person. Then you can have a person read the item or listen to see if there is anything interesting in the conversation. That reduces the load but there's still a lot of false items.

For example, if you have 'United States', 'Asia', 'die', 'bomb', 'murder', 'justice', 'poison', 'killer', 'tragedy' and maybe other words as keywords, you might think a hit on all of these in a relatively short piece of a conversation would be important. Then you discover if it is or isn't when you hear the actual conversation, which, if we go back to sometime in, say 1975, might be something like this:

"I went to the movies for the first time in the **United States** because I saw one that I thought might be related to home back in **Asia**. I thought I was going to **die**. It was ***Murder on the Orient Express***, a real **bomb**. If there is any **justice**, it will be box office **poison**. The movie was **horrible**, and what was an even worse **tragedy** was that I had to sit through the whole thing because I wanted to know who the **killer** was."^{xxvi}

There is a fine line; use too many keywords, you may get too much useless 'chaff'; use not enough or set the rate for matching too high and you may miss some of the 'wheat' you are looking for. Anyone trying to use a World Wide Web search engine will recognize the problems with false hits on things you don't want and too many hits on things you do want. Good communications interception is an art. Since how most of what is done is top secret, you could say it's a *black art*.

Computers have obviously gotten more sophisticated than ever over time, and one of the members of the Intelligence Community, the National Security Agency, or NSA - whose budget is classified, by the way, so we don't even know how much money they have to spend, but I'm sure it's several billion dollars a year - located just outside of Washington on the grounds of Fort Meade, Maryland, has lots - acres and acres - of the fastest computers around. They have so many computers that it's even been openly reported in the news that Baltimore Gas and Electric (BG&E) is having problems providing them with enough electricity from the public power grid. Correction, NSA has had to open a satellite office several hundred miles away because they have *completely maxed out the grid*; BG&E can't provide them so much as another kilowatt. Go

about 50 kilometers south and you get to the Central Intelligence Agency, in McLean, Virginia, which I'm sure also has a few pieces of computing equipment around to work on spying. But even with all that computing power, a message may be worthless without context.

This is where it helped when George Green summoned 246 to come to the meeting by having David mention the Bible quote from Judges 3:20, the story of a man telling the King that he has a message from God. Unless you know that story, that is, if you don't know the *context*, the bible reference "Judges 3:20" does not tell you anything. (By the way, in Judges 3:21, we find out that the "message" is a dagger thrust into the King's belly.)

The spy agencies may also want to know if people are aware of what they are doing, so that they can change it or perhaps encourage people to look elsewhere so the general public doesn't change things and make it harder for them to do their job. This is why most countries make encrypting messages a crime, or want ways to be able to decrypt messages that the people using the encryption systems can't prevent. Or they prefer people use simple methods of encryption that they can easily break. Or not use encryption at all.

In the U.S., analog cellular phones generally are not encrypted; messages are transmitted over the airwaves in the clear, same as a walkie talkie. Digital phones may be encrypted depending on the service, but by law in the U.S. all telephone service providers have to have capacity built into the system to allow law enforcement to tap telephone circuits. The only thing stopping wholesale use of the information disclosed on calls is that it's not trivial to monitor cell phones, it takes a bit of work - not a whole lot but it's not real easy - and because technically it's illegal to do so; companies are not allowed to manufacture, and stores are no longer allowed to sell, new radio equipment that can monitor cellular bands.

But, obviously, these restrictions don't apply to the Intelligence Community.

It is believed that, ironically enough, because of keyword hits, the following conversation was allegedly captured by some member agency of the Intelligence Community between a cell phone in Southern California and a number somewhere in Mexico City:

"Hello?"

"Don't identify yourself or me, or say anything, but you know a friend of ours, who might be classified as a secret agent with a three digit number like 007, who is on vacation right now?"

"Oh, yes, I know him personally."

"Yeah, right, I'm sure you do. Have him visit the nearest land-line telephone and call my pager with the number. He will be receiving an important call in about an hour and I want to patch it through. Cell phones are not encrypted and I believe the U.S. Government monitors international calls. The last thing I want is to have someone like NSA tracing, or trying to trace, a call like the one he's going to get."

"Could it be it's a call from home for him? Be interesting to see what a trace would show, if it really did show anything."

"Yeah. I had half a mind to just go ahead and have the call directly routed to this phone and you could have let him take the call. I'd love to see them try to explain where that call terminated as they won't find it. But it's more than that. If you can believe it, his boss wants to talk to him. You won't believe what it took to make *that* connection. Kind of funny if one was to say that the AT&T Universal Card wasn't even big enough to cover the region the call comes from."

“Yeah, really. Maybe we should just ship the cocaine in by truck through the usual methods, you know dye it red and put it in a suspension of water, pack medical waste bags marked ‘Danger! Medical Waste containing AIDS contaminated blood’ Like the truck shipment going through El Paso tomorrow night.”

“Very funny. I’ve heard that back home you have a real strange sense of humor. I heard you were on TV when you slapped one guy around and another one punched you in the face.”

“Yeah, that’s true.”

“Well, anyway, given what you just said, it just might be fun to watch and see if the Customs Service was passed on a tip and started extra checking of all medical related trucks crossing the border.”

“Or how about if you gave out information about real trucks that were harmless, so that they spent a lot of time checking out innocent vehicles. Would serve them right for listening in on cell phone conversations in the first place.”

“I’ve actually thought of doing that to see what would happen. Especially if we picked trucks that when they opened them they gave off horrible retching gas that made the inspectors puke. Then we’d know for certain if these conversations were being monitored.”

“But if international connections are possibly being monitored, how do we get around that problem?”

“We have private connections not run through the commercial networks, that don’t go through commercial switching systems, so the chances are they are not monitored. But it makes little sense to go through that much trouble, then connect to an unencrypted cell phone. Besides, even for calls that use the Public Switched Telephone Network, it’s much harder to monitor a wired connection than an open cell phone.”

“Oh, I see. Okay, we’ll go over to a pay phone or something and I’ll tell him after he signals you to wait for your call. Bye.”

A check of the number in Mexico that the above call originated from showed it went to an office. A bit over a week after the phone call, a couple of Mexico City representatives for one of the ‘Alphabet Soup Agencies’ was doing some looking around, when he checked and found the office it went to was unlocked and totally empty. It had been cleared so thoroughly, and was so bare and clean that there was nothing to find except the set of keys. Rent for two months had been paid in advance, in cash by delivery service. As were all the other deliveries, office furnishings, phone service, etc. The keys for the office were picked up by someone who it was later discovered was paid the equivalent of US\$1500 by mail to get them, unlock the office, wait for the delivery and set up of office furniture and telephone service, and leave the keys inside the unlocked office without ever seeing who picked them up. For that kind of money, coming from one of the very poor areas in the city where any money was worth a whole lot, he probably would have killed the delivery people and the phone installer if he’d been asked. His family of 8 was able to eat for six months off that \$1500.

While interviews with tenants next to the office said they heard voices of people inside, plus the amount of equipment that was delivered to the office suggested at least 10 to 20 people were working there, nobody had ever seen any of the people who were using the place go in or out, except for one man who left approximately two weeks earlier, whom, it would later be noted, matched the general description of the Charge d’affaires for the Washington, DC Mexican

Embassy, as possibly 50,000 other people in Mexico City did, too. But nobody remembered seeing the man enter the building.

One of the people who worked for the Agency that looked into the matter stood in the middle of the empty room and made the comment that it looked like “they were so slick in disappearing, and did such a professional job in covering their tracks getting into the place, that if I didn’t know better I’d say those who were working here had figured out a way that they came into this world from another universe and figured a way back. Maybe they all just up and died and figured a way to take everything with them.”

Neither he, nor the person he said the comment to, would have any idea how close to correct his statement was. At least, not until years later, after he died, when the man who had left the office would tell him what had happened.

Chapter 147

“Tell the son-of-a-bitch I’m sorry I didn’t slap him…”

The phone rang. “Hello?”

“246, it’s nice to talk to you. How’s your vacation?”

“I’m actually having a wonderful time. Your representative in Mexico City said that I couldn’t even guess what it would take to connect this call.”

“Yeah, from what I gather it’s the longest telephone connection ever made, that if we counted it in real miles it probably exceeds the distance from the earth to the sun. But how you count distance when crossing from one universe to another is an interesting thought.”

“I wouldn’t have any idea, myself. But I suspect you didn’t set up this hugely complicated phone call just for idle chit-chat.”

“Not exactly. We did want to see if we could do this on a regular basis and now we can. Because we have something very special now possible, thanks to you pushing me into doing the research more than 20 of your years ago. But before I tell you what it is, I have some news for you.”

“Really, what’s that?”

“As I suspected, Lynn just told me that she thinks she’s pregnant.”

“Well that’s wonderful news. Congratulations.”

“We both knew when she told me, and now the three of us now know, that I am not the person who got Lynn pregnant.”

“And you know this because?”

“Well, remember the weekend we spent at the other house?”

“Well, of course.”

“I have a bit of news for you. I only slept with Diane. I never touched Lynn the whole time. She only slept with you.”

“Diane said that Lynn uses a diaphragm.”

“246, what Diane said was that Lynn *has* a diaphragm. I thought it was kind of ironic because Diane was using contraception that weekend, Lynn wasn’t.”

“Oh.”

“What do you mean, ‘oh’?”

“Well, I don’t know what to say.”

“Jesus, 246, for someone as open as you are about sex, I am utterly flabbergasted that you don’t know what to say in response.”

“I never had to think about it before.”

“Would you like one possible response?”

“Yeah.”

“How about ‘I guess I’m going to be a father, then.’”

“But I thought you said it wasn’t yours.”

“Very funny, 246. You know what I mean.”

“Yeah, I’m just surprised it happened, I guess. In view of what Diane said, I wasn’t expecting it.”

“I told you I was expecting it would happen when you were at the board meeting asking to be allowed to break Rule #1 on some of the incomings in order to develop what would one day

become Endless Orgasm. Did you forget?"

"I suppose, that was several years ago. Oh Christ, now I do remember, you told me that it was likely she just might decide to let me knock her up. Well, I guess that the only thing to consider is what to tell the child about its father when it grows up."

"No problem, for all it will ever know, it is mine."

"That's not a good idea, George, either something might happen in the future or he or she might have some genetic testing or something and discover the truth."

"I'm sure they will discover the truth, that they're mine."

"You've lost me somewhere."

"Gee, 246, as bright as you are, you haven't figured it out yet. Let me give you a hint. Two words: plastic surgery."

"I think the scales just fell down from my eyes. And you used to say *I* was greasy. I think I'm amazed, that I've been conned by my best friend and his wife. I'm presuming she knew it too."

"Of course. And I think I just zapped you, 246."

"We already know that."

"No, I mean something else. I am indeed touched. You called me your best friend. I thought Tom was. Well, actually she's Maria but you know what I mean."

"Damn, you son-of-a-bitch you so overloaded me I'd forgotten! But anyway, you transplanted me into your own clone after you had its face changed so it wouldn't look like you. So as a result, if I got Lynn pregnant it would be your DNA and nobody would be able to tell the difference if there was a genetic test done."

"Lynn thought it was a great idea. She could have sex with me but it was you in my body, so it would feel the same but she'd feel how you do a woman, which would be different. And she would be able to keep her promise that I'd be the only man who would ever be the father of her children. And she showed me how to do a few things you did to her so we've learned something."

"I am amazed, I guess. But I was both right and wrong the first time."

"What's that?"

"When you said, 'I guess I'm going to be a father, then' because it was figuratively true in that you're the genetic father, and when I said, 'But I thought you said it wasn't yours.' It's not yours literally, because I'm the one that impregnated her. But it's not true either because you didn't say it wasn't yours. That is an utterly amazing thought."

"Yes, I didn't even realize it. Maybe some of that terrific brain power of yours is coming back, 246."

"Maybe it's the force of gravity or something, but I tell you I do believe I'm measurably stupider down here."

"I have a suggestion."

"What's that?"

"When you were back home, everything was digital signaling, and in fact we have to slow it down to keep the system from flooding a person's soul faster than it can handle it. But I suspect what might be happening is that those who can handle more capacity get it, so your existence processes thought much faster in the Afterlife than it does when you're alive."

"Goddamn, I'll bet you're right,"

“Anyway, here’s the news. Are you ready?”

“Go ahead.”

“I’m going to connect you to the woman you’ve been having sex with, okay?”

“So she wants to talk to me?”

“Oh yes, she’s really happy in view of the circumstances. Should I put her on?”

“Yeah.”

“She’s on now, say hello.”

“Hello Lynn.”

“246! Well I was happy before but that’s a pretty callous thing to say to me!”

“Joan?”

“Of course! Why were you expecting Lynn? George just said he wanted to connect you to the woman you’ve been having sex with. I mean, I could expect you to think maybe it was Penelope or Nancy or Erica or Geannie or especially Terry, or some of the thousands of other women here that you’ve been screwing, but that’s ridiculous.”

“Joan, do you have any idea where I am?”

“Sure, you’re doing undercover work out at the Frontier, which is why you’re not around.”

“Oh, I see. Can I speak to George?”

“Don’t you want to talk to me some more?”

“Well, I think I need to say something to him about telling you what I’m doing.”

“Oh, yeah, it might have been better if he had told me that you’re really on earth right now.”

“Joan!”

“246, we just wanted to tease you a little. So now we have something amazing now, thanks to you, if we need it we can actually make calls back to earth. It takes Board permission and it’s a state secret, but we can do it now. I’m glad I didn’t have any relatives on earth or I might be tempted to want to call them and let them know that there really is a Heaven or something close to it.”

“Tell George I’m sorry about one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Tell the son-of-a-bitch I’m sorry I didn’t slap him instead of giving him a hug.”

“Aw come on 246, so he gave you his clone body and let you screw his wife and knock her up for him. And it isn’t like you didn’t get to come. Don’t you think, after all the scams and cons you’ve pulled on people, that someone should get payback for once?”

“Okay, you’re right, I think maybe the smog here is affecting my ability to be pleasant. I don’t think I would have been ticked off so easily back home. In fact, come to think of it, it actually was a neat trick.”

“You’re still not up to your usual standards, however, 246.”

“How?”

“You said, ‘come to think of it’ and you didn’t deny the pun there.”

“Darn, you’re right. Either I’m reverting back to the way I was on earth, or all the things it is possible to do there have spoiled me against the real world, I don’t know which. Maybe it is better to go under the knife to get here, you start over fresh and you aren’t confused by the difference.”

Chapter 148
“The exact opposite of an Enron...”

Los Angeles County, encompasses an area of some 10,518 square kilometers, an area about the size of the State of Connecticut, or 4 times the size of the State of Rhode Island. It is still dwarfed by the largest county in the United States, San Bernardino County, some 100 kilometers north, which is five times the size of LA County. Close to ten million people live in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County and more than 60 incorporated cities that make up the county.

The two largest cities in Los Angeles County are the county seat, with about 2½ million people and the largest city in California, which is named Los Angeles, of course, and the fifth largest city in the state with about 400,000 people, Long Beach.

The Los Angeles region is known for a lot of things. Some of the worst air quality in the country; two major riots (the 1965 Watts Riot and the Rodney King Riot, both caused because the police pulled someone over for a traffic stop); and it is the number one place for making beer, long since having passed Milwaukee.

It is also the number one location for another dubious first. As Washington, DC is considered the Murder Capital of the Nation, having more killings per capita than any other city, Los Angeles County has the dishonor of having more bank robberies than any other area in the United States. More than 400 a year are committed there.

We find 246 visiting Long Beach, exiting the Long Beach freeway onto 6th Street. He makes a right turn at Pine Avenue, and drives past the parking lot of the large shopping mall, until he sees the place he is looking for. As is typical in most cities, there is no place to park on the street so he uses a nearby parking lot. He walks out of the lot, walks around the building, and walks into the front entrance of the building.

So this is the Farmers And Merchants Bank of Long Beach, where Leroy got himself killed trying to rob, so many years ago, 246 thought. You could tell this was one of those really old, conservative banks that were built back in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the huge lobby, marble floors, marble teller cages, grates at each window instead of plexiglass, and so on.

246 picked up one of the brochures that gave the bank's financial condition. He looked at the numbers and couldn't believe what he was reading. The bank owns this building and 11 branches. On its books it listed the net assets for buildings at twelve dollars. 246 was impressed. This building alone would probably go for thirty million or more, and the branches each for at least a few million apiece, based on the pictures of them in the brochure and the price of land as he had noted in the newspapers. Meaning the bank had more than fifty million dollars in assets that they weren't even counting on their books. The exact opposite of an Enron, a place worth more money than their books said they were worth, and more than that, obviously worth more, they're not even hiding the fact they are undervaluing their assets. The type of bank unlikely to get into trouble because they don't try risky investments or play with shady accounting schemes. He could see why he had heard such favorable comments about the place over the years. And they apparently did not offer interest bearing checking accounts, if he was reading their list of available services correctly, so they probably weren't getting themselves into the typical trap of too many bankers, loaning out money for long term use that was due on short

term.

This is the sort of place you want to deal with if you're frightened of people who might mismanage your money, he was thinking. You won't do spectacularly with them but they're unlikely to screw up and lose it like places that go for very high returns and even higher risks and most of the time they don't even realize they are risky. A nice safe place to bank in. Looks like...

What exactly it looked like we will never be sure, because in an unfortunate turn of events, a group of four men, wearing ski masks and carrying long guns, walked into the bank, one at each of the three entrances and the last coming in the front door after one of the others. Apparently they had decided to try and repeat Leroy's failed attempt at equalizing the wealth.

"ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE GET DOWN, THIS IS A ROBBERY! EVERYBODY EAT THE FLOOR!"

246 complied along with everyone else in the bank. One of the robbers spoke up again.

"YOU! Start filling one of these bags with the money from your drawer. Come on, Come on, let's get going!"

246 could see the shoes of the man who was saying this to one of the tellers, whom he had noticed earlier, was an older lady in her fifties or sixties who probably had arthritis in her hands. Apparently she was not fast enough, because the man said to her, "Hey bitch, I said get your ass moving and give me the money!" as he turned his long gun around and raised it, in what looked like an attempt to smash her in the face with the butt.

I'm sick of this, he thought. I've got nothing to lose. As 246 started to get up, the other man saw him move and said, "Hey asshole, he said eat the floor!" 246 jumped up, and as he did, he drove a fist into the testicles of the man who was standing next to him. He screamed in pain as 246 took what turned out to be a shotgun away from him. 246 spun the shotgun around and shot the other man in the stomach.

He then turned around and yelled out, "You want to live, drop your guns now!" The two men did exactly that.

At that moment, police came in. "Drop your weapon!" 246 did so.

Chapter 149

“Your audience... will believe I’m crazy anyway.”

“I am sorry, sir, in view of the circumstances we had no way of knowing.”

“I understand that, detective. Are you finished now?”

“Well, the Chief of Police and the Mayor both want to talk to you, and I think the President of the Bank also wants to thank you.”

“I see. Well, I really need to use the washroom first, can you tell me where it is?”

“Oh, sure.” The detective turns to the teller near him. “This man wants to use the restroom, can you tell us where it is?”

“Sure, go out the other doors there into the main building, turn right, go down the corridor there, it’s on the left.”

“Thank you.”

He walks out of the bank into the main corridor of the office building. He then turns left, walks out of the building, and turns right to walk back to the parking lot where his car is located.

Stepping under the “POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS” tape, he continues to walk forward until a woman reporter, with a cameraman wearing a running video camera on his shoulder next to her, stop him. “Excuse me, sir, could I have a moment with you?”

“Well, I’d kind of like to finish my vacation.”

“I understand that you stopped four heavily armed bank robbers and did it single handed.”

“That’s what they tell me.”

“Can you tell us your name?”

“Um, well, that’s kind of hard to say, let’s just use the number 246.”

“Well, alright, Mr. 246, what made you decide to take on four armed bank robbers?”

“You can just call me 246, back home everyone does. The man who was standing above me was about to bash a seventy-year-old woman in the face with the butt of a shotgun for being too slow in handing him the money he was trying to rob from the bank. I could not accept this and decided to do something about it. So I got up, punched him in the nuts, grabbed his shotgun, and according to the police, I killed the other robber and got the other two to surrender. Not a bad score.”

“You’re a real hero! Weren’t you afraid?”

“Afraid of what?”

“Of being injured or killed.”

“Being injured might be a bit unpleasant but I’m not scared of dying. I’ve died before, but let me tell you something, being dead didn’t stop me from living.”

“You’ve died before?”

“Sure, I’m just here on vacation. In fact, I expect to meet the guy I just killed, and let him know there were no hard feelings on my part, in a few weeks when I go back.”

“Go back where?”

“It’s hard to say. Some people call it Heaven. Others think it’s the Purgatory you go to when you don’t quite make it to heaven. The rest of us call it the Afterlife.”

The reporter, deciding to go along with the gag, smiled and said, “What’s it like there?”

“Sorry, I can’t tell you that. Too many people would be killing themselves to get there if they knew what it was like.”

“You said they call you 246 back home, where is that?”

“The Afterlife.”

“Do you actually believe that?”

“Does it matter? Your audience won’t believe a word of it, which is fine as far as I’m concerned. We’ve got plenty of dead people there, I don’t really care if more people die any time soon. They will anyway, but let’s not encourage them to speed up the process. So it doesn’t really matter what I say because people will believe I’m crazy anyway. But I decided to tell you the truth because I know you won’t believe it, and it’s safer than making up some believable lie that I might get caught in. In any case, I have a vacation to continue, if you will excuse me.” He walks away in the direction of the parking lot.

A radio is being tuned automatically. “‘The hits from coast to...’ ‘The best hits from the 60s, 70s, .’ ‘...nuke ‘em back into the stone age...’ ‘The most country music...’” When he comes to the end of a song he likes, he stops it. “‘...on... Get it on!’ This is station management with an announcement. I wish to apologize for the disc jockey calling that song, which is, ‘A Long Cool Woman in a Black Dress’ by The Hollies, as ‘A Long Black Woman in a Cool Dress’ and ask forgiveness of any of our listeners who were offended. In cooperation with our friends in the music industry, the disc jockey who made those remarks has been properly disciplined and won’t be returning. For that reason, we recommend you do not eat any hamburger processed this week. We take music *very* seriously here. All the best music, KFVD, Los Angeles.” He starts the tuner again.. “... And if we simply ask Jesus to come into our hearts... “and the listener stops when he finds what he is looking for.

“...massive pile up on the Santa Monica Freeway. An accident at the Firestone exit on the Southbound Long Beach freeway in Southgate has caused a two-mile backup in both directions, with a gawker’s block in the Northbound lanes as people stop to look, use caution. Rich Harold, KNX News Radio1070 Traffic.

“Long Beach, a bank robbery by four heavily armed men at the Downtown Farmer’s and Merchants Bank was stopped today by a man who would only identify himself to a reporter as Mr. 246. According to police, the man wrestled a shotgun away from one of the robbers, shot and killed another, and disarmed the other two. Police have identified the deceased man as Rafael Washington, 32, of the 1800 Block of St. Louis Avenue in Signal Hill. Ironically, he is the brother of a man who was killed some decades ago while trying to rob the very same bank. The man who prevented the robbery left the bank and disappeared before anyone was able to offer thanks to him. The man reportedly claimed to a reporter he was a visitor from Heaven, on vacation on earth. The president of the bank said that he agreed, as far as he was concerned, the man was a gift from God, and if he ever came back, he’d give him a ten thousand dollar reward, even if it had to come out of his own pocket. KNX news radio time 3:22.”

Chapter 150

“...I come from... such a popular place... eventually everyone comes to visit.”

246 stops a few blocks away at the Long Beach Main Library and City Hall building to look up a place he wants to go to. He finds the address and directions. Discovering it's actually a chain of stores, he looks up the one that appears easy enough to get to from where he is.

Driving into Orange County, 246 looks for the exit off of Interstate 405 and finds what he's looking for on Trask Avenue off of Interstate 22, in a place consisting mostly of freeway and paved streets, remarkably enough, called 'Garden Grove.' Going around the block, he drives into an In-N-Out-Burger restaurant he had heard so much about. He decided to eat outside on one of the benches, and enjoy the Southern California weather, so he parks and goes in. At the counter, he noticed they had a number of their bumper stickers in a stack on the counter. He noticed a sign saying "Put our sticker on your bumper, listen on the radio, if we call out your license, you win \$100. But watch out for the dreaded 'In-N-Out Burger Bumper Sticker Stripper'"

246 decides to find out about it, so as he's receiving his change, he points at the sign, and asks, "What that 'sticker stripper' about?:"

A woman that looked quite attractive answered him. "Some people like to take our bumper sticker, cut the logo off, then cut the 'B' and 'R' at the ends of 'Burger' off. They think it's funny. And they're probably right. But you can't win the hundred bucks if you do that." 246 looked at the bumper sticker:

IN-N-OUT

BURGER

Then it hit him, if you 'stripped' it, you'd get

IN-N-OUT

URGE

("And I thought I was sex crazed"), he thought.

It was then he noticed the donation can on the counter marked "In-N-Out Foundation, to help abused and neglected children." He pulled \$200 out of his wallet, and put it in the can.

The cashier noticed, "Gee, thank you," she said.

"You're welcome. Back home I fought to help put three kids back into good homes after their mother abandoned them, because the head of the government Department handling them didn't want to bother with giving them special treatment."

"Why that's nice of you. I'm actually from Michigan, I came out here to study at U.C. Irvine. Where's home for you?"

246 grinned sardonically, remembering how he had ducked that exact same question from Major Trapp back in the previous universe, and, wondering what this nice, lovely young lady would think if he told her the truth. "A long way from here. I'm just on vacation, I'm going back in a

few weeks. It's a wonderful place though, a lot of people think it's Heaven."

"Well, that's nice to hear."

"Thank you. You're very pretty. If I happen to see you around my place, I'll be sure and say hello, ah, Margaret, is it?"

She smiled. "Yes. But how do you expect to see me around your place if it's a long way from here and I don't even know where it is?"

As 246 was about to leave, he grinned and said, "I'll tell you the truth, ma'am, where I come from is such a popular place, I'd say eventually everyone comes to visit." He thought for a moment, grinned, then said, "In fact, I've heard some people are just dying to get there. And a lot of them stay for a while. You may not believe it, but trust me, you'll find out sooner or later. In fact, I think I'll try to Welcome you when you get there."

Chapter 151

“...it’s been over 80 all day and... odd for a man to be wearing a raincoat.”

246 decides to continue on and, as any tourist, visit Disneyland. He stayed for a few hours, absorbing the environment, riding some of the rides, buying some stuff, including, of course, some plush figures of Tigger. Can’t pass that up, 246 thought, as he smiled. Driving back to Long Beach well after midnight, he decides to go to the other burger place he’d heard so much about, Tommy’s Famous. He found one on Anaheim Avenue in a building he immediately recognized as a former McDonalds. He had one of their chili burgers, and thought that it was interesting, if you like plain cheeseburgers, the In-N-Out was better, but if you like them with chili and cheese, the way they do here, he’d have to go to Tommy’s. So he thought about it, and realized that’s why both sort of places could do such business. For this place to be open 24/7 and at 2 in the morning have full trash cans tells me either they sell a lot of food or their housekeeping leaves a lot to be desired. But the rest of the place is neat and clean, so I would suspect the former, he thought.

He thought about something else. What surprises me is, with all the fattening food around, that there are so many thin people here. Maybe all the fat people move elsewhere. Or they hide a lot, I don’t know.

As he got back in his car and drove up Ximeno Avenue to the freeway, he thought about how much he had missed some of the things here. And yet, how much crap he had to put up with to maintain a body. Speaking of crap, now he had to go to the bathroom. As he started to go through the traffic circle, he noticed on Pacific Coast Highway there was a bowling alley with a sign indicating it was open 24 hours, so he continued on the circle instead of turning right. As he continued up the road, noticing that no one was coming, he made an illegal left turn into the driveway of the bowling alley. He got out and went in. He used the bathroom, washed his hands and came out. He drove back to the circle, came around and continued along Lakewood Boulevard toward the 405.

That was when he noticed he was low on gas. (“I’ve gotten spoiled by how everything works back home, this is the real world, you have to refuel things and so on.”) So he pulls into a gas station. Since the last time he had used one was decades back when he was alive, he didn’t notice that they now allowed you to pay at the pump, so he went inside to present his credit card. He decided that he would also get a soda while he was at it.

As he went into the convenience store, he noticed something strange. A man walked in, wearing a set of clothes that 246 thought was inappropriate for the weather at that time. Looking closely, he came to the realization that he suspected he was correct. He thought about it for a moment. Should he wait or should he act ahead of time? When he saw the man reach into the pocket where the other piece of clothing he had was, he decided to act.

246 punched the man in the stomach, then smashed his head into the glass of one of the refrigerated compartments in the back of the store.

“Ma’am, I’m terribly sorry about the mess,” he said, motioning to the shattered glass on the floor, “but the man was about to put on a ski mask, and,” he turns the now unconscious and bleeding man over and opens his coat, to expose a sawed-off shotgun, “I had the distinct impression he was about to rob the place.”

“How on earth did you know?”

“Well, ma’am, as Eddie Murphy noted in *Beverly Hills Cop*, when it’s 75 degrees Fahrenheit outside in the middle of the night, it’s been over 80 all day and there’s not been any rain for days nor any expected for a while, it’s kind of odd for a man to be wearing a raincoat. When I saw he had a ski mask in his pocket and a suspicious looking lump in his coat, I figured he wasn’t planning to visit any place cold any time soon. Except now he is going to, since he’ll be going to the ‘cooler’ for a while. Anyway, I’ll leave you to phone the police. Here’s some money for the soda and my credit card for the gas.”

She hands it back. “That’s okay, for you, no charge.”

“Well, gee, that’s nice of you.” 246 fills his tank, and drives away just as the police show up.

Chapter 152
“Excuse me, Mr. Hunter?”

246 had turned his car in at the rental agency near LAX and was riding one of the shuttles to the terminal. He walks in and looks up at the board that shows outgoing flights. Then he notices another one and gets an idea.. He waits in line, then walks up to the counter. “Hi, I’d like to change my ticket if I may. I’d like to find out if I can be routed through Houston with a stopover of a few hours, I just thought of some business I can take care of.”

“We can do that sir, there will be a \$100 charge plus the difference in fares, if any.”

“Whatever.”

“Here you go, sir, and have a nice flight.”

“Thanks.”

246 notices that because of the change he will have an extra hour to wait. So he decides to walk around a bit and look around at the airport. He gets on one of the moving walkways and stands to the right side. As he stands, he watches an event happen in front of him as a man walks by on the left. I don’t believe this, he thought to himself, if this keeps up I’ll need to change my name from 246 to John McClane, either I’m attracting crime wherever I’m going or I’m very observant, or both. So he moves to the left and walks a little, saying “Excuse me,” to the other man who had passed by before, and continues walking, but keeps a watch out of the corner of his eye. As he gets off the walkway, he turns around and bashes the man in the eye with his elbow, then trips him. As the man drops to the floor, holding his face and screaming, 246 takes a wallet from the man’s pocket and opens it, looking for the driver’s license and some other items. Nodding his head, he stands up and speaks to the other man on the walkway,

“Excuse me, Mr. Hunter? Walter Hunter of National City, California?”

“Why yes, how did you know who I am?”

“Well, I’m not sorry, but I just popped this man in the eye with my elbow because I saw him take your wallet when you weren’t looking.”

Mr. Hunter feels for his wallet, then starts patting the rest of his pockets. 246 hands it to him.

“You might try carrying your wallet in your front pants pocket or wear it on a chain so that this doesn’t happen again.”

“Gee, thank you.”

“You’re quite welcome, sir.” 246 starts to walk off.

“I’d like to thank you, you can call me Walter, Mr.... Mr....”

“Seises. Señor Dos Cuattro Seises.”

Walter responds in Spanish, “Your family must have had a weird sense of humor.”

246 responds in kind, “Yes, they did.” Then in English, “I personally prefer to use English when in the United States. A lot of people have biases toward people who speak Spanish. They consider them less educated. Ees lyk weere awhl ay bunch of egnorent wetbacks to deese greengoes ”

He smiled. “I think you’re right.” He opens his wallet and pulls a twenty out of it, and attempts to hand it to 246. “Here, I want to thank you for what you did.”

246 also smiles. “Thank you, I’ll accept it because if someone wants to give me something, I’m willing to let them. But let me show you something.”

“You have a platinum American Express card. In Spanish.”

"I have the equivalent of a \$500,000 limit. And it's mine personally, it has absolutely no connection to the Mexican government. So you can guess that I don't need the money. But I figure that it's only polite to accept it if someone wants to offer it."

"So you're not from the United States? You work for Mexico?"

"Well, I flew in from Mexico City a few days ago. I'm on vacation. I'm actually listed as the Charge d'affaires at the Mexican Embassy in Washington. Basically I'm the guy that goes down to the jail to talk to guys like him when they get busted, if they're from Mexico and tell them - unless their family has money - that we can't do much for them. Being a lawyer, you would know the same thing applies here, even if you're a citizen, unless you have money or are very smart and can learn your rights under the law you don't get much justice."

"You're right again. How did you know I was a... Oh, you saw my membership card in the State Bar."

"I did look at the contents of the wallet to make sure I took yours and not his."

"Well, Mr. 246, then, thank you for helping me. And your English is perfect, I would think you were an American, you have no foreign accent at all. But I think we need to call the police about him."

"Why bother? He got punished, you got your wallet back, and maybe he's learned something. Not a bad score. Let's just leave him there, you point out to a security guard he was hurt, and keep going. Then you won't have to spend time in court testifying."

"Hmm, not a bad idea."

"Well, you're welcome, Walter, and have a nice day," 246 says, then walks away.

Chapter 153

“You’ve chosen to use violence... So I wanted to show you what it means...”

When the plane arrived at Houston’s Intercontinental Airport, 246 got off, got out of the terminal, hailed a cab and asked him to drive to a sporting goods store. He bought a number of items as well as a duffel bag to hold them, waited a few minutes to have some customization done to a shirt, went over to a Kinkos, used the computer and ran some printouts, went to the post office and mailed a letter to the state capital in Austin, plus copies to some local addresses and some out of state, then caught a cab over to the Greyhound bus depot. Walking up to the display, he noted the time on the next bus for El Paso. Not wanting the call to be linked back to his cell phone, he then walked to a pay phone and called directory assistance to get a number. He called the number to ask where to find a specific person. The person he spoke to gave him that number, and he called it.

“Houston Police, 14th precinct, this is a recorded line.”

“Is Detective Engel there?”

“Just a second, I’ll connect you.”

“Homicide, Engel.”

“Detective Engel, I have some information about someone who’s going to have more than six people murdered. I’m at the Greyhound bus station, 2121 Main Street between Gray and Webster, there’s a bus to El Paso. It’s leaving in about an hour and a half. I’ll give you all the information I have, it’s enough to show what he’s up to, but I’m leaving the country so if you get over here fast you can have it. You’ll be able to recognize me because I’m wearing a baseball uniform with the number 246 on it, I figure no one will recognize me or if they do they’ll figure I’m just going to a minor league game out of town. Can you come by here?”

“Sure, I’ll be there in a few minutes.”

246 hangs up, goes into the men’s room, changes his clothes into the outfit he has just bought, adjusts his shoe to compensate, and stores the clothes he was wearing in a locker.

Shortly thereafter, a man comes into the bus depot, and walks over to 246. “I’m Engel, you told me you have something for me?”

“Can you, carefully so nobody sees it, show me your ID so I know it’s really you and not someone else. This will be dangerous for me if it gets discovered.”

Engel shows him his badge and ID card. “Okay, let me pick up this baseball stuff too so it isn’t stolen, it might look funny if I didn’t take it. Let’s step outside so nobody here sees me give it to you.”

They walk outside, 246 having acquired a slight limp along the way, and around the corner near the bus driveway, out of sight. As 246 is handing him the paperwork, he says “This will show everything I’ve been talking about, more than six people who are about to be murdered.”

Engel looks at the paperwork. “Wait a minute, this is about me.”

“You’re absolutely right.” 246 drops everything but the bat, swings it and connects with Engel’s kneecaps. Engel drops to the ground, screaming in agony. 246 frisks him, taking his service revolver and backup piece, opening both and removing the bullets, pocketing them. “I don’t want you trying to shoot me on the way out, you’ll be able to get your guns back because I’ll mail them to the 14th Precinct. Those 10 people listed there, you framed every one of them, and you know it. Most of them are innocent, and if all you had picked on were guilty people,

I'd have ignored it. But I could not tolerate a police officer knowingly sending innocent people to their deaths. You're going to report this to the media, and I expect it to make lots of news, about how someone came to show you the error of your ways of planting evidence and framing people for murder. In case you're thinking of not reporting it, I've sent a copy to the Governor, telling him how if he doesn't investigate this, he might get the same treatment you just did. I will come down on all of you worse than *Keyser Söze*. I've also mailed copies to the *Houston Chronicle* and the local TV stations, as well as some national papers. I'm sick of cops who take the law into their own hands. So I decided to do the same thing. Maybe you can sleep at night doing this sort of thing, but back home, I couldn't sleep at all. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to leave the country shortly, as I told you on the phone, the bus to El Paso leaves in a short while. And it's only about 50 or 60 feet to the entrance, you can crawl back."

Grimacing through pain, he gasps, "But why did you do this to me?"
"You've chosen to use violence - the power of the state - on innocent people. So I wanted to show you what it means to have violence inflicted upon you. And there's another reason. I believe in the right to own firearms. If I just shot you in the kneecaps it would go down as another gun crime and people would use it to argue for more restrictions on weapons. But they can't use that argument when the weapon of choice was a baseball bat. And nobody would suspect a man in a baseball uniform who was carrying one. So I can get away clean."
"Who are you?"

246 thought for a moment. "Just consider me a voice of conscience, maybe something that came here to teach you a lesson. Consider me.." he smiled, remembering, "consider me the *Instrument of God* that was sent to show you the error of your ways. A friend once called me that for a different reason, and maybe it's true." He walks off quickly with a slight limp, leaving the bat behind, goes back into the station, takes his clothes out of the locker, goes into a stall in the restroom, changes them, takes the pebble out of his shoe he put in it to make himself walk with a limp, puts the uniform he was wearing in the duffel bag, leaves the depot, and hails a cab. "Train station."

When 246 gets to the train station, he stops at Traveler's Aid and gives the woman the duffel bag. "Ma'am, here's a hundred dollars and this baseball uniform, perhaps someone can use it."

"Why gee, thank you."

"You're welcome." He goes back out to the cab stand. "Main Post Office." When he gets to the post office, he gets an Express Mail pak, puts the guns and bullets back into it, seals it, writes in HOUSTON POLICE, DETECTIVE ENGEL, 14TH PRECINCT, HOUSTON TX on the waybill, places a self-adhesive stamp he just purchased on it, and drops it in the mailbox. He goes across the street and hails a cab. "Intercontinental Airport." When he arrives at the airport, he goes through security and waits for his departing flight. As he walks through the gate, he takes off and throws away the pair of gloves he bought at the sporting goods store that he had been wearing, as he no longer needs them.

Chapter 154

“This particular part of my vacation isn’t fun.”

Arriving at Washington’s Reagan National Airport, he walks over to the shuttle and ends up at the car rental facility. As he’s signing the contract, he says to the clerk, “What’s the local news radio station here?”

“Actually our cars have satellite radio, it’s channel... 3643.”

“Thanks.”

Picking up his car, he drives off and turns on the radio to that station. “At the top of the hour, from the XM/Sirius Radio news center in Richmond, Virginia, I’m Al Basura with the latest news.^{xxvii} Houston Police are investigating reports of a vigilante who has beaten a police officer who allegedly planted evidence which has sent ten men to Texas’ Death Row. The Governor’s office has stated the claims are without merit, since they are those of a criminal who has shown by his failure to present his evidence in the proper forum, which was during the trials of those who were properly convicted by a jury of their peers, and that no innocent person has ever been executed in Texas.”

As he exited the airport he looked at the direction sign, and pulled over. He’s thinking about where he wants to go next. Coming here had a dual purpose. He could probably have flown into someplace closer for the other one, but doing it this way gave him the option not to go if he made the decision.

246 thinks about it, should he first go to the hotel and drop his stuff off or just go take the long drive? He got thinking about it, (“yes, it’s about two days round trip, does it make sense to take a room I’m not even going to be in for two days? Or do I even want to go?”)

(“For the first time in my life - well, since I died and was born again - I’m stuck with a quandary. I’m thinking I want to go but some part of me doesn’t. Maybe it’s part of the fear of my mortality, of what I was. Given that to be the case, I should go. Don’t go to the hotel, just drive; if you feel tired, pull into a motel and sleep.”)

246 gets on the George Washington Parkway, drives to Interstate 395 South toward Richmond, drives onto Interstate 495, then continues on up the highway until he finds a place where he can stop for gas. He buys some maps. Looking at the maps he sees he has to continue the way he was going then take route 270 and on from there. Five hours later he decides that jet lag and driving have exhausted him, so he decides to check in to a motel. He takes a shower before getting in bed, then turns out the light.

Waking up he discovers it is some fourteen hours later. He notices that there is a “missed” call on his cell phone. He looks at the return number, and sees that it’s a “blocked” number. So he calls the pager number he has for the contact who he’s dealt with and enters his cell phone number. About 15 minutes later, his phone rings.

“Hello.”

“Where are you right now?”

“Uh, according to the sign on the door I’m in a place called Frostburg, Maryland.”

“Oh yeah, that’s where the Redskins training camp is located.”

“I wouldn’t know, I wasn’t much of a sports fan. Anyway, I guessed you called because I had a blocked ID from an incoming call.”

“Yeah, I just wanted you to know that we will need you to handle a job for us while you’re in the DC area.”

“Well, I won’t be there until day after tomorrow, I have some unfinished business to attend to.”

“That’s fine, I’ll give you the name, address and phone number of the person you need to contact.”

“Okay.”

“Having any problems or anything I should know about?”

“No, I don’t think so. Other than I tend to sleep a lot more than I expected.”

“That often happens on vacation. Didn’t you notice it when you were alive?”

“I wouldn’t know. I loved what I did so much I never took vacations, I had too much fun when working.”

“Well, you should. Everyone should take time off no matter how much they love their work, if for no other reason than to get a fresh perspective away from it.”

“I see.”

“Well, anyway I’ll let you get back to your vacation. Have fun.”

“This particular part of my vacation isn’t fun. But it’s something I promised myself I would do if it was possible.”

“Oh, well, good luck to you, whatever happens.”

“Thanks.”

Now well rested, 246 resumes his trip, first stopping at a flower shop, then drives on about 150 kilometers to just before Interstate 68 crosses U.S. 119, 3 ½ kilometers southeast of Morgantown, West Virginia. Looking around, he uses the emergency cutaway to make an illegal u-turn to get to the place he wants. He finds the spot and pulls over. He gets out, reaches in and takes out his package, then walks around to the back of the car and stands next to the guardrail post. Opening the package he removes the flowers and begins tossing them, one at a time, over the rail.

At this moment, a West Virginia State Police car rolls up. 246 continues throwing flowers over the rail into the ditch. “Good Morning, Officer.”

“Good morning, sir. I was going to say that I happened to be about a couple miles away when I saw you make that illegal U-turn and I was going to have a little talking to you about it, but it looks like it has something to do with what you’re doing here.”

“Yes. A really, really close friend of mine died on this very spot, as best I can tell. And for a long time - actually I’d say it’s been decades - I had been wanting to come back to this spot and leave something to remember him by. I never had the chance until now.”

“He died right here?”

“Yep. From what I understand he fell asleep at the wheel of his car, crossed the median strip and plowed into the embankment there next to the ditch. There was no guard rail here at that time.”

“Well, that’s funny, there hasn’t been an automobile accident in this part of Interstate 68 for something like fifty years.”

“Yes. Fifty-six standard years and five months. I know the exact date by heart.”

“Well, sir, you don’t look like you’re old enough to have been around when it happened.”

“Officer, uh, Taylor, is it?”

“Yes, Trooper Shane Taylor. ¹”

“Well, Trooper Taylor, I’ll tell you what it is, but I know you’re not going to believe me, okay?”

“All right.”

“When I learned of the accident, I knew that when he died he got into Heaven. Somehow I actually saw it and heard it and I think I even felt it happen. So I believe it happened too. So I decided that when and if I had the opportunity, I would come out here and leave some flowers to commemorate what happened to let him know he hadn’t been forgotten.”

“I see.”

“You probably don’t believe me, and while I can’t prove it now, someday in a few decades from now when you die, my friend there will say hello to you and thank you for being so polite about it even if you don’t necessarily believe it.”

“Oh really? What’s your friend’s name?”

“Well, he stopped using his real name after a while and just goes by his title.”

“And what’s that?”

246 smiled. “Supervisor 246.”

¹Shane Taylor was a young man I knew because he was the brother of a friend of mine. He got in trouble with the police on occasion for various status crimes, e.g. having cigarettes or drinking beer while under age. So I thought it would be funny to put him in this story as a police officer. Shane Patrick Taylor, 21, of Stafford, Virginia, was killed on March 26, 2004 in an automobile accident, in which the vehicle he was a passenger in went off the road and crashed into the ravine below. “Fate, it seems, is not without its sense of irony.” - Lawrence Fishburne in *The Matrix*.

Chapter 155

“...once a politician is bought he’d better stay bought...”

Coming back to Washington, 246 decides to visit another burger joint he had heard so much about, Five Guys. He finds one just off of Interstate 395 on King Street in Alexandria, Virginia. He stops in the place, and discovers open cartons of peanuts along with lots of shells all over the place, in addition to what’s being thrown in the trash. On the wall next to the front counter is a bulletin board where people post comments. Thinking about it for a moment, he decides to write the actual truth on a card, knowing that no one will believe it:

I came all the way from Heaven
to have a cheeseburger here at Five Guys.
- Supervisor 246, the Afterlife^{xxviii}

He smiles about it for a moment, realizing the thing about it is that he can tell anyone anything about what he’s done since he died, be completely truthful and honest, and know that nobody will believe it.

Well, anyway, he might as well take care of the job that he has to do. He drives over to an office where he picks up a package containing some papers. He looks over them, and realizes exactly why they wanted him to pick them up. Then he goes to visit a man and talk to him. He drives into Fairfax County on I-95, gets off at an exit, and smiles as he notices that the name of the street he has to drive onto is “Frontier.” (“Another memory from home.”)

“So you see, corruption has been endemic in my country for generations, but these, I don’t even know if there is a word strong enough to condemn what these men are doing. It’s not even that they’re taking bribes; bribe taking has been going on for centuries. No, what they’re doing is even worse than that. They take bribes from people, then don’t keep their promises, then continue to take bribes. If you can’t do what you promise, you don’t take money for it, or you give it back, or you get out of the dirty business. You don’t try to act like you’re honest when you’re worse than really dishonest.”

“So you want me to publicize this?”

“Yes. You’re a reporter. These are the worst of the worst, the most crooked men of my country. I think we may be able to make where I came from a better place, but to do that, we have to get people to want things to be better. First we get rid of the most corrupt, expose them for what they are, it might help clean up some of the others.”

“Okay, but no promises.”

“That’s fair enough. When you see the evidence it should be enough to allow you to expose this, and maybe something can be done about it.”

“I’ll take a look at it.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“So how did he take it?”

“Low key, but I think he took the bait.”

“Nice. And you did it exactly how I told you?”

“Yes. It’s interesting that telling him the truth was just the right touch.”

“Yeah, I know, sometimes the simplest answer is the best one. I mean, I can take it either way, if a guy won’t take bribes I can respect that, but if he takes bribes he should either deliver or quit taking them, not make excuses for his inability, then continue to do business at the same old crooked stand. You can’t cheat people then expect to stay in business and get away with it for long. And we’ll let those who might be thinking they can rip us off that it won’t work for long. If they are honest, that’s fine; if they’re crooked we can buy them, but bureaucrats and politicians need to learn that once a politician is bought he’d better stay bought or he’s going to be very sorry.”

“I kind of have the same idea back home.”

“I thought you’d like the symmetry.”

Watching the area carefully, but making sure they couldn’t see him, he saw the person he was looking for enter the Giant Food supermarket. Waiting a few minutes, he then walked in, grabbed a small handbasket and tossed a few items into it, a quart of milk, eggs, two pounds of hamburger, some buns and a bottle of ketchup. He continued through the store until he saw her in the aisle. He continued to walk by, then stopped just a short distance away but close enough that they could see each other.

She turned, looked at him, continued looking through her cart, then stopped and did a double take. She continued looking at him for a moment, so he decided to use the opportunity to actually talk to her. He stepped forward

“Ma’am, did you notice something about me? I saw you looking at me rather strangely.”

With a bit of a Spanish accent, she responds. “I, I’m sorry, I thought I recognized you from somewhere but I... I... I just can’t remember where it was.”

He thought about it for a moment, (“I’ll bet Tom left behind a mattress tag of my face in case I ever did come to earth to see her. But if I had wanted to have her here, I would have had to be here ten years ago. And it wouldn’t have been fair to her, I really wouldn’t want to come here and spend a whole lifetime with someone when I know what it’s like back home. But I can stop and visit.”) He smiled, then spoke in Spanish to her, “I’ve only been in the United States for three weeks. All the rest of the time I’ve been on this earth in this life I’ve lived in Mexico.”

Which was the truth. What 246 decides not to mention was that the portion of ‘this life’ that he lived in Mexico amounted to one day.

She responded in kind, “My parents tell me I was born there, but I don’t remember it, I’ve lived all my life here in the United States.”

“I guess we never met in this life before, then. But maybe there’s another reason. Well, I happen to believe in reincarnation, I’ll bet we knew each other in a prior life.”

She laughed.

He resumed speaking English. “Well, since I’m here in the U.S. I’ll continue practicing my English. Nice baby girl you have there. What’s her name?”

“Estrellita.”

(“I don’t want to interfere with her life here on earth, there will be plenty of time to see her once she dies, so I think I’d better break this off before I encourage her to commit adultery or something, especially if she’s got as strong a tie as I think Tom did.”) “It was nice talking to you,

ma'am, but I have to get going." He continues on.

After paying for his basket of groceries and dropping the bag in the wagon marked "Donations for the local food bank," he leaves the store, looks around the strip mall for a while, then notices she is leaving the store. He decides that, since he has to go that way anyway to get to his car, to follow her as she pushes a baby carriage and a small cart with food.

It was at this point that he would meet a new friend, who ran into him just outside the store.

Chapter 156

“...it’s just a minor inconvenience to me if I get killed...”

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates the Metrorail (“Metro”) subway system in Washington, DC and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs of DC, as well as the Metrobus system. WMATA is so concerned about the perception of their trains as being safe that the Authority will not allow a movie to be filmed in the Metro if it shows violence being used on a train or in a station. If you’ve ever seen a movie claiming to be in Washington that uses the subway and shows someone getting shot at, be advised it was not actually filmed in the Metro. They run a fairly good system with an otherwise excellent safety record. Except for a few minor incidents.

There was a derailment on one of their Metrorail trains on January 13, 1982. The train had gone off track. In attempting to return it to the track, the supervisors backed up the train, but did not notice that another car had also gone off track. In attempting to reverse the train, that car slid off the track, slammed into a tunnel support, and killed three people, the worst accident that ever occurred on the system until more than 25 years later when the June 22, 2009 collision between two trains killed nine people. The 1982 situation was made worse by the fact that nearly every ambulance in the entire tri-state area was in Virginia near the Pentagon, trying to rescue passengers of Air Florida Flight 90 that had failed to be properly de-iced before takeoff, and crashed into the 14th Street Bridge, falling into the freezing water of the Potomac River only a short time earlier the same day.

On January 6, 1996, a Metrorail driver overshot the Shady Grove Metro Station and crashed at the end of the line. It was later determined that because drivers tended to overuse braking systems and wear them down, only computer-controlled braking was allowed to be used by drivers, they were not allowed to use manual control. This operator had asked to be permitted manual control over braking and was refused permission, only a few minutes before the computer-controlled braking system failed to stop his train in time to prevent him from being killed in the accident.

And there is one alleged incident from the Transit Authority that happened on a bus. Bus companies - as do other transport systems such as trucking companies - routinely test for things like drug or alcohol use by drivers. Mostly it’s because the U.S. Department of Transportation requires they have a drug testing plan in place. All that a drug test will tell you if the person has used a drug - legal or illegal - which is present in enough residual amounts to be caught by the testing process if they are looking for it. All that a drug test can show is you’ve been exposed to the drug, it doesn’t show if you’re impaired, when you used it last, how much you have been using or how often. It’s also been said that one can use some chemicals and certain plant extracts to defeat many of these tests and show clean even if you’ve used what they are testing for very recently. And some other drugs and food products will cause false positive results.

It also means that drug testing may be self-defeating because it has, in some cases, moved people from slow dispersal and easily detectable drugs that might not have an effect when not being used such as marijuana, which can be detected days after use, to drugs such as cocaine, that flush out of the system much faster and are easier to hide from a drug test.

With the possible exception of a breathalyser test for consumption of alcohol, drug tests

won't tell you if a person is impaired, all they tell you is if the person is using something, presuming the test is accurate; false positives do occur. (And false negatives, too.). For example, if you siphon gasoline by mouth, and accidentally get some in your mouth and/or swallow it, for quite a while thereafter you will false positive for alcohol on a breathalyser.

Drug testing will not tell you if someone's ability is even impaired, whether by drug use, by lack of sleep, by vision problems, or by other medications which are not tested for. They also won't tell you if the person's ability is impaired due to disease or physical defect.

Using physical response systems such as manual dexterity and vision systems to test people operating equipment, such as an electronic display and keypad, requiring you to re-enter a number, would eliminate most of the problems and issues regarding drug tests. You don't have to care if someone was using drugs at some point in the past, if they're not impaired when they are using the equipment. If they are too sleepy to see correctly they'll fail the test, same as if they are too drunk or too high to operate the equipment properly. And you don't put them through the indignity of having someone watch them use the toilet.

Why physical response systems, which can't be beaten, aren't used over drug tests, which can be, is something nobody has said. Maybe because the use of drug inspections wasn't really to catch those who are impaired in doing their job, but just to grease the skids for improving public receptiveness to more invasive examinations of their lives and to greater taking of their rights and liberties. Individual liberty is never stolen in huge chunks, it is nibbled away at a little at a time, so people don't notice what is gone, often until it's too late, or unless someone comes along and screams bloody murder long before the general public notices the thefts. Physical response testing will detect impairment at the time testing takes place. Drug testing won't. And it certainly won't detect impairment caused by *failure* to use drugs. We will probably never know if a mechanical dexterity test would have detected impairment in this case. What we do know is that the systems currently in use can not and will not do so.

James was a good Metrobus driver, kind to old ladies and well liked by the usual riders on his route. He'd been driving this route for two years and had moved up enough in seniority to be able to bid on another route if he wanted to, but he liked this route. He also liked fattening foods that had exacerbated his Type II diabetes. Like too many of us, James didn't always take his medication properly.

One day, while driving along, his failure caught up with him, and he fell asleep at the wheel of his Metrobus. What happened next was, as it is sometimes called in the industry, a *disaster*.

We say that a 'disaster' occurs when a group of events all simultaneously occur resulting in a tragedy, where if any one of the events had failed to happen, the disaster would not have happened. What are the events that if they had not happened, could have prevented this tragedy?

1. James, the driver of the bus, happened to fall asleep at the wheel; Had he been taking his medication properly it probably would not have happened; If he had chosen to bid on a different bus route, he would not have been driving a bus on Glebe Road, in Arlington, Virginia at that time, or he might have been on a different shift at another time.
2. No vehicle was in front of his Metrobus, otherwise he would have rear-ended

them instead of continuing on toward a crosswalk. On the other hand, he might have rear-ended them and knocked *them* into the crosswalk anyway.

3. None of the passengers on the bus had noticed that the driver had fallen asleep or they might have woken him before he entered the crosswalk.

The light at the intersection he was approaching was red, and the walk light was on for the opposing street, or the crosswalk would have been empty and his going through it would not have mattered.

One or more people were in the crosswalk in front of his bus at the instant when he went through the crosswalk.

That all of these things happened simultaneously resulted in disaster. But this sort of thing happens many times every year, all over the United States and in many countries. It might be worth asking why this particular vehicular accident between a bus and one or more pedestrians is so important. Well, as it turned out, one of the pedestrians was kind of important to this story.

The newly minted Charge d'affaires for the Mexican Embassy was crossing Glebe Road in the crosswalk in front of the Giant Food Store in Arlington, Virginia, at that moment, silently following and - in this case, about 3/4 of a meter - "watching from afar" the woman he loves, Maria Consuela Lopez-Sanchez, who formerly was the man he loved, Tom Johnson. She was walking a toddler, her baby girl Estrellita, holding her hand tightly.

246 saw the Metrobus approaching, kind of fast. It occurred to him, as he looked, that the driver, James (whom 246 didn't know at the time) was slumped over the wheel, as if he had passed out or was asleep. And it reminded him of his own incident (which he described to Shane Taylor, the West Virginia State Trooper), so many, many decades ago.

All of a sudden, everything went into slow motion except his brain, which went into overdrive. ("He's going to run through the crosswalk and probably kill whoever he runs over, 246 thought. I could save myself or I could save the other people, I don't think I have time enough to do both. They don't know what's going to happen if they die. I do; it's just a - hmm, what was it that guy said - 'minor inconvenience' to me if I get killed, I just lose a week of vacation time, to them, it's a tragedy.")

He then made his decision. After acting on it, the bus hit him. "Oh man, this really hurts," he moaned. "I'd forgotten how much pain really hurts. And I should have thought that he's going to kill 'whomever' he runs over. I still can't get who vs. whom right. That almost hurts as bad as this does."

"Breaking News! From the WTOP newsroom. This just in. A Mexican Diplomat has apparently been run over by a Metrobus. A man identified by police as Dos Cuatro Seises, Charge d'affaires for the Mexican Embassy, was in a crosswalk on Glebe Road in Arlington along with several other people. According to witnesses, Seises saw the bus approaching, but made no effort to run, in the space of less than two seconds, he kicked a woman next to him out of the way, pushed a second to knock her out of the way, grabbed a small child which turned out to be her daughter, and threw her to the woman, saving the three of them before the bus allegedly struck him. He has been medevaced by helicopter to Shock/Trauma emergency services at Inova Fairfax Hospital in critical condition. More details later as we obtain them. WTOP

News radio time 4:08. Traffic and weather on the eights with Bob Marlow in the WTOP newsroom.”

“As was just mentioned, Glebe Road eastbound is closed for police investigation of the Metrobus accident, while the westbound lanes are backed up as people slow down to look. This is causing a backup on southbound 395 as far back as the Pentagon, from people unable to get off at the Glebe Road exit. HOV lanes are running normally and automated operation is authorized from the express entrance for 35 miles through to the Fredericksburg Intercept. The outer loop of 495 is slow going from Tyson’s Corner to the Springfield Interchange. On I-66 South near Nutley, there was an accident in the right lane, Fairfax Police are en-route. In Maryland, in Montgomery County on I-270 at Father Hurley Boulevard there was an accident..”

Chapter 157

“You need to tell me what you want.”

(“This is weird,”) 246 thought, (“I’m not feeling much of anything since they gave me the shot. It’s different from the last time I died, so many years ago, when I had such fear in those last few minutes. I guess it’s because I know what’s going to happen and I’m not afraid any more.

(“I’m probably in some kind of coma or drugged out state right now, which is why I’m not hearing or seeing anything. I just hope that if they’ve got me on some kind of equipment that they pull the plug on me real soon, I would hate it if I had to be in a state like this for years, stuck on earth. Presuming this *is* earth and there wasn’t a mistake made somewhere that I ended up in some form of nothing. I doubt that would be possible, but I don’t know, I mean, how did the universe get here if nobody made it, and if they did, how did *they* get here? Of course, it’s entirely possible the universe wasn’t made, that it always existed. But it seems like everything has some sort of beginning, how do you have a universe that never began? But, then again, there’s still a paradox, how does the universe suddenly instantiate itself out of nothing? Maybe the big bang is like a rubber ball, after the universe reaches its limits, it collapses back on itself and another big bang starts the universe all over again. But wouldn’t that imply that everything simply happens the same over and over again? Or maybe it doesn’t. I suppose I can debate these issues for all eternity. Which I hope this condition doesn’t last that long, I....”)

At that moment, he heard a voice. “246? Can you hear me? If you can hear me, I want you to blink your eyes, twice.”

246 did so.

“Thank you. You’re in a hospital in Fairfax, Virginia right now. There are some people here trying to save your life. There are some other people here who want to take you off the respirator, which would probably cause you to die. Do you think you’re capable of making a decision on what you want? If so, I want you to blink your eyes three times.”

246 does so.

“Thank you. What I’m going to do is something called ‘Speak and Spell’ in which I will read the letters of the alphabet, one at a time. When you hear a letter you want to use, blink your eyes twice. When you’re finished, blink twice when I say ‘stop’ at the end of the list. To make sure you understand me, let’s do the word ‘yes’. I’m going to start now. A. B. C.” this continues through “W. X. Y. Okay. A. B. C. D. E. Okay. A. B.” through “R. S. Okay. A.” then “Y. Z. Space. Stop. Okay.

“Thank you, 246, so I know now that you can understand me, I’m going to ask you to tell us what we should do so you can decide. We’ll do speak-and-spell again. You need to tell me what you want. I’m going to start reading off letters and you can tell me. I’m going to give you a moment to think about it so we’re all sure you know exactly what you want us to do. Here we go. A...”

246 was thinking the whole time. Well, since he was incapable of doing anything else, he was doing a lot of it. He considered that they wanted him to show that he was rational, and had made an intelligent decision. And he thought of a way that would indicate that.

5 minutes of speak-and-spell later, they had his answer which left no doubt in anyone’s

mind. 246 also even used the incident to practice something he'd been caught at least once making a mistake on. He figured by using the correct word as well - which most people would probably get wrong, as he had on occasion - as the first thing he said would also show them that he was thinking. So he did.

“Whoever you are, kill me right fucking now before I sue you.”

Chapter 158

“This is the Chairman, this had better be good.”

“246, they’re going to take you off the respirator. I think you will probably die once that happens. Do you have any last words? Just like the last time, we’ll start speak and spell in a moment to give you time to compose something.”

“I go now to a place far better than you can possibly imagine.”

(“Well, what do you know,”) he thought. (“I see the *Tunnel of Light* again. I guess the damn system really does work every time. I always wondered if it would work if I went through a second time. Thinking about it, I always had that small doubt it would, but I wasn’t sure I guess, until it actually happened.”)

“INCOMING! Who’s up on the board?”

“I’m next, I’ll take it. Looks like a man. Let’s check his...holy shit! Hey, Grim, come take a look. You’re not going to believe this! I didn’t know he was alive.”

“Well I’ll be damned. Put a hold on him for now and don’t say anything to anyone, okay?”

“Sure.”

“I’ll be back in a little bit, I have to go into my office to do something private.” He walks in and closes the door. “Central Computer, call Board of Directors.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“Hi Nancy, this is the Grim Reaper.”

“Grim! Nice to hear from you. What can I do you for?”

“I have some good news for you in a moment, which relates to this. Always wanted to have a reason to do this, so here goes. I have an Audio Armada Signal.”

“Oh wow! That serious?”

“Yep. You want to know what happened?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, first tell me you’ve called him.”

“Oh, sure. Accepted for audio only.”

“A close friend of yours just died and he’s arriving as an Incoming. I suspect your boss will want to know. You can ask him after I tell him.”

“Oh really, someone I know from earth?”

“Yep. Just died.”

“Okay, I can hardly wait.”

“Central Computer, close connection.”

The phone rings. “Office of the Grim Reaper!”

“This is the Chairman, this had better be good.”

“I’ve always wanted to have a reason to call you. It just came in on the display 10 minutes ago so I wanted you to know before anyone else. 246 just died.”

“Oh, that is good news. Thanks, I owe you one.”

“That’s what I figured would happen. Since I hadn’t even heard he was alive, I figure maybe you’re up to something and thought it might be worth it to let you know first. Do you want me

to hold the news or release it?"

"For the moment let's keep it under wraps. And I appreciate that you thought to ask me first."

"I just told Nancy that a friend of hers just died, so you can fill her in however you want. I know she cares about him a lot and thought you might want to break it to her in case he doesn't remember her if we have trouble restoring his memories. I'm presuming you want to bring him back anyway even though he's an infant."

"Is anyone else able to hear me?"

"No."

"Charlie, listen carefully, you are not to tell anyone else this, and I want you to handle his processing personally, and if you do this right I'll owe you a few extra favors, but if you mess up on it you'll be back on earth faster than you can say 'road molester,' you got me?"

"Yeah, I do."

"246 got special permission to go back as an adult so he has all his memories intact."

"Oh yeah, I see why you want that kept private. If people knew someone could get back to earth after having died a lot of them would either want it, or would be really pissed off that they can't have it. And I understand why you told me, you know I do not want to go back, ever."

"Exactly."

"I'll have my assistant take care of anything else and I'll run 246 through processing personally. I'll even put a fake record in place to cover the arrival, and I'll tell the guy who got his record to keep his mouth shut or he'll be on the next birth back to earth. How does that sound?"

"Terrific."

"I'll take care of, shall we say, 'burying this body' and you square it with the cops in case I get caught with the shovel in my hands."

"Right, you have a direct order from me to see to it 246's arrival is kept private. Also, I am setting up a special experiment so we're going to try moving around the close period to end of day today instead of the usual starting point. We're going off the grid and time on earth will be suspended for the time being. We'll reset it back later and we will catch up but in the mean time it will give you an opportunity to do some unscheduled maintenance."

"Okay, then, Mr. Chairman."

"Bye, Charlie."

Chapter 159

“It’s even better than on earth...it’s something you can do if you want to...”

(“Oh gee,”) he thought, (“at least it’s consistent. Whee! I’m going home!”)
He arrives in a room with several other people. (“Man, this place hasn’t changed in years, actually more like decades, it’s still exactly the same as I remember it. Come to think of it, it reminds me of the waiting room at the Houston Greyhound Bus Depot.”) He turns to one of the other people there. “Hi, my name’s 246.”
“I’m Marcia.”
“Well, hello, Jane, it’s nice to meet you.”
“How did you know my name is Jane?”
“I read your mind.”
Clearly not believing him, she says, “Oh.”
“By the way, you’re not in a hospital waiting room, if that’s what you’re thinking.”
“Yeah, how... Oh, that’s right. I guess you really can read minds.”
“You’re kind of upset how that guy hit you in the head and stole your purse?”
“Yeah.”
“Well, I kind of have some bad news for you.”
“What, that he’s stolen my credit cards and is charging a fortune? Is this the police station?”
“No, it’s not that and that’s not where you are. Actually it’s the worst thing you feared.”
“You mean I was raped while I was unconscious?”
“No, you never were unconscious, I don’t think. No, what I’m trying to tell you is you’re dead. So am I and everyone else here.”
“You’re kidding me.”
“No I’m not. You struck your head on the concrete, had a massive head injury, and went into irreversible coma and died. They pulled you off the respirator about... Ten minutes ago. You’ve been brain dead for two days now.”
“I don’t believe it, everything feels exactly the same.”
“It’s supposed to, it allows you to feel comfortable about being here.”
“So how would you know? Didn’t you just die too?”
“Yes, but I work here.”
“Huh?”
“Wouldn’t it make sense? That some of us from up here would visit earth from time-to-time to watch for things?”
“Oh. Yeah, I see.”
“Then how do you think we’d get back? We’d either die or get killed in some fashion or we’d commit suicide if necessary,”
“I hadn’t thought of that.”
246 moves closer to her, and holds her hand. As he talks to her he proceeds to touch her more intimately “The reason I wanted to talk to you was I wanted you to understand that we care about people here. More than you realize. I told you I can read minds, so I know what you’re thinking about. And the answer is yes. It’s even better than on earth, a lot better, if you want it. And I can tell you do. Yes. Yes it is. No, you don’t have to, it’s something you can do if you want to, but you can choose not to. And I can tell from what you’re thinking that you do.

Come with me and I'll show you."

They walk out of the room and through the door. "Now that we're out of the way, did you see the movie *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn*?"

"Yeah?"

"We have transporters too, just like they did. Would you like to use one?"

"They have such a thing here? Yeah! I'd like to see that."

"Good. Central Computer, transport the person I'm touching and me to my apartment."

They dematerialize. A man comes by and walks into the waiting room. "I'm looking for Jane Omar."

Nobody answers.

"Is there a woman named 'Jane Omar' here?"

"There was a woman standing next to me who another guy called her Jane, and she left."

"She left?"

"Yeah, one of the other people here was talking to her for a few minutes, then they walked out that door you just came through. Man he was slick."

"What do you mean?"

"I could tell that he was up to something and it was obvious he was trying to hit on her, and I suspect he succeeded."

"Wow, I've heard some Incomings were fast but I've never heard of that happening before. I'll bet he's going to be real surprised when he finds out he's not on earth and he's dead. I'll have to go back and look for someone else. Thanks."

"You're welcome. Oh but he apparently knew we're dead, that's what he said."

"Oh really. What did he look like? And did he mention his name?"

"Well, let's see, there was something funny about his name, I think he said it was Stu Forsitch, he was about 6' 2", about 25 years old..."

"Hold it a second. Might he have said his name was a number, like 246?"

"Yeah! That's right, that's exactly what he said. Hey, where are you going?"

Chapter 160

“...keep this quiet for now, we don’t want people to panic...”

The man barged into the office of the new lead male supervisor and explained what happened, ending with “This is a complete breach of etiquette and a damn disgrace, is how I see it.”

“Calm down Nathan, I’m sure he didn’t do it on purpose. He does have authority as Administrator if he wants to take one of the Incomings from anyone here and Welcome her himself.”

“I know that, but under the rules he has to come and tell me first, and then he has to give me an upgrade in status so I can have the opportunity to pick someone else and perhaps even find a nicer woman than the one I did. If he had done that, I’d say fine, I don’t particularly like it but rank has its privileges and he’s at least respecting me. But he just went in and stole her and didn’t tell me a damn thing. That’s what I’m mad about.”

“Well, let’s go back and see what happened. Ah, here we go. I guess what happened was, he went down there, for someone else, didn’t like her and picked the one you did, but the system didn’t expect someone down there to change their minds and pick someone; it has both of you tagging that woman, which isn’t supposed to happen; once you tag someone it’s supposed to lock out everyone else. Why don’t I do this and fix the problem so you can be compensated for him taking one of yours by accident. Here, use my console, I have higher seniority than you do, I get to look at some of the much more beautiful Incoming women before you do.” He whistles.

“You like that one? Tag her then, so go out and win her over, tiger.” The man leaves.

“Central Computer, call Administrator’s Office.”

“Office of the Administrator.”

“Hi, Travis, this is Supervisor 31662. How soon did 246 get back from the Frontier?”

“He’s not back yet.”

“Like hell he isn’t, he just stole one of the incomings away from one of the Welcomers! I gave the guy a bullshit story and gave him priority access so he could pick another one, but 246 should know better than that.”

“Look, all I know is that he’s not back from the Frontier. Hold on a second. Nope, there is no record of him either entering the building nor teleporting in.”

“Central Computer, where is Welcoming Department Administrator?”

“Administrator’s location is private.”

“Do you get that?”

“Yeah, if he was out of the building it would say so. That’s odd.”

“I suspect something is wrong with the system. Where is the Deputy Administrator?”

“She’s out of the building on some errand.”

“I guess that means I’m the highest ranking person here, then. I’ll have to check on this.

Thanks for your help.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Central Computer, hang up phone and call Board of Directors.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“Nancy, this is Supervisor 31662.”

“It’s nice to hear from you, it’s been a while since we talked. What can I do you for?”

"I think there's a problem with the computer system. One of the Welcomers said 246 stole one of his Incomings, his assistant says he's still out at the Frontier and that he has neither entered the building nor teleported in, but the computer says he is here but in a private location. In any event either 246 is up to something completely out of character for him or we have a serious computer failure. I'm wondering if I'm overreacting or do you think it justifies an Armada Signal?"

"That is unusual. It's not like 246 to just sneak around. If he is then the Chairman would probably know and he can tell you, or he'd want to know if he doesn't. Why don't you do an audio request and ask him."

"Okay then, this is an Audio Armada Signal."

"Accepted for audio only."

"Central Computer, hang up phone."

He answers the phone when it rings. "This is the Chairman, this had better be good."

"Mr. Chairman, I believe we are either having a computer failure or Supervisor 246 is acting completely out of character and I thought you needed to know about it either way."

"Oh really, what's the problem?"

"Well, one of our Welcomers said 246 stole a woman he had tagged. 246's assistant says he has neither teleported in nor entered the building, but the computer system says he's here in private. The Deputy Administrator is out of the building so that leaves me with no one else to contact. Now if there's something going on I can try and cover it up if you want, but if it's something you're unaware of then I thought you should know. On the other hand, if he came in here normally but it's not showing up, then we have a problem."

"Yeah, you're right, it's not like him to do that. Let's keep this quiet for now. You know how we did that change to Climax Privilege so many years ago, and we told you and some of the other supervisors privately why?"

"Yeah, there was a bug that a man could defeat it and commit rape and still come. I'm damn glad it worked in my case or I might have ended up in serious trouble. I think about those poor bastards that did the same thing and got turned into a woman, it could have been me."

"What might have happened is, 246 found another bug somewhere and is exploiting it to prove that it is possible to defeat the usual checks, but didn't want to tell me about it until he confirmed it was possible. It could also be there is a real bug in the system and 246 in some manner triggered it and doesn't know. Either way, let's not give anyone ideas for right now. What did you do about the Welcomer that 246 stole an Incoming from?"

"I gave him a bullshit story, I told him the system had recorded two tags, one from him and one from 246, and that 246 probably went down there, changed his mind, then picked someone else but the system wasn't expecting it and allowed both of them to tag the same woman. Wait a minute, I never even checked. Central Computer, for today's incomings show tagging individual for Jane Omar."

"Jane Omar was tagged by Supervisor 246."

"Central Computer, show all today's Incomings tagged for Nathan 104"

"Marcia Allen, logged as declined. Jane Omar, no record. Eloise McAlister, accepted."

"So I'm correct, either 246 stole an Incoming, or the system allowed two people to tag the same person. And it's not like 246 to just do that, he would have told the guy he was overruling him and taking her himself. Well, he's here then, sir, but his assistant says he's out at the Frontier."

I know 246, if he was simply not seeing appointments you can guess what his assistant would say.”

“Yeah, he’d be honest and say 246 was busy with a woman. I know Travis; he’s not going to hide it unless 246 told him to, and it’s not 246’s policy to hide what he does either. And I agree, 246 might do some slick things, but if he wanted an Incoming some other guy had tagged, he’d simply tell the guy, he wouldn’t override his tag. This is completely out of character for him so I suspect there may be a problem with the computer system. What I want you to do is keep this quiet for now, we don’t want people to panic if it is an error as opposed to 246 figuring a way to do something. Maybe 246 was playing a practical joke on the guy or something. Why don’t you do this. Call a programmer, have him put a log on all conflicting tag requests and any attempt to change the tag of someone once they have been tagged. Whenever anyone tags someone, every time someone else tries to it generates a report to you. Now, what you should get are nothing but lockout requests normally. Then you might get one where a Supervisor wants a particular person that someone else has already tagged, and gets them to agree to take someone else, and you’ll get an override. Check those out to see that they are all agreed to. Now, if you get anything else, then we know that there is a problem.

“If 246 did what the other guy says, I’ll have a serious talking to him about it. He has the authority to take an Incoming from any Welcomer simply by invoking his right as Administrator and giving them the choice of someone else. Before overriding someone’s tag he’s supposed to stop them and tell them. That’s very rude and I don’t see 246 doing that unless it was someone who had done something rude to him in the past.”

“I agree, Mr. Chairman. That’s why I suspected computer failure over 246 just simply overriding a guy’s tag without telling him he was doing so, it’s completely out of character for him to do that.”

“So, anyway, you get someone to start logging all conflicts and all tag changes and if you spot any, verify them and if you do find any more double tags find out as much as you can and keep a list, we’ll check later. If there’s a bug of some kind I don’t think it will affect anything else so let’s not have people unduly panic over some minor error.”

“Right.”

“But I don’t want to overreact either, in case 246 was either pulling a practical joke on someone or payback for a past rudeness.”

“Oh yeah, that might make sense too.”

“Once I can actually talk to 246 then we’ll see. We might both be overreacting over something as minor as maybe 246 has been working so long without taking vacation time that he’s become rude, or that there is some other explanation.”

“That’s possible too.”

“It’s also possible that since he’s been out at the Frontier for a while he’s picked up some bad habits from all the slime who live out there.”

“Oh yeah, I never thought of that, if you hang around with cretins long enough it can make you callous to other people’s feelings.”

“Right. But we’ll watch both ways just to be on the safe side. Who knows, there might actually be something wrong and we’re catching it before it gets worse.

“In fact, in view of how serious it is to keep this quiet, I know exactly whom I want to call to take a look at it. I’ll have someone examine the situation. Don’t tell him anything about what

you noticed, just tell him about the tagging problem, and don't tell him who it was. I want him to find what's wrong - if anything - without having preconceived notions of what to look for. He might find out something else we don't even expect. Got me?"

"Sure. Might as well catch anything else that might be wrong if we don't know about it yet."

"Exactly. In fact, just as a precautionary measure I'll change the close period to start at midnight tonight instead of the usual time. We'll just say we're doing an experiment to see if we can change close periods to reduce loads in the event of a lot of people dying at once. We'll make it up later but in the mean time it will give us plenty of time to examine the situation without having to worry about further incoming arrivals."

"Why thank you, Mr. Chairman."

"You're welcome. By getting this to me privately I think we've helped prevent panic in case there is something wrong. So I think that it's only fair that I see to it we make sure that there isn't a problem even if we're just overreacting to what has happened."

"Okay, then, Mr. Chairman, thank you for your assistance."

"Thank you, Leroy, if it had been someone else I'd figure they were rude but we're talking about 246 here. He's slick, he'd con you out of your shoes if you let him, if you had something he wanted I wouldn't trust him not to try and steal it, but if someone was to tell me he was intentionally rude without cause, lied to them or broke a promise I'd say they were crazy."

"I agree. He is probably crookeder than a corkscrew, but ironically if you needed to trust someone to keep their promises and never lie to you, I can't think of anyone else I would trust more. I owe everything I've been able to achieve here to him and his willingness to offer me another chance."

Chapter 161

“...this is even worse than what you were doing before!”

“I. Can’t. Beeeeeelieve. IT! Oh God, Oh God, Oh God, I can’t stand it, it’s tooo muuuuch! I thought you were kiiaaaiding when you said it was even better! Oh, oh, oh, oh! Oh my God not another ONE!”

“Okay, Jane, I’m going to bring you down slowly because I have to tell you something.”

“Oh, that was just too, too much. Oh my. Let me guess, I’m going to have to pay for this or something.”

“No it’s nothing like that, actually it’s some very good news for you.”

“Oh. Even better than what you’ve been doing?”

“Oh yeah, lots better.”

“All right, then. Although I don’t know if I would be able to live through anything better than this.”

“Now, remember, you died. This is the place you go when you die. We call it the Afterlife. There’s actually a video you can watch and some orientation classes you can go to. Well, they put something in my head when I got here. Every man here gets one of these. What it does is that when you’re in bed with a man like me, I can’t come. No matter what I do I am not able to come. You can let me have sex with you and I can pound on you for days and nothing would happen.”

“That’s terrible, I feel so sorry for you.”

“Well, there’s nothing to be sorry about. It’s not that I can’t ever come, it’s that I can’t come myself. It is possible for me to come, and that’s where I need your help. You see, they also put something in your head when you died.”

“Really?”

“Really, really. That’s where this whole thing is from. You see, I can come but there is a feature called Climax Privilege that has to be released to allow me to come when I’m having sex with a woman. Now, we’re here in this apartment, alone. In order for me to come when I’m having sex with you, someone - some person - has to decide that I am allowed to do so. And you and I are the only people who know what is going on when we’re having sex. And someone specifically has to decide to release climax privilege to me. Would you like to guess which person is the one who decides?”

“Me?”

“Yes. We set it up so that when a man has sex with you, or with any woman, unless she decides that he’s entitled to have an orgasm, he doesn’t get to come.”

“Wow! That’s absolutely amazing.”

“So, would you say I’ve done enough to you that I should be allowed to come once I start having sex with you?”

“Oh, yeah, of course.”

“Okay, now, what I’m going to do is tell you how to do that. But just remember, when you’re with a guy and you’re having sex with him, you don’t release climax privilege to him unless he does you right, like I’m doing, okay?”

“Oh, sure.”

“I’m going to tell you something else, too. When you have sex with a man, and you decide he

should come, and you let him, then he has an orgasm and he sprays you. He does not ejaculate because he does not have any semen and no sperm. You can't get pregnant from sex here."

"You're kidding me."

"Nope. Plus, you don't have reproductive equipment either, so not only is it that he can't get you pregnant, you don't have the ability to get pregnant. Everyone who is here got here by dying."

"Oh wow."

"And there's even better news."

"There is?"

"Yeah. All diseases stayed on earth. There are no venereal diseases, no colds, no flu, AIDS, cancer, herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, even yeast infections, they all stayed behind. That means because you can't get pregnant and can't catch disease, you can have sex without having to use any precautions."

"That's amazing. I'm not sure if I believe all this, but it sounds wonderful if it's true."

"It is true. I can prove it to you. You know how a man, once he comes, gets soft and can't do any more?"

"Yeah."

"Men here don't get soft after climax. Once you grant Climax Privilege to a man, he has an orgasm and sprays you, but he stays hard and he can continue having sex with you. And you can give him another orgasm after he's given you some more. And you can keep repeating this for as long as you want. We don't need sleep here, so you could conceivably spend days in bed with a man, coming over and over while allowing him to do the same thing. How does that sound?"

"This is really true?"

"Yep. I'll prove it to you. I'm going to tell you how to let me come. Then we'll start having sex. You'll think the particular phrase and then about 2 seconds later you'll feel me come inside you. Then you can feel that I won't get soft, and when you think I've done enough to you that I deserve another orgasm you do the same thing, and we can keep doing this as long as you enjoy it. When you want to do something else, you tell me and we'll do that, okay?"

"Okay."

"What you need to do is think of a word or phrase you want to use when you want to let a man come inside you while you're having sex. You want to make sure it's not something you would normally say or think while having sex unless you mean it for that purpose, because once you think it the guy will start to come. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Central Computer, grant internal climax privilege release command access to all female occupants of this room and confirm."

"Climax Privilege Release command via mind control enabled for 00090 Jane 012188"

"Now, you have to think of a phrase you want to use that when you think of it, you allow a man to climax, okay? You could have it be as simple as thinking 'okay, let him come' or anything you wanted to. Did you think of what you want to use?"

"Yeah."

He reaches over and pulls out a piece of paper. "Think this in your head, where the blank on the line is, think the phrase you want to use."

The computer spoke. "Command Macro has been assigned."

"Also, there's another nice thing it does."

"What's that?"

"If a guy tries to rape you, it allows you to automatically transport yourself and him to the police station. Since obviously you want me to have sex with you, right now I don't think you need to worry about being raped, do you?"

She smiled. "No"

"Okay, what I'm going to do now is start on you again, to get you nice and excited, then we're going to have sex, and each time when you think I've done something nice for you, you think of that phrase so you can do something nice for me, okay?"

"Yeah. Oh, oh, oh, this is too much."

"Here we... go!"

"Oh God this is even worse than what you were doing before! I don't know if I can take it! I'm being overloaded! Oh, Oh Goooooooooooood! Yeeeeeeeeeeow! Yes! Yes! Oh, oh, oh, oh. Oh, you're right, you don't get soft when you coooooooooome! Oh! Oh! Oh, yes, you really can come more than once! Oh, oh, oh, wooow! That's amaaaazinnnnng! This is faaaaantastic! I love it! Keep doing thaaaaat! Yes! Oh, God Yeeeeeeeeees! Hey, I didnnnnnt knooooow I could make you come twice in a row, that's reallly soooooomethingg! Yesssssss!"

Chapter 162

“I don’t know where you heard that... it’s obviously an exaggeration.”

Three men at a table in one of the conference rooms are discussing one of the most talked about subjects in the Welcoming Department, its star performer.

“So what’s the situation anyway?”

“They moved the close period up for an experiment to midnight tonight. There’s supposed to be some big changes coming and they want to have time to implement it before the next batch. Probably has something to do with the fact that I heard 246 is back from the Frontier. Probably want him in on the changes.”

“Where is he, anyway?”

“Where do you think? In bed with some broad. I heard he just stole six Incomings away from their Welcomers and is doing multiple threesomes. The bastard is so greedy I wouldn’t be surprised if he charged favors to Incoming women for screwing them.”

“Naah, he might charge for everything else, but sex is the one thing he does give away.”

“You mean he actually gives *anything* away? I heard that he never sprays a woman when he comes because he’d have to give that to her.”

“I do know that when it comes to something he wants, price is no object. I heard he used something like three hundred million favors to get his number all to himself. That’s why nobody else has the number 246. I guess with all the favors he’s conned people out of, he can afford it.”

“When it comes - no pun intended, as he’d say - to sex, he’s incorrigible. Nobody can touch him when it comes to the stuff he’s done to women.”

“I heard he was in some contest and gave a woman 100,000 climaxes. In one hour.”

“It isn’t just women who have to be scared. I heard he goes both ways, and that he even came on to some guy in public once. I think he and Tom, the old Administrator years ago, were screwing too, I read somewhere how Tom left him a message that said, ‘I am now, and always shall be, your boyfriend.’”

“Someone told me that he sometimes takes bets against other guys, that he could give a woman 10,000 climaxes, and usually the other guy hasn’t even gotten their zipper open before 246 is finished and the woman certainly is!”

“Someone else told me that Tom had to stop him from short-arming cattle. They told me that Tom said 246 is so horny he could fuck rats continuously. I think they had some kind of phrase about it, ‘pry mouse, off my, penis’.”

“I heard he was with a woman who had been with 600 guys and wore them all out, but he wore *her* out.”

“Man that guy is un-fucking-believable!”

“I heard how one time they had this guy under arrest, he’d raped a bunch of women, and a huge crowd showed up and wanted to beat the shit out of him, but 246 stood between him and the mob and scared them all off by telling them he was going to turn them all into women and fuck every one of them if they hurt the guy.”

“Not only that, but I heard we caught another rapist, but we never prosecuted him because 246 was afraid people would find out the guy could fuck more than he can!”

“Naah, nobody could fuck more than 246. He’s had more than ten times as many women as work in this building.”

“That’s low. I heard he’s had sex more than a hundred million times, and had more than ten million women.”

Another man interrupted with. “I heard that he lied to someone about something.”

Everyone stopped, and one of them looked at him. “I don’t know where you heard that ridiculous rumor, but it’s obviously an exaggeration. Nobody in their right mind could seriously believe something that preposterous. No, actually, it’s a lie spread by someone who doesn’t like him.”

“I wouldn’t trust 246 not to try to seduce some broad away from me, but I know he’d never lie to me.”

“Me neither. Well, actually you could trust him. If you could actually get him to promise not to chase after a girl you picked.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I wouldn’t trust him not to try to steal a woman if he had the chance, but if he promised not to have sex with some woman, I could trust him even if they were both in bed naked together. What do you think?”

“Yeah, I’ll go along with that. If he promised something, you can depend on it.”

“So, what do you think would have happened with whatever woman he’s with right now?”

“She’s probably a vegetable by now.”

“What do you mean?”

“He’s probably screwed all her brains out.”

Chapter 163

“...that would be torture! But I think I could stand it.”

“No more, please! Oh, oh, that’s too much. You know, you’re the first guy I’ve slept with who was better in bed than he said he was. I thought you were just sweet talking me when you said it was even better than back on earth. I’ve been around with quite a few guys that I thought were really good, but you’re really amazing, 246.”

“Thank you, Jane. I try hard to make sure I do you right.”

“You do, indeed. I’ve had more sex and came more since I met you than I did in years. I have no idea how long we’ve been doing this but it seems endless, like it’s been weeks. And I like the way you’re holding me close like this.”

“Central Computer, display calendar time since event ‘entry of me.’”

“Forty-seven hours, four minutes, eleven seconds calendar.”

“Two days.”

“We’ve been having sex for two days? That’s all?”

“Well, I spent, oh, about an hour on you before I told you how to release Climax Privilege, and then the rest of the time we’ve both been coming a lot. At least I have and your comments to me make me think that you have too. Unless you’ve been faking it, in which case you’ll have to be punished.”

“Oh, I’m not faking it, you’re too much for me. But what would you do to punish me?”

“Oh, give you about ten times as much pleasure as I did while we were having sex.”

“Oh God, that would be torture! But I think I could stand it.”

“Would you like me to try?”

“Uh, No! I think what you’ve been doing is more than enough. But if we’ve been here for two days, how come we’re not hungry or thirsty? Or tired, or at least I’m not and it seems like you just keep going forever.”

“Well, the video tells that too, but remember, we’re dead. We don’t need all the things you have to do to live on earth. We don’t have to sleep, we don’t get sick, or old, we don’t get diseases, we don’t have to eat or drink, we can’t have children, and we can’t die again unless we go back to earth and be born again as a baby.”

“You mean we can actually go back to earth?”

“Yeah, but you won’t remember anything that happened here or in the life you just lived.”

“Really? Is it so people don’t remember what life is like after they die?”

“No, that’s not it. I got special permission to visit earth without having to be born first. No, the reason we do it that way is that there isn’t enough room in a newborn’s skull to take everything that the person knows with them. They have to leave it all behind except their basic personality. Oh there’s a small amount of room left for a few extras but not much. Also it would interfere with their development as a new human being if they brought all the garbage with them from their previous life.”

“Oh, I see. That makes sense. Um, it’s been so much fun here, that I guess I have to ask, uh, what’s going to happen to me now? I’ve been kind of worried about that.”

“You really want to know? You did some really horrible things on earth? You sold other women’s kids to snuff film makers and rented them out to child molesters, and gave the women and their kids drugs to keep them doped up?”

“Oh no! Nothing anywhere near that bad, I don’t think. Well, uh, I’m kind of embarrassed about it. Is what we’re doing here sort of like a bribe, to make me feel better about what’s going to happen?”

“You could say that. Actually, what we do is offer this to everyone as soon as they get here, to show them how society cares about them. The first thing that the government here does is to have someone offer to make love to them. We think it’s a nice way to Welcome someone, to love them back into the world. Because they could conceivably be spending the next trillion years here.”

“Oh. Well, I am still kind of worried about what’s going to happen next.”

“You’re thinking that you’re going to be punished for the sins you committed on earth?”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

“Well, remember when I said all diseases stayed behind on earth?”

“Yeah.”

“Well everything you did stayed there too. Once you died, everything you did, good and bad, died with you. Doesn’t matter how good you were, you don’t get any extra points for it. Doesn’t matter how bad you were, you don’t get any punishment for that either. You start over at zero.”

“Oh wow! That’s great, I feel so much better.”

“How about if I do something to make you feel even better than that, now that you know that you’re not going to have to suffer for anything you did on earth?”

“Well, it’s kind of fun but you’re overloading me.”

“I’ll do this nice and easy, and not give you so much pleasure so quickly. Then we can work up to what you can stand and I’ll give you as much as you can handle, okay.”

“Oh yeah, that sounds wonderful.”

“Okay then, I’ll just do a little of this until you’re nicely wet, then instead of more of that we’ll just have sex and when you feel I’ve given you enough pleasure, you give me some, just like before. If you think you can handle more, tell me and I’ll do some other things, until we bring this right up to as much as you can stand, without it being so much you can’t take any more, okay?”

“Oh, yes, this feels very nice, oh, oh, oh, yeah, go ahead. Oh wow, this is terrific, I like this. Oh yes, do some more of that, that I do like. Oh, oh, oh, oh, yessss. Here’s one for you. Oooh, yes, oh God this is wonderfuuuuuuuul...”

Chapter 164

“I figure if things were bad enough people... wouldn't care...”

“Well, I figured it out. You want the long version or the short version?”

“Tell me the short one.”

“Okay, you haven't said anything so I suspect you've developed some special way to allow people to visit earth without having to be born first. Is that the case?”

“Keep talking.”

“Okay, the system is designed to only allow one person to put a tag on another person, but it doesn't check if someone is an incoming because it presumes that they don't have the authority to do anything. Which would be correct since I understand that the Recycling Department revokes all privileges from someone when they go under the knife. And even if they hadn't, the person couldn't know how to issue computer commands unless they had knowledge from here, and my understanding is there's not enough room in a baby's skull to take memories from here with them, which is why everyone starts over with a clean slate at birth. So the only way I can think of that someone would know enough to be able to do that as an incoming is if they were on earth with memories of this place, only intact and still able to know about everything here.”

“Okay, so what do we do about it?”

“You told me when I did this to just think about how to solve the problem, don't make any changes because of safety concerns, correct?”

“Yeah, I'd rather take a year to get something absolutely perfect versus doing it over ten times in one week to get the same answer and causing all sorts of problems in the mean time.”

“Okay, well, we can patch around the problem, but the simplest answer is that if you allow people to go to earth with their memories and privileges, and come back, that you have whoever is processing Incomings to mark them as no longer being one. That way we don't have to change anything. How does that sound?”

“Great, I'll remember that.”

“Mr. Chairman...”

“Yes, Wilfred, I know what you're thinking, if you want to be able to visit earth sometime I'll arrange it. This is a 'board certified' matter, something we don't tell anyone about, not anyone unless they already know or need to know.”

“Yeah, I understand.”

“Do you know why we don't tell anyone?”

“Because if people know it's possible to go back to earth without having to be born again, a lot of them are going to be demanding it. And the ones who want it and can't have it will be pissed.”

“There is another reason as well.”

“Oh, what's that?”

“It was experimental. We didn't know if it would work or what side effects might occur. Would you want to try going to earth if there was a chance you might end up not being carried over correctly and dying for real, as in going wherever people would go if there was no Afterlife?”

“Oh, I see what you mean. As you pointed out once, nobody knows what would happen to the person.”

“So basically we had to wait for someone to volunteer, who was willing to go because they wanted to. I can’t ask someone to volunteer for such a thing, it’s a little too much to take that risk. So I waited until someone who really wanted to go, and deserved such a privilege by doing really good things, that they knew what the risks were and were willing to accept them.”

“Oh wow. Well, now I know who it was that went.”

“All right, who and how do you know?”

“Well, I think you pointed out that you’ve only found three people who’ve done some really terrific things for the Afterlife who aren’t on the board of directors. I spoke to one of the other two and found out she is a woman. Since the person who did this was male, that eliminated the other person as I knew it wasn’t them, which left only one. 246.”

“How were you able to eliminate the other person?”

“It was real simple. From what you’ve said, there are only three people who are really good enough to deserve such a privilege based on what they’ve done here. Dr. Stevens, me and Supervisor 246. Dr. Stevens is a woman. You’ve just said you’ll let me visit earth. That means it was 246 was the one who came back as an incoming while being allowed to keep his memories from here.”

“How do you know it wasn’t one of the members of the board?”

“Dr. Green, I know how to keep secrets and I know to keep my mouth shut, that’s one of the reasons you guys let me play with so many things. So I know.”

“Go ahead, let’s see how good you are.”

“The reason is that you and all the members of the Board of Directors are still alive, haven’t died, and you’re not even in our universe. Also, because of the time difference I also know that your world and ours are not normally interconnected so that time passing in one place does not necessarily pass in the other place. You haven’t aged as many years as the amount of time that has passed since I first met you, therefore it is clear that you’re only here when you actually connect and the rest of the time continues here without any time passing in your world. My guess is that actual wall-clock time you’ve been connected amounts to perhaps 1-2 calendar hours a month, less than 10 hours a year, for a total of perhaps 250-400 hours, and perhaps a total of two years real time if you decided to check in at the rate of, say, 2 hours a week. My guess is that you do something else and this is a secondary operation like a second job or a hobby rather than something you work on full time.”

He sighed. “How long have you known this, Wilfred?”

“About a month after I started working for you, call it the whole roughly thirty standard years. I figured out the timing after about a couple of years when I realized you are still alive but hadn’t changed except very slightly. If you hadn’t changed at all I would have figured you were using a simulation to show who you were but I realized you keep your appearance secret because you probably want to be able to just move about in public here anonymously while still allowing your friends to know you by sight, once you actually die. If you were using a simulation you could simply change it once you died, but since you keep your appearance secret it’s so you don’t have to change since a very tiny number of people know you personally.”

“Damn you are good. Any other things you discovered?”

“Well...”

“Wilfred, you know the rules, if you can figure a way to steal a privilege you get to keep it. What did you figure out?”

“I doubt you’d allow it in this case.”

“What is it?”

“I figured out how to impersonate you if I wanted to. I found the means by accident.”

“Really? Tell me how?”

Wilfred told him. “Basically I didn’t say anything, I figured if something ever went really wrong, we couldn’t reach you and there was an emergency requiring we do something, then I’d tell 246 if necessary or I’d do it myself if we couldn’t reach him. I figure if things were bad enough people would be so grateful they either wouldn’t care I’d done something I wasn’t allowed to do or they’d ignore it under the circumstances.”

“What would it take for someone else to figure out how to do that?”

“Well, they’d have to have system-level access in order to be able to look for it. That’s where it was, and it was only because I was looking for something else at the time that I stumbled on it.”

“So unless someone has high access they couldn’t find the precise sequence of statements through trial and error?”

“No. Especially since, if you use one of the codes and don’t follow it immediately with the next, it ignores even a good request for thirty seconds, so you’d have to know to wait 30 seconds between tries. Also, it adds a random amount of time from 10 seconds to 5 minutes after that for a second mistake, so you don’t know when it is accepting a valid command sequence if you did get part of it right. Plus you have to do all 32 commands without missing any or you have to start all over from the first one. So they’d have to do all 32 commands, do them all perfectly, or it doesn’t work. It doesn’t even tell you if you missed, either you get all of them right and it tells you, or you get to the last one and it informs you there was an error in the sequence. It does not tell you where the error was, so you’re correct, you can’t find it by trial and error.”

Chapter 165

“...sex isn't an irreplaceable asset...”

“Well, anyway, now that you've seen the video, what do you think?”

“I am really amazed. I'm just so glad that I'm not going to get punished for what I did on earth. Well, I'm also glad that there actually *is* something here, I was kind of afraid there might not be.”

“Okay, well, I have a little bit of bad news for you.”

“Oh. I'm not going to like this, am I?”

“Oh, no, no, no, it's not that bad.”

“Okay.”

“Well, thing is, we've been at it for six days, and I need to do some work. As much fun as this has been, I've been on vacation for almost a month and I need to do some things.”

“Oh, I see. So, what, does that mean you'll be working all week?”

“Oh no, this isn't earth. Most people work about one day a month. But the truth is also, I want to get back to see my friends and such.”

“So, does this mean you're getting rid of me, like...”

“Jane, I want you to listen to me very carefully, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Do you know what would have happened if I hadn't propositioned you?”

“No.”

“What would have happened is, some man who was watching all of the women coming in would have spotted you. He would have tagged you, then come out to meet you. He would have shown you the video, then done exactly the same thing, asked you if you would want to have sex, told you it's okay and permitted, then did the same things with you that I've been doing for the past six days, making love to you and having sex with you. If you had been a man, a woman would have come out to see you and offered to let you have sex with her. What it is, is that there are a lot of horny people here who want to have the opportunity to be the first person to have sex with someone like you so that they can show you a really good time and also have a really good time with you. Now, if you want, you can go back there and some other guy will come out, and probably show you as good a time as I did. Generally we don't have monogamous relationships here like they did on earth, eternity is too long to settle for one person and there's no reason to. Let me ask you this, would you want to stay in bed and do nothing but have sex constantly for the next twenty years?”

“Well, that sounds like fun, but, no, I don't think so.”

“Well, you could if you wanted to, you'd just have to do it with a lot of different men, for the simple reason that everyone who is here likes to have different people so that they can try different things and learn new ways to have sex and please their partners. The people here are extremely horny and like to have sex a lot. But your average person in society here is only a little less interested. The average woman out in our society has about ten to twelve boyfriends. And the average man might have three to five girlfriends. Basically every woman has sex almost every night, some more often than that, and the average guy does it maybe six to eight or more times a week. And what is typical is that two people who know each other closely might end up that they have sex once or twice a week with each other, but they do the same thing with

many other people. Most people have very few inhibitions and almost nobody is jealous of someone else because there are so many people around who are willing to have sex with someone else that we don't have to be possessive. I mean, I think if you allowed yourself to really enjoy sex, the way you did here, and gave yourself permission to see more than one guy at a time, you might find out just how much fun it is going to be here, and you would see that you don't have to be possessive of someone whom you've had sex with, because there are so many fun people you can be with and who can also make you happy too. But the thing is, I see other women, the ones I have known and new ladies, like you, that I choose to make happy like we have done because it's fun to do. But I didn't promise you I was going to stick with you for the next billion years."

"I never thought of that. You mean guys don't get jealous over other guys?"

"Most of us here have come to realize that sex isn't an irreplaceable asset that if you give it to someone else there's no more available for them. And if you care about someone, you're not going to give them up for someone else because you don't have to, you can see both of them and nobody has to sneak around or be hurt."

"Why that's wonderful!"

"Yeah. I think you're going to have a lot of fun here. If you like what I do, you tell any other guy you're with about it so he'll do that to you also. And if you do want to see me again, you can call my office and I'll see when I can, I'm sometimes very busy. But other times I'm not really busy and I can spend a half hour or an hour with you. And you can tell me if there's something some other guy did that you liked and I'll try doing it to you."

"Oh, okay then."

"I'll give you one more hour then I have to leave for work. But if you want to go see someone else, I'll show you how, okay?"

"Okay. Whooooooooooooo!"

Chapter 166

“Calm down, Grim, you didn’t do anything wrong.”

The Administrator of the Welcoming Department is back at his desk after returning from his vacation on earth and the time he spent seducing an incoming, and decides to take care of a few matters now that he has returned. First he looked at the summary of the news, and he calls Travis in.

“Had fun on your vacation?”

“Yeah, actually I did. Let me get this straight, the Court of Appeals struck down the imposition of Involuntary Recycling on Incomings?”

“Yeah, they said it was an unusual punishment. Not ‘cruel and unusual,’ just ‘unusual’.”

“Hmm, you know, considering the fact the only reason we ever put any incoming on trial for that was because Putty Tat was being a bitch, they might actually be right.”

He has a message to call the Chairman, audio only, so he does so. Shortly thereafter, George returns his call.

“246, I need to have a meeting. Call Wilfred in.” 246 does so.

“Wilfred?”

“Yes, Dr. Green?”

“I’m going to call some others in depending on what needs to be done, some of whom are not board certified. So you are only to refer to me as Mr. Chairman, okay?”

“Certainly.”

“246, get the Death Traffic Manager on audio.” He does so.

“Grim, this is the Chairman.”

“Good morning, sir.”

“246, you know the woman you were having sex with earlier when you came back from earth?”

“Yes, Jane Omar. Or rather, Jane 12188 since she’s been loved back into the world.”

“Wilfred, tell him what he did.”

“Apparently you tagged her after someone else did.”

“246 I want to ask you a question. Did you simply tag her or did you override the other man’s tag on her?”

“I did a plain tag as soon as I saw her. If I had been told she was already tagged, I’d have called the guy and told him I wanted her. Or maybe found another female incoming who hadn’t been tagged yet.”

“That’s what we suspected. Wilfred, tell him what happened.”

“The system thought you were an Incoming and didn’t check to see that you shouldn’t be able to tag her when she was already tagged.”

“Oh. That’s not good.”

“This is where you come in, Grim.”

“Look, Mr. Chairman, as far as I know...”

“Calm down, Grim, you didn’t do anything wrong.”

“Oh, okay.”

“What I’m passing on to you is this so you know. From now on, if you get someone who comes in as an Incoming and we do this again where it’s someone who wasn’t a deceased adult,

but instead was someone who got permission to go back to earth without being born first, you'll mark them as not an Incoming when you process them. Frankly I didn't tell you before about 246 because we had never done that before and we didn't know what would happen. We figured it would look exactly the same as any other death, but we also didn't want you to expect something different or act in a different fashion and perhaps do something that makes his death fail and perhaps go on to the next world. If there is one, that is. Got me so far?"

"Yeah, if we have an Incoming and there's some note that they were actually dead before they died, I'll drop the 'Incoming' flag on them before releasing them for Welcoming."

"Very good."

"Uh, Mr. Chairman?"

"Yes, Wilfred?"

"Since you mention that this man is not Board Certified, you've brought something up I want to ask but I don't know whether I should wait or either ask him to leave or go elsewhere to talk to you."

"I see. Grim Reaper doesn't have the ability to read minds, so just think your question, I'll hear it. Okay. Damn, Wilfred, how do you think of these things? You made an excellent point. Okay, Wilfred has posed a question. Basically what he's asking is if I or a member of the Board of Directors decides to go to earth directly, then die, should we have our mark as an Incoming removed because there may be other checks and balances involved, what with the additional privileges we have we might cause something to happen we don't mean to? Well, since we do know about this problem, what I'm going to do is this. In the event I or one of us does that, we'll leave our privileges turned off until after we come back, so Grim will treat us exactly the same as any other Incoming as far as our processing is concerned. I have an idea. Wilfred?"

"Yes?"

"Make it automatic that when someone whose group is 1 dies, it temporarily drops all privileges, and they can issue a request to restore them when they know they won't use them by accident."

"Mr. Chairman?"

"Yes, Wilfred?"

"I don't want to sound like I'm being pedantic, but if we drop all privileges, they won't even be able to use the phone, and if it's a woman, she won't be able to release climax privilege. Well, they could ask a Welcomer to do that but maybe they might want to do it themselves. But how do I decide which they should keep and which they should drop?"

"Oh yeah, that's a good point. Okay, just figure the basic ones a normal person has to have to manage, you know, phone service, etc., plus, say, teleportation. Just any of the privileges that don't affect others. Just figure, if it's something most people have and it makes it convenient to use the afterlife, doesn't require authorization and generally has minor effects on anyone else it's okay to keep. You know, just thinking about it now makes me understand better why you were asking. I haven't checked recently, how many different privileges are there, roughly?"

"Hundreds, I think." He looks off into space for a moment. "Make that thousands. There are two hundred and nine functions exclusively available to the Chairman or to the chairman as General Manager when he's in residence. Twelve of those require confirmation by a member of group 1 and two department heads. There are one thousand seven hundred and nine reserved for users in group 1. There are seventeen thousand and forty-five functions that require

authorization, and there are three hundred ten thousand four hundred and ninety six that are basically available to anyone if they can get someone to grant them to them. About half of those are specialized functions.”

“What are those?”

“There are certain functions to allow automated equipment to execute functions or grant privileges, such as allowing a transport kiosk to teleport people without it granting them teleport privilege. There are also some functions which have very little use except in limited circumstances, like granting someone authorized access to the Amusement Park, for example. Actually, technically if you have SQL update authority on the base tables you could do anything, most privileges are simply the equivalent of a stored procedure in SQL and make certain changes to the system in specific ways.”

“I see you’re quite familiar with the system then. Well, use your best judgement, just disable anything dangerous or that might cause problems.

“So, basically, Grim, if we tell you that someone will be coming back without being born, as part of their processing you drop their ‘Incoming’ flag, otherwise you don’t do anything even if it turns out the same conditions apply. That way if someone is sent back and doesn’t really have any privileges we don’t have to do anything at all and Grim doesn’t have to arrange anything special. So do you understand everything, Grim?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good. Central Computer, telephone Watch Commander.”

“Office of the Watch Commander, this is a recorded line.”

“Knit 2 Pearl 4.”

“One moment please.”

“This is Joan 20319.”

“Hi Joan, this is the Chairman.”

“Mike, how are you doing?”

“Authenticated. I have a non-board certified person present in this conversation so I will authenticate manually and do not identify me. Code 30216.”

“You are authenticated manually on my end, sir. So what can I do you for, Mr. Chairman?”

“Joan, I have 246, Wilfred and the Grim Reaper in 246’s office on speakerphone. Go over there for a moment. 246 let me know when she’s there.” She materializes.

“She’s here.”

“246, identify everyone that’s in the room with you.”

“Central Computer, identify all occupants of room by ID.”

“00000 SPACE SPACE Supervisor 000246. 07705 QZ Wilfred 014532. 30306 KX Joan 020319.”

“Grim, when you get these numbers on your board you are to process them yourself in the manner I described for persons you’re advised about and keep it secret. Got me?”

“Drop the Incoming Flag on them when they come back. Got you.”

“Grim, you remember how last week I told you I was moving the close period at the end of the day as part of an experiment?”

“Yeah.”

“The only reason I did it was to suspend 246’s funeral until he was able to attend.”

“I see.”

“So I’m ending the close period as of midnight tonight, you can resume sending people to earth and Incomings will begin arriving as usual. I’ll let Leroy know so he can let the Welcomers know the close period is now over. Joan, I have news for you.”

“Oh really?”

“I don’t trust 246 to go anywhere there are women around unless he’s kept on a short leash. Diane tells me that basically, within ½ an hour after she let him go, he’d found another woman, went home with her and did God knows what, except that she knows they went so far as to have sex in her limousine on the way back to the transport facility. I shudder to think how many women he did in his own world before he died. I’m going to send him, you and Wilfred back to earth so he can attend his own funeral.”

“Uh, Mr. Chairman, if it’s all the same with you, if that’s the reason I’ll be allowed to go, I think I’d rather pass. I don’t…”

“Wilfred, I’m just sending you down there at the same time as them. Once you get there, you’re free to go wherever you want as long as you comply with the restrictions I’ll give you.”

“Okay.”

“First you know to keep your mouth shut, so you would probably know but I’ll say it anyway. Don’t tell anyone about the Afterlife. One crackpot like 246 can be ignored, but not a whole bunch. Second, you stay out of New Jersey, I don’t want you to run into anyone who knew you when you were alive. Third, you’ll be supplied with a means to commit suicide, probably drug related, when you decide you want to come back, you go into some drug infested area and use it. You’ll be dead in a matter of minutes, and as far as the police are concerned you’ll be some junkie who overdosed, and it will be ignored as just another unimportant death. Have any problems?”

“No. And I think that’s pretty good, nobody’s going to care or investigate another dead junkie, so nobody will bother looking for surviving relatives or checking my background, which they might do in the case of an ordinary death.”

“Very good. I’ll let you know when we’re ready to move. You can leave now.”

“Okay, then, thank you, sir.”

“You’re welcome.” Wilfred dematerializes. “I have some things I need to discuss with 246 and Joan. Grim, I want to thank you for your assistance in this matter. Oh, perhaps I should have asked, while I gather you’ve indicated you don’t want to go back, maybe you didn’t mean it if it was as a child, and maybe you wouldn’t mind going back for a short visit as an adult?”

“Mr. Chairman, considering how it is on earth, what with having to eat, being tired, having to go to the bathroom, having to use condoms to have sex, getting injured, suffering from aches and pains, plus having to die again, and plus all the things that it’s possible to do here, I decided a long time ago that I never want to go back.”

“Okay. Just wanted to be sure.”

“Not that I don’t appreciate the offer, I know how generous it is. But there’s too much fun things to do here that I don’t need the aggravation of being alive. If I wanted to have the chance to have another kid, I might consider it since I wouldn’t know about this world until I came back. But, I can let other people have that privilege, I’ll stick with being Grim Reaper.”

“Okay then, see you later. Central Computer, disconnect 05466 Grim Reaper 777064 from this call. 246, go secure the office.” He does so, and George teleports in. “Joan, I’ve always wanted to ask you this. If you and 246 were on earth what kind of relationship do you think the

two of you would have?”

“With or without him knowing about the existence of Maria?”

“Without.”

“Obviously he would have married me by now. I can tell. If he had met her in the same lifetime, at best I might be a girlfriend he kept on the side or I’d be the wife he abandoned for her. Beyond that, I don’t know how it would have worked out since obviously he’d never have gone to temple with me. I’m no fool and if Tom had been a woman when he was here I suspect 246 would have been much more interested in her than me. That’s why when Maria dies I probably won’t see much of 246 again. I can accept that because I care enough about him not to try to make his life miserable by trying to hold onto him when I know he loves someone else more than me. A lot more.”

“Perhaps you’re right. 246, you might as well tell her the story about your friend.”

“Which one?”

“Oh yeah, that’s right. Perhaps you should tell her how come Tom got in. On second thought, maybe you’d better tell her the whole story.”

Chapter 167

“I have something to say to you.”

She went to go get him. He arrived, as do all incomings, in the reception area. As it turned out, he saw an attractive female come up to him. Correction, he thought, extremely attractive. The kind of woman he knows he'd never get to meet when he was alive and certainly wouldn't have a chance with here, he's sure since they probably don't allow that. She looked at him. “Do you know what happened? Or where you are?”

“Uh, well, I thought I died, but now, I have no idea. Funny thing is, I've always had foot problems, and now my foot doesn't hurt at all. So maybe I did die and that's why.”

“You were correct. You're here in this place, as you are now, because it's easier for you to understand than if you were transformed into some other thing that you're not used to being. That's also the reason I have chosen to appear before you in the form I am now. It's easier for you to understand and to comprehend. I'd like you to come with me. If you would follow me, please.”

He follows her out into a corridor, and into an elevator. She punched in a number and the elevator rose up. They arrived at the floor, and went over to a door. She opened the door, and they walked into an office. She closed and locked the door behind them. She sat behind the desk, and he sat down in front of it.

“I'm not sure what to do with you. Should we send you back or do you want to stay here?”

“I get a choice in the matter?”

“Of course. You can leave right now if you want, or you can listen to what I want to discuss with you.”

“Okay.”

“I'm thinking of having you do something to show that you deserve to be here.”

“Like what?”

She leaned forward and gave him the sweetest smile. “Oh, I bet you can think of something.”

“You know, if our roles were reversed I'd have the idea that you were suggesting we have sex.”

She smiled again. “Hmm. That's not a bad idea.”

“Are you serious?”

“Were you when you thought that was what I was suggesting?”

“Yes.”

“So what exactly is wrong with the idea? You're obviously old enough to choose to get involved with me if you want to, you're dead so you can't get some disease, and I'm the woman, so even if we could, you're not the one who could get pregnant, so unless you've got some reason you don't want to, why not?”

“And this is okay?”

“Of course it is, I allow it.”

“Who are you?”

She smiled again. “I thought you'd never ask. You don't recognize me, do you?”

“No. Should I?”

“Not like this.” She changes her appearance before him, turning into an old man, with a white beard, the desk turns into a judge's dais, and she rises up about 2 meters. In a booming voice, ‘he’ says, “Arise, and prepare to be judged!” The desk and her both return to their original

appearance. “That give you any ideas?” She looks at him and smiles.

“Are you trying to tell me you’re God?”

“That’s what I am trying to do. Does the idea surprise you?”

“Well, it’s not what I expected.”

“In what way?”

“Well, you’re a woman, and...”

“Oh please. I can read your mind and it’s so obvious you’re not thinking. For someone as bright as you are, I’m really surprised. Some of the things you’re curious about make some sense, so let me see if I can answer them.

“Yes, I’m a woman. Yes, I’m talking about having sex. With you. An invasive act. I invented sex, I certainly know how it works. Why bother with you? You died and I decided to examine you. You looked interesting and I thought your background would be a pretty good match for me.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Look, you’re not afraid of me like so many of those extremely religious people. Too often they’re like puppy dogs, either they’re so in awe of me they can’t do anything but fall over themselves to act servile to me, or they’re scared I’m going to punish them for whatever they did on earth. That’s why I decided to pick you. Do you think I want you to act out of fear? Oh, and you’re still not thinking. There’s more than one of me here, figure it out, enough people die every day that either I’d have to handle each person one at a time and I’d have about 3 seconds to examine their entire life. Oops, time’s up! Or I’d have to pull some stunt to expand time for each and every person to cover points of their life. A whole lot of work, and it’s a lot simpler for me to just have lots of pieces to handle the work. Why would I bother with human beings, why not just mate with myself? Oh I have. I know the answer, but I want to hear it from you: what do you call it when you mate with yourself?”

“Uh, masturbation I guess.”

“Exactly. Booooooring! Much more fun to have someone else to try this on. And why am I doing this? For the same reason people do: because it’s fun and it’s pleasurable. Who says I can’t choose to do this if I want? And I’m not telling you that you have to, or that it will make one bit of difference whether you do or don’t as far as you’re concerned. You’re dead, you can stay here if you want, and if you’re not interested you can just leave. Why am I being a woman? Because you’re a man and I’d rather get you as you are than change you just because of some preconceived notion that it matters which of us is a man and which is a woman. Do you think I want to make you do something unpleasant when, to me, what gender I am is unimportant as far as my enjoying this? Or do you think that I would want someone who isn’t any good at this?”

“Huh?”

“I could have gone the other route, had you justify your existence, had you scared to death that you’re going to be punished for your sins. But am I seriously going to get you to voluntarily do things from the threat of punishment? A thousand years ago, two thousand, three thousand years ago, men didn’t respect women and so the only way to get respect was to look like a man. You don’t suffer from that problem. You’ve had decades of experience as a human being, as a man. I can try using you the way you are; you know how to handle your body. If I were to be as a man, and turn you into a woman, first of all you’d be scared of me because of what else I could conceivably do to you; second you wouldn’t know how to handle your body; and third

since you don't know anything about how to be a woman, you'd be lousy in bed and neither one of us would have any fun. You know what? You're a hypocrite."

"What do you mean?"

"Before you showed up here and I decided to Welcome you, I read your mind and looked at some important points in your memory. One of the things that bothered you was the story of Job, in the Bible, that after I throw all those plagues at him, or rather, I let someone else do that, then he complains about it and I chew him out for questioning my motives. You criticized me because you pointed out - correctly - that I could simply have said that I made him, it was within my province to choose to allow those things to happen to him, but I chickened out and criticized him for validly asking why I allowed those things to happen. Maybe if I had told him the truth, he wouldn't have accepted it, just like you refuse to accept it now."

"What do you mean?"

"Let's face it. I know you think I'm very attractive. If we were on earth and had met in some ordinary circumstance, and you discovered I was interested in you, you would have been driving me to a motel within ten minutes and you would have been inside me within half an hour.

True?"

"Yes."

"So here I'm being honest with you and you won't grant me the same respect you would to some woman that offered you the opportunity down on earth."

"I didn't say I wouldn't, I just..."

She looks over at the other side of the office, "Look." A large bed suddenly appears. "If you're really as good in bed as you think you are, let's go and you can show me."

They walk over toward the bed, when she turns and stops him in front of a full-length mirror.

"Hold on a minute. Look at you. You don't find yourself attractive, do you?"

"Well, no, not really."

"So, let's do something about that. First, let's lose the pot belly." As he watched, his stomach shrunk and he became noticeably thinner. "Next, let's roll back your age. A man is supposedly at his peak at 18, but I think there is something for looking a little older. Let's try 25." He watches, again with amazement, as the accumulated years of his life faded from his face and his body. "Now, what do you think?"

"I'm stunned."

"So now, let's see what you can do." They get into bed together. "Oh, yes, it might work better if we didn't have clothes on, wouldn't it?" Their clothes vanish. "Now, what I want you to do is think of all the things you would do to me. I want to see how you think about other people. Oh. Not bad. There are a few things I want you to do slightly differently from what you're thinking, but otherwise you're not too bad in what you've figured out. But you still don't get it, do you?"

"No."

"Yes, this is a woman's body. It's specially tuned for sex, is there any reason that I shouldn't be allowed to enjoy sex same as what I have given to any other human being? Nor do I choose to exploit you, yes, you will receive pleasure from this, but I will get much much more. I will use you for this experience as I would use any other tool. No, wait, let me rephrase that. I will play on you as the *Instrument of God*: I will experience the music of pleasure. And so will you, but from this I will discover how well you treat others at the particular moment it is

hardest for a man to act except selfishly. Do you understand better?"

"I think so."

"In that case," she rolled over and laid down on her back, "show me what you can do." They kiss, and touch, and he tries everything he can think of. "Now, I'm just about ready to have you take me, but I want to see how you act so I'm going to ask you to move a certain way for a bit. So go ahead."

He gets on top of her, and slips inside. "Hmm, nice. I'd like you to start with something slow and deep. Now you can try fast, yes, go ahead and pound on me. Now slow down a little, now do quick, short strokes, okay, you're doing fine, I think I'll let you go ahead and just do anything you want and... why are you stopping?"

"Well, uh, I was about to come and I didn't think you wanted me to just yet, it's kind of fast."

"Let me explain something to you. I have complete control over your body. You don't get to come unless I decide to let you. So now, my precious instrument, continue to play for me the music of pleasure as you receive your reward and express it inside me."

He does. He can't believe it. God *herself* is having him have sex with her and he's experienced a level of pleasure he could not even imagine. "Again, why have you stopped?"

"Well, uh, it's kind of obvious, isn't it?"

"Are you soft?"

"Uh, no, come to think of it. Hehe that's a terrible pun."

"Well, if you're not soft, little instrument, continue to show me how well you can play."

"Oh wow, I'd never imagined being able to have this happen more than once so often."

"Actually, you impressed me a bit by being so careful to respect my feelings. Okay, I've decided, I'm going to drive for a while, hold on to me." She rolls both of them over and she begins moving. Now, he feels a very strong climax and orgasm, so much that he rises off the bed slightly. She stops.

"Why did you do that just now?"

"Uh, well, it was so good that..."

"No, I mean why did you climax just now?"

"Uh, well, because you made me?"

"Exactly! So stop being afraid; realize the only reason you climax is because I decide to permit you to do so, you can't at all if I don't let you. I could have you pound on me for hours or days on end, or like now I could be moving with you inside me, and while I would be receiving tremendous amounts of pleasure all of the time from what I am causing that little part of you to do to me, if I don't explicitly grant you climax privilege, you will not come at all."

"I see."

She begins moving again. "So, now, let me take my *Instrument of God* and play out such a wonderful work of love." She looked down at him as she noticed he was fingering her. "Ah yes, that is nice of you. Do you know what will happen if you do nice things to me?"

"Uh, no."

"You'll get *this*," she says, as she gives him another orgasm, "and *this*, and *this*!" By the third time he was almost levitating in terms of how strongly she had hit him with pleasure. She was thinking that this was the first time in a long time she'd given a man three orgasms in a row because he'd done so nicely. She got thinking about all the positions in the *Kama Sutra*, she'd probably see how many she could get him to try. She hadn't had this much fun with someone

freshly dead in quite a while. Playing God as a way of seducing Incomings was such a cool trick, she thought, she should have thought of it before.

Days and days later, after they have had sex hundreds of times, she decides to tell him the truth. "I have something to say to you."

"Oh, okay."

"I kind of lied to you about something."

"Oh?"

"Remember I told you how you're dead?"

"Yes."

"And what did I say I was?"

"Oh my God. This is weird, I have almost perfect recall now, and I realize, you never once said you were God, I said you were!"

"Uh huh. What happened was exactly what I said, I saw the information about you come up on the list of freshly dead people, and discovered some of your background, so I decided instead of just propositioning you, to use some of your own hypocrisy to show you some of the errors in your thinking. Besides, you're still not comfortable with the idea that a woman can be just as aggressively interested in sex as a man and I suspect you might have had trouble if I did it that way. So I decided to play God for real."

"Oh. So what's your real name?"

"Elizabeth 844323."

"You want to run that by me again?"

"It's how the people who are here permanently let others know as opposed to being just another Incoming who just died. Everyone has two numbers. The first number is 5 numbers long and the second number is 6 numbers. You put that number together and you have a unique ID that you have always had, even before you went to earth. Most people just use their first name and their second number. Do you want to know your second number?"

"Yes."

"246."

"You know what, the funniest thing is I've always had a fondness for that number, all of my life, I thought it was just unusual that a particular number would be so important to me. Now, I guess I know why."

"Yes, you do now."

George now resumes talking after the *Instrument of God* (and now you know where the name of this story came from!) finishes telling his story.

"What happened was that a few years later she decided she wanted to go back to earth. 246 tried to talk her out of it but she felt she wanted to go.

"Her name was Elizabeth; Libby for short. She went back to earth to try something different. She got a Real Sex Change and was born on Earth as Tom Johnson.

"246 watched him from time-to-time for decades as he approached his 19th birthday. But that didn't stop 246 from getting into lots of trouble in the mean time. I don't know if he's told you much about the things he did to get to where he is now, some of those stunts were absolutely amazing in terms of their ingenuity.

“Tom died 2 weeks below the cut-off date of the *Point of No Return* which meant he was too young to stay. He would have been sent back to earth but 246 interceded; he didn’t want to wait another 20 years for his friend to come back.

“Nobody had ever argued to not have a child recycled and 246 was the one who caused the rules here to be changed.

“I think 246 fought so hard for Tom is because of what happened in his case when he was first welcomed here. And once Tom figured out that when he was a woman he was 246's Welcomer, that’s probably what made him decide to go back again.

George looked at Joan. “That’s why Tom and 246 got along so well. 246 is really a kid at heart and Tom still was one.”

Chapter 168

“Oh, it’s going to be even hotter.”

“Okay, Wilfred, I have some news for you.”

“Go ahead.”

“First, let me see how many members of the board do you know.”

“You, Deputy Chairman Diane McCloud, Dr. Rawlins and Dr. Jensen. I met Dr. McCloud but I never told her I knew.”

“Okay, well, anyway, we’re going to have you, 246 and Joan show up at my place first. So now I can tell you since you already know. Diane wants to set up a mini orgy involving basically all our close friends once we’re all dead. She wants to invite you and Terry to participate, are you interested?”

“What’s involved?”

“What they’re thinking about doing is having a system in which guys are in bed with their girlfriends, and then, after the women come as a result of what the guy is doing, the guy pops into another woman and then climax privilege is triggered automatically so that each guy comes into a different woman than the one he caused to come. We figured even if you weren’t interested in participating you might find the development of the device interesting.”

“I’d love to go along, and I’m sure Terry would be pleased.”

“Good. Also, we’re going to have some fun down here. Diane and Lynn also want to try you in bed, and when Joan gets here she wants to do Diane’s husband Jack, me, you and 246 to compare how we are in the real world with how you guys are there and how me and the others will be once we die. I’m presuming you won’t mind.”

“Oh yeah, I’d really object to getting to fuck hot broads.”

“Oh, it’s going to be even hotter.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Here’s what we’re going to do.”

A lot quieter than the first time only a short time earlier, 246, Joan and Wilfred arrive in George’s world.. Wilfred meets George, and Joan and George hug. Then Joan and 246 hug.

“Joan, you’re such a lovely little bundle of joy!”

“Thanks.” Joan and Wilfred hug.

“Anyway, let’s get over to my place.”

They arrive at George and Lynn’s second house. They all walk in, and Joan and Lynn hug. Lynn also hugs Wilfred. “Diane and Jack will be here in a couple hours. 246, George and Joan can get the preparations for the party ready. If you’ll excuse us.” Lynn takes Wilfred by the hand, and they go back into one of the bedrooms.

Wilfred looks at her, with a strange look on his face. “So it’s you!”

“What do you mean?”

“I always wondered who she was. It’s your voice that is used for the Central Computer.”

“Yeah, George had me read a few hundred phrases and some sounds so that they could duplicate almost anything it needed to say. I was flattered.”

“You know, and I’m not just saying this because I wanted to impress you, but I always thought

that the woman who did the voice was very sexy.”

She smiled. “Well, thank you.”

“I never could find who she was, I figured it was someone who went under the knife.”

“You didn’t consider it might be someone who was still alive?”

“You know, it’s funny, until I figured out that George was alive, I never thought about it. I figured, with all the people that are dead, it would be far easier to find one of them to do the voice. But, I suppose, you could use anyone if you had enough audio samples.” He looks over at her. “You look wonderful.”

“Thank you, again.”

“Well, how about I show you a way I’d like to thank you,” he smiled.

“Okay!”

They undress, Lynn slips beneath the covers and Wilfred does the same. They engage in passionate kissing, then Wilfred moves down her body. “Oooh, what’s that you’re doing?”

“Signing my name with my tongue on your clit.”

“Oh, that feels nice.”

“When we do, do you want to get on top or me?”

“That’s nice of you to ask. Okay, then, I will this time. Later I’ll let you get on top.”

“Fine.”

Lynn climbs on top of Wilfred, slides him into herself, and begins moving up and down. “Do you want me to move?”

“Sure, if you want.” So he does as she does until he comes. “That’s nice. But, anyway, let’s shower and change for the party.”

“You want to shower together?”

“Cute!” So they do.

The two of them come out to find most of the materials for a birthday party with “Happy 40th Jack” appearing on the wall. Lynn says, “They’ll be here in about an hour. I’ll make sure everything is ready.”

About an hour and ten minutes later, Diane and Jack walk in. Everyone yells “Surprise!”

Jack turns to Lynn. “I had no idea.”

“That was the point.”

After dinner and cake are eaten, presents are handed out. The usual ugly tie, cologne and other trinkets go around. Then Diane says, “And now, your biggest and fanciest present. Bring it over, Joan.”

A very limber and spry Joan walks over and sits in Jack’s lap, holding a card. He opens the envelope, and reads:

“Hope you like your present, Joan. From George, Lynn, Diane and everyone else involved.”

“I don’t get it.”

“Jack, your present is me!”

Diane leaned over and whispered in his ear. “Honey, Joan is going to be the only underage girl you’re going to be allowed to fuck unless I say otherwise. She’s 15 and a virgin. So it’s three presents. You get to pop her cherry, you get to fuck her bare, and you get to come inside her. Happy Birthday! Now go take her in George and Lynn’s bedroom on their big bed and have

fun.”

As the two of them leave, Wilfred turns to 246. “Her husband doesn’t know?”

“No. Standard policy, even spouses don’t know what we’re doing unless they’re part of the operation. Lynn had to know because when George was recruited, it was known that there was no way he could keep secrets from her so both of them were recruited. Jack is busy with other business opportunities, he will be let in on the operation when it’s necessary.”

Jack and Joan go into the bedroom and close the door. “Jack?”

“Yes, Joan?”

“We decided to let you have me because I wanted an older man to be my first, we had to find a good man who was cool about it, and we had to make sure that everyone involved could keep their mouth shut because we don’t want it found out. Nobody wants you to get in trouble from Jail Bait, so we made sure only the six of us knew about it. So you can have fun with me and not worry, okay?”

“All right.”

“Jack, one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“When we first do it, what I want is it over fast. You’ll get on top of me, we’ll count to three, and when I say three, I’m going to push my ass up at the same time you slide into me. I want my hymen to break in one quick push. Got me?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“I haven’t started having periods yet, so you don’t have to worry, you can come inside me. I want to feel you when it happens. I’m thinking that you’re going to love how tight my pussy is, and I’m going to love how your dick feels when you’re moving inside me. So let’s get in bed, the sooner we start foreplay and get me ready, the sooner I can feel you inside me.”

“Joan, you’re amazing. You’re such a precocious little girl. I’m surprised you’re not nervous.”

“Jack, do you believe in reincarnation?”

“I’m surprised a girl your age knows a word like that.”

“Well, anyway, do you?”

“I really don’t know.”

“Well, I do. Before I was alive, here and now, I was a woman who ran the police for a major city, and I had over a hundred lovers. So I’m not nervous about having my first time in this life, I’ve done it many times before. In fact, the real reason I decided to become alive was so that when I had my first time I could have it with a decent man who would treat me right and wouldn’t use or abuse me like some scumbag. And I found exactly the man I wanted to do this when I became alive again, in you. Yeah, yeah, I can tell from the look on your face, I know you don’t believe it, it only matters that I do. Can I offer you a prediction about the future?”

“Sure.”

“You, Diane, me, George, Lynn and some other friends of ours will all be able to have sex with each other after we die. How does that sound?”

“I suppose that sounds like fun.”

“Not only that, I believe that Diane will have a serious important position in Heaven. Does that sound interesting?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, enough about the future. We’re not getting laid by talking, are we?”

“No, I guess not.”

Joan pulls her sweater off, kicks off her sandals, unzips her jeans, and takes off her panties. She helps Jack take his shirt, tie, T-Shirt, shoes, socks, pants and boxers off. She looks down at his expanding cock. “Jack, I know you’re probably thinking how nice it would be to have a lovely young thing suck you off, but for right now I want you to be ready to give me your lovely cock inside me, I want you to be really hard so you spread my tight pussy really easy, okay?”

“Uh, yeah.”

Joan pulls the quilt off and turns down the cover sheet. She slides into bed, and he follows her. She puts her arms around his neck and begin kissing passionately. He nibbles gently on her earlobes, sucks on her tiny teats, and puts his hands on her thighs, pushing her legs apart, lowering his head above her small slit. He sucks on her clit, listening to her moans. He tweaks her nipples at the same time, then moves back up to kiss passionately again. Joan pants, “Jack, I want you to fuck me now. Pop my cherry. Make me a woman tonight.”

Joan spreads her legs, and Jack climbs over one and slips between her thighs. Joan reaches down and feels how thick and hard he is.. “Move up a little Jack, I want you to slip in me easy. A little closer. There. Now, let me put a pillow under my ass to make me even higher. Now, on three, I want you to push in me hard. Ready?” He nods. “One, two, three!”

Jack aims for Joan, as she moves herself to meet him. He hits the opening and feels her lips slide around him. He feels her walls tightly holding him, feels a momentary blockage which he figures for her hymen, and slices through it. He feels more of her walls gripping him with unbelievable tightness, as he slides deeper into her virgin pussy. He bottoms out, then backs up, and begins sliding inside her delicious pleasure.

She begins to grind up against him and move with him. He pushes back into her, then pulls out, and continues moving inside her wonderful snatch.. Riding a moving target is always more fun, and if there’s a better target than a tight pussy moving around you while you’re moving inside it, it would be hard to name. Plus the added excitement of banging illicit, tasty jail bait, and knowing you’re gonna get away with it clean, definitely adds to the pleasure of the experience. Plus the additional, rare pleasure of riding a woman bare, and knowing you’re not taking any risks. He continues deeply pleasurable strokes inside her. She whispers in his ear, “Wanna move long and really pound me? I’m built to take it, Jack, go ahead and give me some long, hard thrusts.”

He decides to try it, and begins to make even longer slides inside her really tight slickness. He hadn’t had anything this good in a long time. Deep pounding a really good looking, young tight piece of ass is wonderful. He senses he’s about to come, so he starts to move in shallow and fast. Joan suspects the same thing, so she encourages him. “Come inside me, Jack. Let me feel you come in me.” As he reaches the last thrust, he has a terrific climax, great orgasm, and a powerful blast into her.

Chapter 169

““What was I supposed to do?””

Meanwhile, Diane and Wilfred are also busy. Wilfred admits what he knew. “Diane, I knew you were a member of the Board even before 246 left. Actually I knew it when you came to interview me, but I never said anything. I know lots of things that I keep my mouth shut about.”

“Well, here’s a part where I hope you don’t keep your mouth shut,” she says, as she slips into his arms and begins deep french kisses. As they work together on foreplay, she enjoys the excitement of trying yet another new lover. When she’s ready, she shows Wilfred how to use the method she learned from 246. He rides her high, enters her, and begins sliding in and out. She moves beneath him, enjoying every thrust, even more because she can move at the same time. Finally he comes and stops. Diane then gets out of bed so she can have George do her again.

At the same time, 246 and Lynn are also enjoying each other’s company. As with Diane, Lynn has a particular position she likes 246 to use, and he does. “I want you to use that position that’s extra pleasurable, the one that was almost too much for me. Ung, ung, ung, oh yeah!” she screams out.

Next, Joan gives Jack what he considers one of the best blow jobs he has ever had. He is quite amazed. As is Diane, with George giving her another really pleasant experience. Joan then decides to go see Wilfred, after having Diane give him a fresh instant hard on. Wilfred is also amazed at how tight Joan is, even compared to how she was when they were dead.

Joan proceeds to have Jack do her every way possible: woman on top, side-by-side, doggie style, and ‘up the chocolate channel’. She hands him the lube, and says, “Go ahead and fuck me in the ass, I want to let you do me every way possible.” So he gets to try one more thing with her, which he finds unbelievably pleasurable. “So, which of these did you like the best?”
“I liked being on top best.”
“Okay, let’s go take a shower and then let’s try again.”

Diane is in bed with 246 this time. “So let me get this straight, you’ve decided *not* to have sex with Joan while she’s alive?”

“Yeah. I mean, I know the whole purpose of having her a little girl was as a present for your husband. That’s your - and her - decision, and while I don’t necessarily agree with it, I don’t have to participate.”

“Okay, why do you object?”

“I don’t agree with older men having sex with young girls.”

“Okay, 246, let me pin you down on something. First of all, I’m curious, do you consider it child molesting?”

“Hmm. Okay, I’ll say no. At 15 they can, and do, have sex and realize what it means, but it’s usually with boys who are near their age.”

“So you’ll concede it’s likely a 15-year-old girl could be having sex without it being an

emotional problem for her.”

“Yeah, okay. Oh Christ, I just remembered.”

“Okay, tell me the story.”

“The first time I had sex, I was 16. I happened to be visiting a Sears store, and a couple of girls, I guess, mistook me for one of the employees, because they were trying to find a record. Well, when a couple of cute girls want to talk to you, you don’t turn them down, so I went through the 45s looking for whatever it was one of them was after. Yeah, it was that long ago that they actually sold records in vinyl. I don’t remember if I helped them, but one of them looked really pretty, so I asked her for her number. She said that her parents wouldn’t really like it if she got phone calls, but if I gave her my number, she’d call me.”

“I figured she probably wouldn’t, but I gave it to her. About a week later, she called. We’d have a regular conversation every so often, and it got rather steamy after a while, and I tried to talk her into going out on a date. Well, since she was only 15, apparently she couldn’t have me come by her place but she might be able to do something on a weekend if she could arrange to be out later.

“Her name was Ziggy, or at least, that’s what she called herself. So one day, she tells me that she’s going to be staying at a neighbor’s place, doing some babysitting, and if I want to come over that night and watch TV with her, I could.

“So I take two buses - I wasn’t old enough to get a license, then - and I get to the house. I knock on the door, and she answers, dressed as a typical teenybopper: tee shirt, no bra, blue jeans and sneakers. So I walk in, and she’s made popcorn. There’s some show on the TV, damned if I can remember what it was. We sit down and watch for a while, and I’m watching her. I move a little closer, and she doesn’t shrink back. I take her hand, and she leans her head on my shoulder. I decided to see what would happen, so slowly I leaned over, and tried to kiss her. She sat up, and turned toward me. I almost bumped into her nose, before I found out you’re supposed to turn your head. So we kissed, and did this for some time. I wasn’t sure what to do, so I tried putting my hands on her breasts. Fortunately I knew enough to be gentle or I might have killed the mood right then and there. Then I get the idea to slip her a little tongue, and this gets her really excited. So she breaks the kiss, and says, ‘Let’s go upstairs, they have a big bed there. The little brat is up in his room asleep, and even if he isn’t, the door can be locked. His parents won’t be back until late, and as long as you’re out by 11 I’m okay, so we’ve got lots of time.’ So I race her up the stairs, and we get in the room, where there’s a king-sized bed. She does lock the door, and we start taking our clothes off.

“After she’s naked, she goes around to the other side of the bed, pulls the covers off, and slides in. I get in on the close side, and slide in next to her. She reaches over and turns off the light, so it’s fairly dark, there’s just a small night light in the room. We continue to kiss, I’ve got my arms around a nice naked girl, and this goes on for a while, and I see if it’s okay to do anything. I push her over. I put my hands on her legs and spread them. Well, I haven’t heard her say no, so I figure it’s okay, I get on top of her, then I decide to kiss her a few more times, and then one time while I’ve got her tongue in my mouth, I decide to slip inside her.

“Realize this was during the time when sex was pretty much openly available, we could generally cure all known venereal diseases and the ones we did have weren’t fatal either. It was

a great time of innocence as far as getting laid was concerned, and so for a lot of people, it was perfectly reasonable to have sex bare with someone you didn't know.

“So anyway, I reach down, find where her opening is, move my dick there, and slide into her. She feels really good, so nice and warm, and tight around my dick, and fortunately she's nice and slick.

“She breaks the kiss, and says, ‘Goddammit, don't you know you're supposed... oh, hell, just finish fucking me.’

“The way she said it made me worry, ‘Was I supposed to use something?’

“She shook her head. ‘No.’ She smiled. ‘Actually I'm taking an acne medication that my parents don't know is also a birth control pill. If I wasn't, I'd have told you before you got into bed that you have to use a rubber. Just go ahead and finish this, I can't very well tell a guy to stop once he gets started.’

“So I continue moving, up and down, inside her, and I got thinking she seemed to like it when I was kissing her, so I did. It must have excited her a bit, because she became very responsive and actually started moving under me. But that didn't last long, because maybe a minute or two later I came.

“So I roll off her, and she says, ‘Look, I know it hurts when a guy gets excited and can't get off, so I guess I can understand why you want it so bad, but don't you know you're supposed to do something to me first? How am I supposed to come if you don't do me before you fuck me?’

“I almost started to ask her what she meant, so I said, ‘What...’ and almost said, ‘do you mean it hurts when a guy doesn't get off?’ then I caught myself. If some girl believes something that makes her more receptive to allowing a guy to get laid, I'm not going to tell her otherwise. So I caught myself. ‘What was I supposed to do?’ I said.”

Diane looks at him and smiles, “You mean it doesn't hurt if a guy doesn't get to come after he gets a hard on? I'm shocked!”

“Yeah, I'll bet you are.”

“246, maybe you're not the type to manipulate girls to get them into bed, but I think almost every girl hears that story, and the ones that are nice and don't know any better fall for it.”

“Oh, I see. Did you?”

“I'm not telling. Finish your story, this one's actually interesting.”

“Let's see. I said, ‘So what was I supposed to do?’

“She looked at me funny, ‘How should I know? I'm not a guy, I don't know what to do when you give a girl head, I just know that if you don't, I don't come. Is this the way you fuck every girl?’

“So I told her the truth. ‘I don't know, this was the first time I ever had sex.’

“Well, I think I shall remember the look on her face for all eternity, because I remember it to this day. She was plainly shocked, and she became a lot less mad. ‘Oh, I'm sorry! I just figured, you were so good looking, that you'd probably had lots of girls before, and you'd be pretty good in bed. I mean, how old are you?’

“‘I'm 16.’ I said. I think I'd told her this before, because she told me how old she was, which I already knew.

“Well, I'm 15 and I've had about twelve or fifteen guys since I started at 13½. I had

them using rubbers, only it was always a problem getting them to use them. Something about it makes it not feel as good. Then one guy tells me to tell my mom I'm having trouble with acne, and I need to get a prescription, then tell the doctor to give me an acne prescription that will also regulate my periods. Which it does by being a birth control pill as well, but my parents don't know it.^{xxix} Apparently a lot of girls use it as a control for acne and to regulate their periods even if they're not having sex. So I started taking those, and I haven't had to worry about a guy knocking me up when we fuck. And he was right, it's more fun this way, even when I don't come, I still like the warm splashy feeling when a guy comes inside me. And the guys apparently like being able to come inside me and not having to pull out when they come or right after they do when they use a rubber. Look, what we can do is, I'll give you a chance to figure out what to do, and maybe we can do this again. It wasn't too bad, you did kiss me while we were fucking and I liked that. We can..'

"A loud pounding interrupted her. 'Oh shit, the little brat woke up. Well, you'd best get dressed, I'm probably going to have to let him out for a while, and you can't take a shower, they'd notice if the bathroom was all fogged up, so go back and sit on the couch until I can get him back in bed, then we can try again, okay?'

"Well, I was all for that, so I got up, put my clothes back on, and went out to the living room. I still can't remember what movie it was, but she's chasing this little rugrat, about 4 years old, finally catches him, and tickles him a bit, then takes him back to his room. She comes back a few minutes later, and sits down, 'Whew! I have to stop for a moment. I told him he's supposed to be asleep, I let him have his bear and a drink of water, but I told him he'd have to stay in his room and not make noise. Cute little fella even if he reminds me of my bratty little brother. Anyway, I'll let you try doing me here on the couch, and if you can figure out how to make me come, then we'll go upstairs and we can fuck again. So unzip me and take a look.' I get her pants and her panties off, and I try to guess what I'm supposed to do. I try using my finger on her, and I think I'm a little too hard, because she says, 'your nails hurt.' So I'm more careful, and as luck would have it, I try using my finger and I stroke her G-spot. Oh, this, she really enjoys, 'Oh God, oh God that does feel good, keep doing that!' which I get to do for maybe ten or fifteen seconds, and she's moaning, 'oh, keep that up for about 5 minutes and I'll definitely let you fuck me again! Oh, oh oh...' before there's a knock on the door. 'Oh fuck!' she cries out. So we more-or-less straighten everything back, she gets her jeans back on and gets up to answer the door. At first, I was afraid it was going to be her parents or the parents of the toddler she'd just locked up. As it turns out, it's some other pimply-faced kid, like me. 'I know I'm early, but I wanted to... Who's he?' he says, pointing at me.

"Well, you said you wanted to date other girls, so I'm doing the same thing! I wasn't expecting you here before 11:30.'

"Now I understood why she said I had to leave by 11. Well, I'm not complaining, I got to fuck some hot little strumpet who would have let me fuck her again if her boyfriend hadn't shown up early. But, since boyfriends can be possessive, I decided I'd better leave before he decides to do something. 'Look, I'd better go,' I said, and I tried to walk past him. Well, I guess her boyfriend could smell it on me, because he said, 'Did you just fuck her?'

"I probably should have just lied, and said 'no,' then left. 'Yeah,' I said. 'I didn't know she had a boyfriend.' 'Well you do now, so get lost!' Or maybe he said, "...and fuck off!" I don't remember. I do remember that he proceeds to push me out the door. Big mistake.

“I was in the military the last two times I was born - although I wouldn’t know that until after I died - and as luck would have it, I was an ‘army brat’ in that life. Which means that I got a lot of exposure to other cultures, including ones where kids learn to fight at a young age. So I had learned. Fortunately, I learned how not to injure someone, or it might have been worse. As he tried to shove me, I grabbed his hand, hooked my leg under his, and pulled. He went down like a sack of potatoes. ‘Don’t ever do that again,’ I said. She immediately went to him, then she turned to me, and said, ‘I think you’d better leave.’ So I did.

“A couple days later, she calls me, to tell me that her boyfriend had decided that he only wanted to see her, so she wouldn’t be able to see me any more. She also said that if she ever broke up with him again, she might want to get together again. I said, ‘Okay,’ and I hung up. I never heard from her again in the six months before we moved again.

“I did learn one thing. I knew that if I wanted to make girls interested in having sex with me more than once, I’d have to know how to, as she put it, ‘do things to them.’ So I learned. I spent so much time in the library reading books about sex that I remember to this day the Dewey Decimal number for sex books: 612.6.”

Chapter 170

“... I think I’m measurably stupider...”

“Fine, that was when you were almost the same age as her and it’s apparently okay. Now, why do you object over it in this case?”

“Because I think that when older men have sex with young girls it’s usually exploitive in nature.”

“And how old is Joan?”

“Uh.”

“Exactly. I mean, I’ve known Jack has a weakness for young girls, so he has to figure if I don’t object that it’s not a problem. Really, 246, do you think I would do that or allow my husband to do that when it might be abusive or dangerous to some girl? We have a daughter of our own, we expect her to find a nice boy some day, and we would never allow her to be used by some older man when she wasn’t ready. Or any man or boy. Jack has to figure that if I’ve said it’s okay, that we know that she’s reasonably aware of what’s going on and what it means.”

“I see.”

“Now, again, to repeat something you’ve said before, ‘Sir, you didn’t answer my question.’”

“Let’s see, she was 48, so she was more than ten years older than I was when she died..”

“So that makes her about 210, by your comments?”

“Yeah, more-or-less.”

“And so, your reason for not wanting to let her have you is?”

“Oh hell, I guess I never thought about it. Again, I think I’m measurably stupider here on earth than upstairs.”

“Actually, you are.”

“What do you mean?”

“246, do you think we could fit 200 years of experiences in your head? We did something similar to what’s done in the case of Recycling. For example, where did you go to college on Earth? What was your original birthday? Where were you born the first time?”

“Uh, I don’t remember. That’s odd.”

“It’s not. What was your Social Security Number?”

“078-05-1120.”

“Now that’s funny. That’s the number Woolworth’s put in their wallets as a sample.”

“Just wanted to see if you knew about it.”

“We kept the last day you died in the real world. We left all the information you had about having sex, which probably included all of the times you had sex while you were alive, and the last twenty years of memory in the afterlife, plus all the meetings you had with any of the board members. Same for Joan, we cut what she knows way down.. All we gave her was the last year. Ask her. Since she’s not really planning to stay very long, she doesn’t need much. We had to pick and choose what to give you, and so we picked the most important things.”

“Oh.”

“Do you know the reason anyone is on the Board?”

“I figured it was people George knew.”

“No. Or rather, not exactly. Everyone who is on that board had something to do with development of the Afterlife. George was the one who figured out that we needed a method to

develop a way to save people's memories in computer storage. Dr. Quarles and Dr. Michaels figured out how to load memories into a clone and how to extract them. Hugo had figured out how to control people's minds. Mary figured out how to go backward in time. Mr. Allen because he was the first to notice that Analytical Symbolics was becoming stagnant and needed to change. And of course, you know what Monica did."

"But you haven't said what you did."

"I wondered if you would ask. I'm the one that figured a way to store human memories when encoded in a computer system such that the person could retrieve them. I'm also the one who figured out how to allow the person's 'essence' or 'soul' if you were, to be saved and restored back into a human brain. Basically, I figured out how to store people on the computer and retrieve them from it. Which would have been okay but would require people to watch others to catch them. This would have restricted the saving to perhaps all of us and a few thousand others, it wouldn't scale. Monica figured out how to do it without human intervention. It's like Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, but Strowger invented the automatic switch so people could dial calls themselves. So as far as the afterlife is concerned, I'm Bell and Monica is Strowger. So if I tell you something about the Afterlife and how it works, you can be sure I know what I'm talking about.

"When you get back to the Afterlife again, you'll find everything that happened here will integrate properly with everything you remembered before."

"Okay."

Chapter 171

“Then I could... rob liquor stores and gas stations for extra money.”

The next morning 246 gets up to eat, and finds little Joan sitting cross-legged on a chair, eating a bowl of cereal. “This tastes so good, I may have to go back to eating after I die. Plus I was never this limber before, when I was alive.”

“Joan, how far back do your memories go?”

“Let’s see, I think they left me with about six months when I was this age, plus the last year before I was reborn. I didn’t want to spend a lot of time restoring my memories when I only planned to stay here for a few days. I know they gave you a hell of a lot more because they knew that you’d want to enjoy your time here. I think they gave you the last fifteen or twenty years. I mean, if you pack and go on vacation, you don’t pack up your whole house and take it with you, do you?”

“No.”

“I mean, one of the things left out was that they gave me almost no moral sense. I basically have no conscience. That means I have no scruples and no inhibitions. I absolutely love sex and have no qualms about trying anything. I suggested to Diane that we could let her husband in on what’s going on. I’d pretend I was mad, kill him, and we’d let him go through the entire afterlife and then bring him back. She said that first, she didn’t think it was funny, and second, he might not want to come back.”

“That’s true.”

“I mean, I know you’re not supposed to kill other people, but I don’t feel it the way I feel not to hurt myself. It’s like knowing you shouldn’t pull the wings off flies because it’s cruel to them, but there’s nothing stopping me. It’s one thing I do realize I’m missing because I know how I was back when I was dead. There’s also another reason.”

“What’s that?”

“How do you expect to get back to the afterlife if for some reason you don’t have the nerve to kill yourself?”

“I think I can.”

“But what happens if you discover you can’t? You didn’t have to the last time because you got run over by a bus. That’s where I come in.”

“Oh, you mean you’ll kill me?”

“Yeah, if you need it. Plus, since I don’t have any scruples, I know I can kill myself without hesitating. Or I can do whatever is necessary. Did you ever see the movie *The Last Boy Scout*?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Well, what happens it, there’s this scene where these guys have Bruce Willis knocked out and he’s in the back seat of their car, and a police officer walks up to one of them, and asks them if anything is wrong, and he says, ‘Yes, officer, there are too many bullets in this gun,’ and blows the guy away.

She giggles. “Damn, it, 246, the really horrible thing is I think that would be fun to try. Isn’t that terrible?”

“I suppose!”

“Goddamn it, 246, I’m a police officer! I’m not supposed to be cheering on the bad guys!”

“As you said, you don’t have a conscience. Once we get back, you can feel bad about it then. As long as you’re not going to do it, it’s just an idea.”

“Yeah, I know. The only thing that bothers me is that I might get caught and *not* executed, and I’d have to spend life in prison.”

“What about the poor bastard you killed?”

“Who cares? If there’s no afterlife he dies dead; it wouldn’t have mattered anyway. If he is tied in to ours or whatever the equivalent is here, he dies and gets to bang lots of hot women. Or men, if that’s his choice. I see you’re finished. Let’s go back and fuck.”

“Uh, Joan, I kinda don’t feel right about screwing a 15-year-old.”

“Oh that again. Look, I’m not really 15, we both know it. So, I mean, all we’re doing is two adults having funsex, it’s just turns out one of us has a really young hot body. I mean, I’ve been hoping I’d be able to fuck you for real, and now I have the opportunity. Come on, 246, I wanna take you to bed and fuck your brains out. I can’t wait to get laid again. Look, do you really think anyone is going to know what we’re doing?”

“No.”

“Besides, if it did get figured out, I’d simply scream rape, when the cop pulled his gun on you, he won’t be suspecting anything from me, I’d punch him in the nuts, grab his gun and send him to his reward. Then I could go out and rob liquor stores and gas stations for extra money. Maybe I could do it more than once for extra practice. Might be fun to see which way more brains spurt out, if they’re shot in the forehead, the side of the head or back of the head.”

“That’s it, exactly.”

“What?”

“You basically have no concern over the feelings of anyone else.”

“Why should I?”

“Because that is what defines a conscience.”

“Oh.”

“If you’re not sure whether to do something, consider whether the other person would like it if you did it to them. If you think about whether the other person would like it if that was done to them, would you like it under the same circumstances? Use that rule and you’ll do okay.”

“In that case, let’s go back to bed and fuck. I know you’ll like it, and if what you said is true, then you should be willing to take me back since I do like it.”

“Oh Christ, I just set myself up.”

Arriving in his bedroom, Joan strips and encourages 246 to undress faster. “Goddamn it, 246, I’m horny and I want to fuck! Strip faster.” He finally gets undressed. Joan gets into bed, and slides over. 246 gets into bed, at which point, Joan pushes him down, gets on top of him and begins kissing him, and trying to French him. Like any normal man, 246 gets a hard-on as a result of this. Joan notices this, mounts his organ, and slides him inside. Even 246 is amazed at how pleasurable and tight she is. She begins to move up and down on him for about 30 seconds, then stops and says, “Roll me over and do long, deep pounding on me, I absolutely love it.”

So he does. As he begins moving inside her, she begins moving to match him. This continues for a few minutes, until he comes and spurts into her. She laid back, and says, “Now that was great, I can’t wait to do it again. That was even better than what that son-of-a-bitch Jack did to me.”

“Huh?”

“Yeah, he popped my cherry. Bastard probably enjoyed it, and it hurt like hell. The only reason I’m only a little mad is I came like crazy while he was doing it, and I know it’s not his fault, if I want him to fuck me, I have to have him pop my cherry.”

“Uh huh.”

“I think I may get revenge on him. I told him the truth, knowing he’ll never believe it. I told him I believe in reincarnation, before I was born I was a police chief of a major city and had over a hundred lovers. What I didn’t tell him it was ‘over a hundred’ by a factor of five. He didn’t believe much of what I said, if I told him that during the average year I fucked over 500 men he’d never believe it. I also told him that when he dies, we’ll all get together for sex, and that Diane will have an important role in heaven.”

“Cute. Reminds me of what I did when I was on our earth. I stopped a bank robbery at the very same bank Leroy robbed when he was killed. And as it turned out, one of the people committing the robbery was a relative of his. I told the reporter the truth, that I was on vacation from the Afterlife.”

“246, speaking of Leroy, I’m glad that it was you around to get relief. If we were in the Afterlife, and I was as horny as I am now, I’d have fucked Leroy. Hell, I’d do it now if I thought he’d be able to do what he did when he raped what’s her face, I didn’t take her name with me.”

“Anita.”

“Yeah, if I thought Leroy could pound on me for 45 minutes, I’d be riding his ass right now. Well, not his ass, his dick, you know what I mean.”

“Yes.”

“I’m tempted to have Lynn or Diane give you another hard on so you could fuck me again, that was fun and I came like crazy. Knowing that it’s better up there, I specifically had them not include any memories of what I did in bed there so I could enjoy it a lot while we’re here. Maybe I can find some older guy who can get it up, I understand the older ones take a lot longer to come than a young guy does. A younger man can really pound on me, which I like too, so I guess there are trade-offs.

“But anyway, now I can tell Jack he doesn’t have to worry.”

“About what?”

“I’ve now fucked every guy here: You, George, him and Wilfred. So none of you can report what happened with him without also going to jail. I think he was worried a little. Not that anyone’s going to say anything, but it might make him feel better. On the other hand, it might be better to let him continue to feel bad in view of it hurting the first time. Yeah, I think I’ll go with that, it seems like more fun.”

Chapter 172

“He was...one of those... who enrich our lives by their existence...”

“...And so, I have asked his brother to speak a few words on his behalf.” Some applause occurs.

“Thank you. We are here today to honor the memory of a man, a good man, who became a special man because of an extraordinary act.

“But what is a man? Is it merely someone of the male gender? Is it something more than that? I think it is, and I think that the dearly departed was clearly up to the standard. When I say a man, I mean it in the more formal sense of being a gentleman, a man of honor. And I believe my brother was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. He was a real man. Not some guy with a ‘macho’ swagger, not one of those skirt-chasing Lotharios, but a man in the highest sense of all: those who enrich our lives by their existence, and the lives of those whom they come in contact.

“We know of at least three people with whom he came in contact. Those three people are here today with us now, and were it not for the actions of my brother, they might not have been.

“I would like to tell you all a story by one of his favorite writers, that by coincidence corresponds very closely with the last act of my brother’s life, as it corresponds with the last moments of the lives of three people decades ago.

“One of my brother’s favorite writers was Robert A. Heinlein. Little did he know that we would someday be able to use something Heinlein wrote to speak of an act of courage of his. I would like now to read to those of you assembled here from one of Heinlein’s stories, about a tramp, a train, and an unparalleled act of heroism. The story goes like this:

“I said that ‘Patriotism’ is a way of saying ‘Women and children first.’ And that no one can force a man to feel this way. Instead he must embrace it freely. I want to tell about one such man. He wore no uniform and no one knows his name, or where he came from; all we know is what he did.

“In my home town sixty years ago when I was a small child, a thing happened which made a permanent impression on me. My family lived in Kansas City then, and my mother and father used to take me and my brothers and sisters on the street car line to Swope Park almost every Sunday afternoon in good weather. It was a wonderful place for kids, with picnic grounds and lakes and a zoo. But through the park runs--or did run, then--a railroad track, the Katy line. There were a half a dozen places where one could cross the track on foot.

“One Sunday afternoon a young married couple were walking in Swope Park and started across those tracks. She apparently did not watch her step, for she managed to catch her foot in the frog of a switch to a siding and could not pull it free. Her husband stopped to help her. Nothing to panic about, there were no trains in sight and that line carried only a couple of trains a day.

“But she found that she could not pull it out even with her husband’s help--and there was no one else around. They both worked away at it for several minutes when a stranger came along, a man, and now all three of them strained and pulled. But try as they might they could not get her foot loose.

“No luck--and now they heard a train coming. Out of sight around the curve a train whistled.

Too late to flag it down--too late to do anything--save continue trying to get her foot out of there. Of course both the husband--and the stranger who had happened along--could have saved themselves easily. But they didn't. Neither gave up, both men kept trying and were still trying as the train hit them.

"The wife and the stranger were killed at once; the husband lasted just long enough to tell what happened and died before he could be moved.

"The woman had no choice. The husband had a choice but acted as a husband should. But what of the stranger?

"No one would have blamed him if he had jumped clear at the last moment at which he could have saved himself. After all, in sober fact, the woman could not be saved--it was too late. She was not his wife, not his responsibility--she was a total stranger; we don't know that he ever learned her name.

"But he didn't jump back. He was leaning over, pulling at this stranger's leg with all his strength when the locomotive hit him. He used the last golden moments of his life, the last efforts his muscles would ever make, still trying to save her.

"I don't know anything about him. I didn't see it happen and when the crowd gathered--amazing how fast a crowd can gather even in a lonely spot once an accident happens. My parents got me quickly away from there to keep me from seeing the mangled bodies. So all I really know about it is what I can recall from hearing my father read aloud the account in the *Kansas City Star*.

"I don't even know the stranger's name. The newspaper described him as about twenty-eight, I think it was, and a "laborer." Probably means "hobo" as he was walking along the tracks. It is possible that this married couple who died with him would never, under other circumstances, have met him formally, might not have been willing to sit down and eat with him.

"I don't know. I'll never know anything about him--except how he chose to spend the last five minutes of his short life . . . and how he elected to die.

"But that is really quite a lot and I've thought about it many times since. Why did he do what he did? What did he think about in those last few rushing minutes when the train bore down on them? Or did he think about anything save the great effort he was making? Was he afraid? If he was, what inner resources did he draw on to offset that fear with ultimate courage?

"We can't know. All we know is that, with no flags flying, no bands playing, no time to prepare his soul for the ordeal--he did it.

"The wife was killed, the husband was mortally injured and died later, the tramp was killed -- and testimony showed that neither man made the slightest effort to save himself.

"The husband's behavior was heroic. . .but what we expect of a husband toward his wife: his right, and his proud privilege, to die for his woman. But what of this nameless stranger? Up to the very last second he could have jumped clear. He did not. He was still trying to save this woman he had never seen before in his life, right up to the very instant the train killed him. And that's all we'll ever know about him.

"My brother did something similar. In the space of a few seconds, when it was clear that he could have chosen to save himself, he did not. He pushed one woman back, pushed another forward, and tossed her child clear before he was struck by a Metrobus. He saved three people

from certain serious injury, possibly fatal. And as I said, those three people are here with us now.

“Many of you may remember the flight of Air Florida 90 that crashed into the 14th Street bridge, and how only six of the 79 people on the plane survived. The sixth passenger, who was later identified as Arland D. Williams, Jr., passed the rescue lines to others whom he felt needed rescue more urgently than he did, and chose to save five others.

“I quote again from Robert Heinlein to refer to three men, an unknown tramp from decades ago, to Arland D. Williams, and to my brother Dos Quattro Seises, a few days ago, who all chose to make the effort to save the lives of other people, and who all paid the ultimate price in doing so.

246 looked up at the audience, and finished his speech. “*This* is how a man *dies*. This is how a *man*. . . lives!”

Chapter 173

“I don’t even think Black Widow spiders are as bad as I was.”

“Gee this is a nice hotel, I may have to have something like this back home.”

“Joan, you never were that concerned about this sort of thing when I knew you.”

“Being the way I am, I guess, I’m much more sensual - or is it sensuous - in noticing the finer things in life. I dunno, what would you call them back home, ‘the finer things in death,’ but since there isn’t really that much to be uncomfortable about there, so I guess I never thought about it. Speaking of uncomfortable, dammit I’m horny again, 246! Strip and let’s fuck.”

246 gets into bed with her, and once she’s ready, this time, she has sex the entire time with him on his back. As he is fructified, she stops and rolls him out of her, then gets out of bed.

“That was pretty good. I want to go pick up a few things, I need some money or credit cards. Of course, as horny as I am I could simply turn tricks for it, but I think I’ll be nice about it for now.”

246 tosses her his wallet, “Help yourself.” She removes some money and plastic out of the wallet, then leaves it on the table. She showers and gets dressed, then leaves the suite. About a couple hours later she returns with several bags, and a couple of steamer trunks, accompanied by bellhops who all leave as soon as they drop off the material. 246 watches with amazement.

“I am surprised not one of them even so much as hinted for a tip.”

“Oh, I took care of that already. I just told the concierge I wanted the three best bellhops to bring some stuff upstairs, and I’d give them each fifty bucks, in advance, to bring the stuff up and leave, fast. He had no problem finding them. Anyway, I want to get this stuff set up for the surprise.” She wheels the cart with the trunks into the other bedroom, and comes back for the bags. Then once she has moved everything into the other bedroom, she decides to move back into bed (with 246, of course). He proceeds to perform the usual rituals to ensure she has a marvelous time, then he climbs on top of her and slides inside. Her associated noises and movements with him indicate she is also enjoying this as well. Finishing up with him, she looks up at him and says, “I’m going to finish this since you’re no good to me right now, so if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to be busy for another hour or so.” After he showers and changes, 246 decides to go into the living room of the suite and read the newspaper.

45 minutes later, 246 notices that Joan is putting a bunch of boxes in different places around the room. She then starts to run wires from box to box. She stops, then says, “Well, if I’ve done this right, the sound effect should be perfect. Anyway, 246, I’m horny again. Actually, I never was *not* horny, but I had to get this finished first. Let’s go back to bed.”

So they do, and when she decides she wants it, pushes him over and proceeds to slide up and down on him. “Uh, when you’re about to come, roll me over that way, I want to try something.” So they continue for a while and 246 notices, so he pushes her over and continues what she started, then again, he is fructified. And, as is sometimes the case in the animal kingdom - and quite often in insects - when the male has been fructified the female takes advantage of it.

Joan reaches down under the bed, and removes a large sling blade, similar to a barber’s shaving razor. Bringing it up, she comes across and slices 246 across the throat. 246 grabs his throat, trying to talk, but can’t. At this point, 246 passes out. She pushes him off of herself, then grabs his arms and pulls him off the bed, saying, “Jesus, 246, I never realized how heavy you

are.” She then drags him along to the balcony next to the bedroom and pushes him over the railing.

She walks back into the suite, picks up the telephone, dials 9, then 911 for the local police. She identifies the hotel and the suite number. “He raped me and I fought him off, and I threw him off the balcony. I guess we need the police here.”

A short time later, the police show up. As the first officer enters the room, she grabs his arm, spins him around, and stabs him with a large knife. She then removes his service revolver, puts the gun to the side of the head of the second officer to enter, and pulls the trigger. She then turns and puts a bullet right through the forehead of the third officer who entered the suite, but was unprepared for the sudden outbreak of violence. The next officer who entered was about to pull his service revolver, but is unable to do so, as Joan presses a button on the remote she had strapped to her waist.

Newspaper and television reports carried all over the U.S. and Canada the following day estimate the blast, which took out the entire suite, the floors above and below, as well as most of five hotel rooms next to it, was equivalent to more than ten sticks of dynamite. Which it was. Joan had simply bought several 5-gallon cans of gasoline, which she had the excuse that she was buying it to refill a lawnmower. But it wouldn't have mattered, even if it was illegal for someone under 18 to buy gas (which it wasn't), she simply used a self-service pump and used a credit card. But it wouldn't have mattered much. Generally, it's hard to get permission to purchase a single stick of dynamite, but buying 5 gallons of gasoline - even one gallon has much more explosive power than a stick of dynamite - requires nothing but money.

246 again arrives in the reception area of the Welcoming Department, as does any other typical Incoming. Thinking about it, instead of choosing to pick up another girl, he decides to wait for Joan. He then realized he'd better check where she's going, because of the policy never to send an incoming and the person who murdered them to the same location, she might be in another reception room. He goes over to a display console, determines where he is and discovers that she is also scheduled for arrival to the same room. He'd have to see to it that he sent a thank you to Grim Reaper for doing a good job.

A few minutes later, she does arrive. “Wow, that was exciting! Hey, 246, I hope you're not upset.”

246 looks at her. “Uh, Joan, if it's any consideration, I just felt it was a bit sudden.”

“Okay, because I want you to take me to bed first before I get my memories back, so I can see how different it is here and now versus how it was a few minutes ago.”

“Sure.”

“Central Computer, fax me and 246 to his apartment.” Nothing happens. “Oh shit. Central Computer restore my privileges. Central Computer, fax me and 246 to his apartment.” Now, they both disappear.

She tells the computer to discard their clothes, then quickly moves to get into bed, and 246 follows. “Joan, you're not going to pull any funny stunts or try things like using me to do endless orgasm on you, are you?”

“Oh, well, I was thinking about it but since you're my friend I won't, okay?”

“All right.” With that, he proceeds to go down on her. She starts to moan. “Normally I'd at least give you an orgasm first, but all I'm going to do is enough to get you wet so I can get inside

you.” He does so, then discovers that it has only taken her a few seconds to become fully lubricated, so he stops, climbs on top of her, spreads her legs further apart, then, “And this is for cutting my throat,” he says, as he slides into her as fast, deep and hard as he can, then proceeds to vigorously pound her mercilessly, with very fast, deep, short strokes. What she finds surprising is that while she’s not hurting as she would expect, actually she’s not feeling anything. After a couple of minutes of this, he whispers in her ear, “Let me come,” so she does, then he stops and rolls out of her.

“I had the computer turn off all your feeling. Maybe I was wrong to do it to you that way but I was mad about it. But I just realized that it’s better I got it out of my system now than maybe be mad at you for a long time. I…”

“Stop. I get it, you’re right. You wanted to show me exactly what it’s like when someone gets fun or pleasure out of someone else at their expense. I understand it now.”

“Okay, I’m glad you get it. Anyway, I’ll do this the normal way now, so we can both enjoy it, Okay?” She nods her head.

This time, while he does vigorously slide into her again, she definitely notices what he’s doing, and screams out. As he continues moving inside her, although not as fast as before, she again cries out, only this time in words, “Oh God, this is fantastic!”

Over the next few hours they continue pleasuring each other, in various positions. At one point, he says to her, “Let’s get out of bed for a moment.”

“Oh, what?”

“Let’s have you re-integrate your memory so you have everything back to when you left plus the last ten days.”

“Oh yeah, go ahead.”

“Watch the TV for a moment. Central Computer, restore all of my privileges. Central Computer, execute upon Joan 20319, stored procedure Joan-1, authorization 00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246.”

She stands there with a “thousand mile stare”- or perhaps I would call it a ‘two thousand kilometer stare’ - on her face for about a minute, then her facial appearance returns to that of how she was the last time she was dead as opposed to how she looked when she was 15. She comes out of the trance, has the most horrified look on her face. drops down on her knees, and begins retching. Since she’s not alive and doesn’t have anything to vomit, all she can do is have an attack of dry heaves and feel bad for a while.

After she calms down, she looks up. “246, be sure, did you take out all your mad on me?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“Well, if you hadn’t I’d want you to go ahead and take it out now so I don’t have to worry about it later.”

“No, now that you’re back I realize you understand what you did.”

“I thought of a way you could have been even nastier to me and still not hurt me.”

“What’s that?”

“You could have re-integrated my memories at the same instant you had me make you come. Then you could have both had the pleasure of getting orgasm from me and not letting me feel anything, but also be having it when the ‘whammy’ I felt when my memory came back and I was

sick to my stomach because of what I did to you.”

“Uh, I think that would be close to on the level of rape. I simply wanted to do to you exactly what you did to me, had fun at my expense. I didn’t want to hurt you, and in fact if I knew that re-integrating your memory was going to affect you that badly I’d have warned you.”

“Oh. 246, despite your quirks, sometimes I think you might be a little too nice. Well, tell me, what bothered you the most? Was it that I killed you, or was it something else?”

“No, it wasn’t that you killed me, I figured you were going to, eventually. It was the way you did it. If you had, say, told me beforehand that you wanted to kill me suddenly to see how I reacted, and asked if that was okay, that would have showed me that you respected my feelings. Or if you had said you wanted to blow the suite up, and asked me if I’d prefer a different way of dying, that’s another thing. But this showed that you didn’t care about anything but yourself. So that’s why I fucked you the way I did, to show you what it’s like when someone cares about nothing but themselves.”

“I see, and I understand better. I’m thinking, I don’t think of the thousands and thousands of times we’ve had sex, that you’ve ever done an ‘angry fuck’ on me. I’ll bet you’ve never done that before, turn off a woman’s ability to feel, have you?”

“No, normally I don’t have sex with women I’m angry with. In a way, I’m almost sorry I did, because it sort of feels like rape, doing that to you. But I didn’t want to hurt you, although I was tempted for a moment.”

“246, I guess I can honestly say I’m glad you ‘sort of raped’ me as payback for the way I did that, cutting your throat right after you came. If it had been the other way around and I was a man and you were a woman who had done that to me I’d probably have punched you in the face. Or maybe I might have done worse, and not just turned off your ability to feel but maybe raped you as well. Like you said when Barney went on trial, if someone was in a sexual game and it went too far, you could accept that was temporary insanity rather than a complete disrespect for women. I realize just how crazy I drove you, the fact that you were as mad as you were with me, you care enough about me that you couldn’t hurt me despite what I did to you.

“Question: did you know what those boxes were that I placed around the room?”

“I guessed you planned to blow up the place after you sliced my throat, would that be right?”

“Yeah. I constructed an ersatz fuel-air explosive type bomb, or rather, several of them wired together. Vaporized gasoline is more explosive than common explosives. About the only thing stronger would be ANFO. But a young girl can get away with buying a can of gasoline, she’s picking it up to refill a lawnmower, it would be harder to explain buying diesel fuel and fertilizer. Based on the look on the police officer’s face when the bomb exploded he was probably terrified. I’m considering apologizing but I think maybe it’s better if he doesn’t know who did it.”

“So that’s what made you sick to your stomach?”

“No, come to think of it, not really.”

“Were you trying to puke because of how you killed me?”

“No, that’s not what bothered me, that’s to be expected. Since we do continue after we die, it doesn’t really matter how our lives end, and since neither of us was planning to survive to old age, either we had to commit suicide or one of us would have to kill the other. Come to think of it, I’m not even upset about the innocent people I killed blowing up the suite or the cops I shot, again, it’s not like I’m depriving them of their existence. No, it’s how ruthlessly bloodthirsty I

was and utterly lacking in self control. I mean, like I said before, I knew that those things were wrong, but I did it anyway because I didn't feel that it was wrong the way I do now. It was not only that I was an amoral wretch, but that I enjoyed how it felt to do those nasty things. I don't even think Black Widow spiders are as bad as I was. I mean, I think normal people don't get those sort of feelings because their conscience stops them before they would."

"Yeah, think I told you that."

"Oh well, I did find out one thing I wanted to know."

"What's that?"

"I found out which bleeds more, a shot to the temple or a bullet through the forehead."

Chapter 174

“Now, that was a nice touch.”

Wilfred walked into the police station. He went up to the desk sergeant. “Can I help you?”

“Uh, yeah, I think I need to report a suicide. Maybe a murder-suicide, I’m not sure.”

“I’ll get someone to speak with you.”

“Thank you.”

“I’m Detective Johnson. How can I help you?”

“I need to report a potential suicide. I even suspect the guy is going to kill someone else. I don’t know if we can stop him but it might be worth the effort.”

“What’s his name?”

“Wilfred Simmons.”

“And you are?”

“For the moment, I’d rather not say, I don’t want him or anyone else to find out and potentially go after my family for turning him in, okay? I’ll let you know a little later but right now I’m scared.”

“Well, all right. Do you know where he is?”

“I have a pretty good idea. Look, can we go back to the squad room? I’m afraid someone might recognize me.”

“Oh, sure.”

Wilfred sees whom he wants to talk to, that he made sure was there before he came in. He also saw the man had the one item on him that he wanted to take from him. “Oh, there you are! I’ve heard so much about you! It’s so nice to meet you in person!” He holds out his hand as to shake it.

The man offers his hand, and Wilfred takes it and shakes. “And your name is?”

“Oh yes. My name is Wilfred Simmons.” Detective Johnson is shocked for a moment but doesn’t react fast enough. Wilfred then takes his left hand and cold-cocks the man whose right hand he is holding, knocking him down. He immediately goes for the man’s holster and gets his gun. Pointing it at him, Wilfred turns to speak to Detective Johnson, “Stay where you are for the moment.” Turning back to the man from whom he stole his gun, he speaks. “You don’t seem to learn, do you? I guess one beating wasn’t enough, maybe you need another.”

“What do you want?”

“I think it’s time for you to take early retirement. I’m going to help.” Wilfred points the gun at the man’s knees, and shoots him once in each one. He then turns back to Detective Johnson. “Don’t move! I’ve got no quarrel with you and if you behave yourself you’ll get out of this uninjured. He’s pulled the same stunt too many times, framing innocent people for crimes they didn’t commit. So I’ve decided to make him stop, since the last beating didn’t.” He turns back to the man lying on the floor, crying in pain. “You know what, I’ve changed my mind, Detective Engel, I’ve decided not to kill you after all. This will be far, far worse. Detective Johnson, do you remember I said I wanted to report a suicide?”

“Oh please, don’t!”

“Yeah, you guessed it. Mine.” Wilfred points the gun at his own head and pulls the trigger.

A few days later, 246 would meet with Wilfred. “He was on light duty after I beat him up. Interesting that you shot him in the knees after I had busted him in them with a baseball bat. Now, that was a nice touch.”

“Yeah, that was kind of fun. I kind of agree with you. There were a couple of people who had committed murders the police didn’t know about that he framed, but there were at least 3 people who hadn’t. Some of them did some bad things, but none of them really deserved to die, and it was wrong for him to do that. And your beating didn’t seem to let him learn anything. It’s far worse to let him live, if he died he’d be coming here and enjoying the afterlife. Now, he’s going to spend months in severe pain, probably have to go through several operations for knee replacement, more therapy to learn to walk again, and he’ll have an even worse limp if he can even walk again. And since I shot him while he was on duty, it’s worker’s comp and the Police Department has to pay all the costs of his medical treatment plus continue to pay his salary, so it’s not like I’m even costing him anything, he’s getting off pretty easy compared to some of the people he framed for murder. I have a suggestion I think you’ll like.”

“What’s that?”

“You like puns, so from now on we make Engel the Butt Monkey of the Afterlife, if he stays a cop and doesn’t quit. The next time someone who knows about the Afterlife is in that area, they give him another taste of ‘police brutality’ and smash him again. If he’s got bodyguards they get banged up too for being in the way. But we absolutely refuse to injure him enough to kill him or cause him to die, we’re being brutal and he doesn’t get to stop suffering.”

246 snickered. “‘Police brutality,’ I like that.”

Chapter 175

“I’m the Vice President and General Manager of Heaven!”

246 went down to the reception room, as one of the women he had on his list had just showed up as an incoming. He walked in to hear various curses.

“Goddamn son of a bitch motherfucker! I can’t believe this happened to me.”

“Diane, calm down, you knew sooner or later you were going to die.”

“246, when I was thinking it might be 50 years before I got to see you again, I didn’t expect it to be only 1 ½.”

“It probably would have been a lot more than that here, if it wasn’t for the fact that for most of the time our two worlds have been bonded together to handle all the new processing for the suggestions I made as well as the work to build the new Afterlife. I think it’s only been about the last two months that the continuous link was severed. So, call it about three years.”

“Yeah, I know that. I’m just ticked off. I was out skiing with Jack, we were sort of celebrating, I missed a curve and smacked into the top of a tree. Once I saw the *Tunnel of Light* I knew I’d been killed.”

“Well, anyway, why not enjoy the time you’re here? Even if you decide to immediately go back it will take at least a couple of months to decant your clone. Hell, you may not want to go back. Remember what you told Joan about your husband when she suggested letting him see this place a little early?”

“She told you about that? Wow, I figured that if we left all her moral sense behind she’d have no problem killing you or herself, but I never realized how much fun it would be for her to be a total psychopath with no scruples. I remember you told me how she puked when she arrived and got her moral sense back. Oh, I have something to tell you, but don’t tell her.”

“Okay.”

“I had spoken to George and we had decided specifically not to put any moral sense into her, but we also did a little experiment, just in case. I didn’t want her getting mad at my husband when he popped her cherry, so I did a little finagling with her personality. First she’d be unable to kill a woman, so that way Lynn and I were safe around her. She had no scruples about killing any man unless it was someone who had consensual sex with her. Once she had willingly had sex with a man she would be incapable of killing him. So she could never have killed you, my husband, or George while she was in our universe. We removed all restrictions when she left our world and transported into yours. Otherwise when she was there she wouldn’t have been able to kill you, which basically would have defeated the purpose of sending her along with you.”

“Well, that does explain why she was ticked off at Jack even though she apparently liked what he was doing when they had sex.”

“Basically we fixed it so that she’d have the ability to have a killing rage at anyone if she wanted to, and specifically if she was hurt by them, but we disabled it for anyone she had sex with. Otherwise she probably would have broken Jack’s neck the instant he got inside her.”

“That wouldn’t have been a good idea, even if he did decide to come back.”

“No, it wouldn’t have. But as far as this is concerned, I’m just mad because I had some great ideas I wanted to try, and now I can’t do them.”

“So, take some time off, then go back if you really think it’s that important. Or get someone

else to do it by your instructions. In any event, you wanted me to show you some things. Plus, we can set you up in the mini orgy you wanted to try.”

“Oh yeah. I guess I’m just a little pissed because I wasn’t expecting it. Does this happen much?”

“Extremely rare. You could only be this angry because you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that you would survive even after you died, so as a result you weren’t surprised. Most people - myself included - are just greatly relieved that they didn’t simply cease to exist when they die.”

“Oh.”

“Well, anyway, do you want to try your first computer command now that you’re actually here?”

“Oh yeah. Central Computer, fax both of us to 246's apartment.”

“Looks like Grim did it right. When Joan and I came back, he withdrew all our privileges until we each issued a command to restore them back. In your case, it looks like he did leave you with your basic privileges. Try issuing a restricted command.”

“Central Computer, isolate this room.”

“Unable to comply. User has insufficient current privilege. Reenable privileges to allow function.”

“Well, you’re right, 246, it looks like he did do a nice job on it, I can’t do anything that might be dangerous until I specifically want to allow myself to do so. So I guess I don’t have to worry about doing anything wrong with you while we’re in bed together.”

“It may be kind of stupid in view of what you’ve done, but do you want me to explain how to use your new body?”

“Oh sure, I’m going to be new at this since I’ve never really had one here.”

“Anyway, we need to set up climax privilege for you.” He holds up the note with the blank phrase space on it. “You need to think this, with the phrase you want to use in the blank so that the guy you’re with can come, so we know the computer can correctly read your mind.”

The computer responds with, “Command macro has been assigned.”

“Now, let’s see, how about we set your appearance about 20 years old or so? Or do you want to look older?”

“I’ll go with that.”

“First I’ll strip off all your clothes so you can see the difference. Oh, wait, I’ll do mine too. Central Computer, undress everyone in this room. Look in the mirror and watch. Central Computer, set age of Diane to 20 years and reduce body fat to 1%, authorization 00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246. ”

“246, if you were a plastic surgeon I’d say you were a magician. I don’t think I looked this good when I was 20 in real life.”

“Why, shucks, ma’am, it was nothing. Oh, but I need to do something else. Central Computer, call Leroy 504337.”

“Hi, 246, what’s up?”

“Leroy, I’m with an incoming and I want to do her without having her take me first, so I’m asking you for approval.”

“You’re asking me? Gee thanks, I’m very happy to hear that. I really appreciate you thought that highly of me. Under the circumstances I can’t see how you would mistreat any woman, so do anything you think is right.”

“Thanks. Central Computer, close connection.”

“Well, that’s interesting. Why didn’t you just ask me, 246?”

“You’re under a lot of stress just from dying, it’s not fair to expect you to approve what goes on when you’re the one it’s being done to. I mean, seriously, I think it would be very unlikely you’d report me for anything I’d do to you, so it’s probably better if I do confirm it with someone else. Besides, I’ve never really had the issue come up, it’s just force of habit that I’d ask if I did a woman with anything requiring privileges. I try to treat every woman I have with respect.”

“Oh, well that’s nice.”

“I mean, it’s not the point of asking someone else that’s important. It’s that I stopped for a moment to call it in because I realize it is someone else who has feelings and I thought about the fact that they have feelings too. Oh yes, speaking of feelings, I can do one other thing to really allow you to enjoy this, if you want.”

“Sure.”

“Central Computer, set sex drive of Diane to maximum, authorization 00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246.”

“Oh God! It’s like I’ve got heat lightning between my legs.”

“Okay, then, how about I make you feel better?”

“Please, yes!”

“Oh, oh, oh, oh, why did you stop?”

“I suspected I was overloading you. Remember, you asked me not to overload you.”

“I am surprised to find I wasn’t, I really enjoyed it. So keep going.”

A few minutes later, she changes her mind. “Oh, oh, oh, it’s good but, oh hell it’s fantastic but I want more, you can stop eating me and fuck me.”

“Diane, just one thing.”

“Uh, what? Ooh, that feels good too.”

“If I’m overloading you, tell me and I’ll slow down. But since you know how, don’t overload me, either, okay?”

“Oh sure. Yeeeow! Ooh, man that feels so good! I thought what you had done to me back on earth was terrific, and I figured this was going to be fantastic, but this is unbelievable! It goes way beyond anything I could have imagined! Oh yes, that feels nice when you come, too. Oh yes, I was hoping it would be like this, to feel a man still hard inside me even after he came. Yes, yes, yes, Yeeeow! That feels so goddam good it’s unbelievable!”

Some days later, Diane says to 246. “I’m not mad I died. Or rather, I’m not mad anymore. And I’m not going back anytime soon, I’ll let someone else take over my work in the real world. This has been more fun than even I could have imagined.”

“Do you want to try an Endless Orgasm?”

“You know, this has been so fantastic I never even thought about it. I mean, I often get bored if I’m doing the same thing, but all we did for the last few days was just the same ol’ man-on-top and sometimes I’d decide to do woman-on-top, but it was just so much fun that I wasn’t bored by it at all. I was right, though, I figured it would be a lot more fun having a man coming inside me many times. 246, can I expect to see you on a regular basis? I mean, I know you have other girlfriends, and I’m sure I’ll have lots of boyfriends once I find who the best guys here are, but will I see much of you?”

“Diane, I’ll be happy to see you anytime you want. But once you get busy I suspect you’ll have plenty of male attention to choose from.”

“True.” She laughs. “I just thought of something. I essentially have the authority of the Chairman, do I not?”

“As a matter of fact, you do. “

”The reason I was laughing was I thought of something. What is the status of the Administrator?”

246 laughed. “Oh yes. The Administrator serves at the pleasure of the Chairman. So would you like me to serve you some more pleasure, boss?”

“I would love that.”

Days later, she turns to him. “Are you just humoring me, or are you really interested in me this much?”

“You know, that’s right, I’ve usually gotten tired of a woman after a few days. I guess I really do care about you, Diane.”

“Oh, which reminds me, I should talk to George, maybe we can let my husband in on this. Can you page him for me? Better do it audio only so he can tap in quickly.“

”Sure. Central Computer, call Board of Directors.”

“In the mean time I should restore my own privileges. It’s a good thing they drop them temporarily when we die or you couldn’t have done those nice things to me since my privilege level exceeds yours. And we will have to give Grim a nice thank you, he did it perfect. Central Computer, restore all privileges to me, authorization 00001 XF Diane 000014.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“Hi, Nancy. Would you do an audio Armada Signal, I need to talk to George.”

“246, I’m glad you called. There’s something weird going on here.”

“What is it?”

“Well, it’s funny because I’ve never seen this message on my console before, it says ‘General Manager latency is zero, General Manager is fully resident.’ It just popped up a minute ago, it doesn’t indicate a warning or error, so if you hadn’t called I’d have just waited until I spoke to George and ask. Anyway, accepted for audio only, I...”

A series of tones went off. “The Chairman has received an Audio Armada Signal from 00000 Space Space Supervisor 000246. Do you wish to accept?”

“Central Computer, mute telephone. Diane, I think since you’re present in the Afterlife, it’s redirecting them to you. That’s probably what the message means. Do we tell her and what do we do?”

“I think I have an idea. Hit the audio.”

“Central Computer, unmute telephone.”

“Nancy, this is Diane.”

“Oh, Hi Diane.”

“I believe there is an emergency warning signal, which you were told never to use except in extreme emergency or you couldn’t reach the Chairman.”

“Uh, yeah.”

“I’m authorizing you to use it. Do you understand?”

“Uh, yeah. Activating.”

“Central Computer, hang up telephone.”

George teleports in. “246, what happened? Oh, hi, Diane, let me guess, since you were on, the system sent pages to you, and so it didn’t page me. I thought you were going on vacation with Jack?”

“Uh George, I’m not alive anymore.”

“What?!”

“You remember that Jack and I went skiing over the weekend that we left?”

“Yeah.”

“I missed a turn and crashed into a tree. It killed me.”

“Oh, that’s a damn shame.”

“Yes, isn’t it. It’s funny the way we can consider being dead as just an inconvenience.”

“Well, anyway, I can have them get your clone ready in a few weeks.”

“George?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve decided for the foreseeable future not to go back. But I think we should bring Jack in as a Zombie, let him know what’s going on, and let him take my place. I’m not saying that because I care about him, I know how important this project is to all of us, and I seriously believe he can do the job. I had been thinking about it for some time with his success in his latest projects, but I got killed before I could consider seeing about implementing the decision.”

“Okay. How long have you been dead?”

“I have no idea. I’ve been here about two or three weeks, I think. What day is it there, relative to when I left to go on vacation?”

“That’s why I thought it was strange. You called me about four hours ago from the slopes.”

“So it’s the same day?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, then, try calling Jack’s phone, see if he answers.”

“It’s ringing. I’ll tap it in but don’t say anything until we find out what he knows, we don’t want to frighten him.”

“Right.”

“Jack Egan.”

“Jack, how are you?”

“Hi, George, I’m glad you called. We’re afraid Diane might be hurt, she disappeared off the trail and they’re going to try to find her.”

“Jack, hold on a second. 246, I’m muted. Go ahead and tell him everything. I’m bringing you back on line so he can hear you, starting *now*. Jack, I have someone on the line who wants to talk to you.”

“Okay.”

“Jack, you know me as David, George has me on a three-way.”

“Hi, David.”

“Jack, I have some bad news for you. I have to tell you first, that I lied to you, and when I explain why, you will probably understand.”

“Uh, okay.”

“My name isn’t David Rollins. That’s the name of a friend of mine. My name is actually Supervisor 246. The reason I couldn’t tell you my real name was one you would not have

believed. I would like to tell you why, if you are willing to listen.”

“Uh, okay.”

“The reason I couldn’t tell you was that I was a visitor from another place, one you probably don’t believe in. Do you remember what Joan told you about herself the night she had you pop her cherry?”

“Uh, yeah, she said that she believed in rein... Oh my God. Are you trying to claim that you were a visitor from heaven?”

“Yes, something like that.”

“You know, this isn’t funny at all.”

“Jack, I have never been more serious. What I wanted to tell you is that your wife is dead. She made a wrong turn and crashed into the top of a tree.”

“George, I don’t know what kind of sick friend you have, but this isn’t one bit funny.”

George answers. “Jack, we’re not making jokes. We’re deadly serious. We...”

A voice in the background of the phone: “Mr. Egan, I’m sorry to have to tell you this but your wife is dead. We discovered her body in a tree.”

Jack screams out, “NO!” and begins sobbing uncontrollably.

“Jack? Jack? 246, I think Jack dropped his cell phone. I’m going to talk to him directly. Don’t say anything until I can get him back on the phone.” (“Jack? Jack, can you hear me?”)

“Leave me the fuck alone!”

(“Jack, please listen to me. I want to try to reach you and make you feel better. Look around, you’re not holding the phone, you’re hearing me in your head, now.”)

“Huh?”

(“Jack, I have certain powers including the ability to reach someone’s mind directly, and to hear their thoughts. I want to help you. Can you listen to me?”)

“Uh, yeah, I guess so.”

(“I want you to pick up the phone. “)

“Hello?”

“Jack, I just spoke to you in your mind a moment ago. I don’t want you to think you imagined that as a result of some insanity due to grief. I want you to understand and be aware of something. When people die, they don’t cease to exist. They do continue, in a wonderful place called the Afterlife. And we have the capacity to reach them. Your wife is there. Do you want to talk to her?”

“You’re kidding me.”

“Go ahead and tell him.”

“Jack?”

“Diane?”

“Oh Jack, I’m so sorry I got killed. I messed up, I took the turn too steeply and got launched into that tree. I want you to understand something, Honey, I’m still here, even though I’m dead. And what Joan told you is true, I have an important position here. I’m the Vice President and General Manager of Heaven!”

Over a period of several hours, George, 246 and Diane all convince Jack that (1) he isn’t crazy; (2) his wife is dead, but yes, he can reach her, and (3) they want him to take over her work running the equipment that manages the Afterlife as well as being the ruler of the planet it is

located on.

“Jack, honey, it’s a policy we have that we don’t recruit people, not even the spouses of people who work for us, unless they either have a skill we need or there’s a specific reason to do so. The only reason we’re recruiting you now is that we need someone we can trust to do this. Actually, it’s very similar to what you were doing before, ordering the construction of buildings and staff, the only difference being they’re designed for the efficient housing of computers rather than people.”

“This is all a lot to take.”

“Jack, it is possible, if we need to, for me to come back. I’m thinking that won’t be necessary, I can teach you everything you need to know to be able to handle most of the job in a few weeks, and you can learn the rest of what you need to know over time. Once you understand what is going on, I think you will find it more fun than anything you can imagine. Just consider, you don’t have to worry about what happens when you die. And you’re going to have a big part in how the Afterlife is operated. Just imagine, Jack, you’ll be Chief Executive of a company with 100,000 employees in twelve universes, has over 10 billion customers, and more assets than all of the entire Fortune 500 combined.”

Later, Diane discusses the ‘change in administration’ now that a member of the Board is resident in the Afterlife. “Uh George, another thing, we need to change the way Armada Signal works, because otherwise we can’t get you except by using the emergency pager, and then when there’s something routine, we can’t distinguish between the two.”

“Okay, but, since you’re there, how about we have petitions sent by the public in general sent to you, and from friends of mine and department heads can go to me?”

“Sounds like a good idea. How many times do you get actual calls from the public?”

“About 150 to 200 a year. Wouldn’t be that many except that most are people who have qualified for a general mind reading privilege, which requires I grant it to them since they’d have to be Board Certified because they might accidentally discover who I am. Or it’s someone who has qualified to be Board Certified for a different reason. Occasionally someone discovers a really bad mistake, sort of like what Wilfred did. Sometimes I’ll get a call from someone who thought they discovered a mistake, but it was misclassified because of someone else’s error. Those I thank the person even if they were wrong, for the simple reason that I want to encourage error reports from the public. If I didn’t have the severe penalty for false calls I’d probably get every crackpot in the Afterlife.”

Chapter 176

“... it looks like it’s pretty much unanimous...”

“So, anyway, I guess we’re ready to try this.”

“Who did we get to show up?”

“Not that again! It’s supposed to be ‘*whom* did we get to show up?’ Let’s see, Joan, Terry, Nancy, you, Royce’s other girlfriend Anise, Lee, Marcia and Erica. For the men there’s me, of course, Royce, Wilfred, Manny, who’s one of Anise’s other boyfriends, Chuck from favor management, Ralph and Ben who are two of our best Welcomers and my assistant Travis. I was going to invite Willis 309 - I think you’d have a lot of fun with him - but he turned me down; he doesn’t do multiples.”

”How did you decide who to pick... err, I mean whom to pick?”

“I’ve known all of these guys for at least a year or more, and I either know or I’ve spoken with, most of their girlfriends, to be sure that they know how to treat a woman nice, first. Second, they all agreed they’d be interested in trying a new kind of group sex thing, and that it wouldn’t bother them if it didn’t work right. I mean, I probably could have put together a group of a thousand or more couples, but I wanted to try a small, intimate group first. If it doesn’t work or we can’t get it to work right, it’ll be a hell of a lot easier to figure out why with eight couples than with eight hundred. I was going to invite David, but like Willis he’s admitted that he’s kind of old fashioned and prefers to see one woman at a time. I suggested inviting Harry, the Deputy Watch Commander but Joan felt it might be disruptive of morale to invite her deputy to an orgy where she’s participating. I think I kind of understand because I have a similar rule.”

“Oh really?”

“Really, really. I won’t get involved with any woman who is a superior, direct co-worker or a subordinate of mine unless I was involved with them before they got that position, or I met them in some other context where I was not aware of any work relationship to me and became involved with them otherwise. Or she specifically asks me first where I have not in any fashion encouraged her or made any special offer or favor to her for doing so. I figure that’s a reasonable restriction to prevent issues of exploitation or use. I mean, with George wrapped around my finger as my friend, and you wrapped around another body part of mine...”

“Nice pun.”

“Thank you. With you as a lover as well, it means that I could probably do just about anything I wanted to any woman and get away with it. When Joan and I came back I was really ticked off at what she did to me, and if I hadn’t cared about her I might have hurt her. And obviously she’d have never prosecuted me. So, I think that to protect some woman from being used by me, I try to put some restrictions on what I will do to them to prevent that from happening. It’s to protect them from being used by me through what might be my misconduct. It does not apply if she’s in one of the previous groups I mentioned and she asks me.

“I mean, I do quickie sex with a lot of women on a once-monthly basis, but for most women that I’m seeing for serious involvement, I would like to see them more than once, and thus I don’t want them to be disappointed. I have an essentially perfect record that no woman has ever left my bed without being satisfied.”

“What about Ziggy?”

“Ouch. You had to remind me of that. I meant, since I got to the Afterlife. After her, I did

do a lot of research to make sure I knew how to pleasure a woman properly. With the exception of the first time I ever had sex, I have a perfect record of always pleasuring a woman. Actually, I can take the exception off, I did pleasure her afterwards and if I hadn't been interrupted I would have finished getting her off and I would have had a second time with her."

"So do we need to do anything special?"

"Well, for right now, what we need to do is to decide two things. Who's going to get on top and who gets swapped out. I'm thinking that because of positioning it's going to have to be whoever is on top that gets swapped out. So, I'm not trying to be macho, but I think at least this first time, we'll do it man on top, and we'll try it for an hour. Then..."

"246?"

"Yeah?"

"Let's just try it for three hours then see how it was. Something nice, simple, and if it's really good I don't want to get addicted to doing it that way. This will make it stop after a short period."

"Okay."

"So, anyway, how was it?"

"It was fantastic! It was the most amazing thing I'd ever felt. A guy would be inside me, moving, and then I'd come, and right after that I'd feel empty inside, and suddenly a different sized dick is moving in me, and he'd come, then he'd bring me to a climax, sometimes two or three, sometimes just one long one, and then he'd disappear, and a new guy would be inside me, and he'd come. It was even better than I'd hoped. How was it from your end?"

"It was really fun, I'm surprised to say. Only thing was we couldn't hold on to a woman because the next one might not be the same size and we'd bump into things. But it was definitely very different to be having sex with a number of different women one after the other automatically. I hope it doesn't bother you, Diane, but I personally prefer one woman at a time. It might be interesting in some special cases but I think it works better for me the usual way. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not criticizing this, I just think the other way is more intimate."

"Well, naturally, yeah. But this was a lot of fun though."

"What I think we'll do is set this up again for woman on top and see what you think of that."

"Okay."

"Well, from what I heard, it looks like it's pretty much unanimous, that while all of you thought this automatic sex system was great, when you got to be on top, that was even better."

"Yeah, I mean, this was so good I almost can't describe it. I get to control everything, how fast he moves inside me, how deep he goes, what angle, everything, then I get to come like crazy, usually two or three times, then I feel myself go empty for a second again, and then I feel him spurt into me. Only it's a different guy. And it's fun because either he's smaller and my pussy tightens up to hold him, or he stretches me instantly because he's bigger. That 'rhythm' effect, when we all got ourselves such that we started swapping about every ten or fifteen seconds and coming on each guy right after that was really something."

"I'm thinking of a more intimate trial. If Lynn were here I'd love to do that with her and another guy and see what she thinks, but what I'm thinking is I'd like to try it with just you and Wilfred, and me and Joan, in which we swap with each other only maybe even faster. Like

having the two of you move at the same way and swapping out every time you move, so it would be with you two flipping back and forth between us. Or both of us switching between you two men. I think I'm going to have a lot of fun."

"Diane, how about Wilfred and Royce? Not that I don't mind seeing you, I think I'd like to 'wean' you off me so that you get used to spending more time with guys you're not used to, and maybe start having other lovers, too."

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

Chapter 177

“And you don’t like being under the control of a woman.”

”Good Morning, Andrea.”

“This is definitely different. You invited me here.”

“Yes. I want to ask you about something.”

“Okay.”

“This is a serious matter, and it has to remain private no matter what happens.”

“No problem.”

“What I am going to do is, have you authorized to be Board Certified because in order for me to explain the issue to you you’re going to have to know some things that basically require you to know some private details involving the Chairman.”

“Fine.”

After going through the process to have her Board Certified, 246 explains to Andrea the whole issue.

“I’m going to explain a few things here. Did you know we have a new Chairman?”

“Well, to be honest with you, I wasn’t really certain if we even had a Chairman in the first place. I figured you and a few of your friends were actually running the country and pretending there was one so that you could duck any controversial issues by claiming it wasn’t your fault.”

“No, actually there is someone who is Chairman. Actually there’s two; the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman. Well, here’s the first part. Both of them were still alive.”

“That makes sense.”

“It does?”

“Yeah. We’re here in the Afterlife and unless someone was on the outside there wouldn’t be much capacity to fix things if something went wrong. I mean, consider what happened in *The Matrix*, it’s not possible to do anything about the people inside unless you got out of it and accessed things directly from the real world.”

“Well, you do get things better than I expected. Okay, well, anyway, the person who was the Deputy Chairman died and is here. So the Chairman has made her Acting Chairman except when he’s connected.”

“I see.”

“The problem is this. The Chairman was my friend but sometimes he and I didn’t agree on some things. Now...”

“Excuse me.”

“Yes?”

“If it was that much of an issue, do you think maybe you could have gotten the Chairman to appoint you to a higher position, maybe have made you Deputy instead of someone else? I mean, if you really wanted to make substantial changes, perhaps you could have asked him.”

“Well, that’s the point, you’re misunderstanding me. Actually, though he did once.”

“Now I have lost you.”

“The Chairman offered me a seat on the Board of Directors. I didn’t want the responsibility and I turned him down. Well, he appointed someone else as his deputy, then she died and now she’s in charge.”

“And you don’t like being under the control of a woman.”

“No, actually, that’s not it either.”

“Then maybe you’d better explain it.”

“Actually, I think it wouldn’t be a problem if I was subject to being managed by a woman. It’s the exact opposite. To put it bluntly, I’m one of her lovers.”

“Oh.”

“Well, the thing is that her and I being that close she’s probably liable to let me get away with almost anything. Do you remember many years ago when you criticized me about what I did to Chavez, the first guy we caught committing rapes in the Frontier?”

“Yeah, I think I pointed out that once you brought him into Civilization you should have treated him accordingly.”

“Exactly. Well, that’s the whole point. I think I’m pretty good at knowing what is right and wrong, and to be consistent in respecting others. But I might make mistakes or not think about the consequences of what I’m doing. You pointed that out to me more than once.”

“Uh huh.”

“So what I want to do is have you act as a secondary conscience to myself, and maybe to the Deputy Chairman if she’s interested, basically I’m thinking as a way to make us think about what we’re doing, even when it isn’t illegal, is it right. And maybe in some cases, even if it is legal, should it be? You get to be the person who asks the hard questions we might not think about. Is what we are doing the right thing to do? Have we respected the rights of other people in the things we are involved in? Is this necessary? Are there other issues we haven’t considered? Is there a better way to do something than the method we have chosen or are thinking of choosing? That sort of thing.”

“And how do we work this, do I follow you around, be your keeper?”

“No, no, no, no, basically I think that when I’m planning something I’ll either send you a note or invite you over to listen to me explain what I’m thinking about. And any time you notice a policy change or something is going on and you think you should know about it, you contact me or the office in question to get more details. Then you contact me or the Office of the Board if you think we should reconsider something we’re doing or there’s something about it you think we should think about.”

“I see. Well, if I take the job, there is one thing I want.”

“What’s that.”

“I want access to the Legislative Counsel and the ability to present items before them.”

“Actually I can do better than that.”

“How?”

“I’ll get the Chairman to appoint you to the counsel. We probably should have more private citizens on it in order to get more input from ordinary people.”

“All right.”

“So, then, if you’re willing to take the job then I’ll have the Deputy Chairman meet you.”

“Okay.”

“Central Computer call Board of Directors.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“Hi, Nancy. I have an Armada Signal, I need the Deputy Chairman.”

“Uh, she’s kind of busy right now, but I’ll send your signal if you want.”

“Yes.”

“Accepted, you may hang up now.”

A couple minutes later, the Deputy Chairman teleports in. “Hi, 246. I was busy with…”

“Diane!”

“Well, hello Andrea, nice seeing you.”

“All this time you’ve been Deputy Chairman and you never said a word?”

“Well, I can’t know if you’re interested in an issue or just being involved in something in order to get close to people with power. Or whether you’re sincere in your comments or just saying things to be in agreement with me. Besides, we had some really strong disagreements over some issues and even when I didn’t agree with you it often made me think about what you said. Sometimes the arguments got really heated and I don’t know if I’d have gotten the same responses from you if you thought you might lose access to someone of importance if you expressed a serious disagreement.”

“I guess that makes sense.”

“I’ve had fun at the meetings, even when we disagreed. I respected your opinions even when I thought you were totally off-base.”

246 decides to interrupt. “Well, it’s kind of obvious you both know each other.”

“Yeah, Andrea and I both attend the *Conference on Women’s Issues* once a month.”

“I just want to know something: had you been going to the conferences before you died?”

Diane looks at 246. “You told her?”

“She has to know for the job I’m offering her.”

Diane looks back at Andrea. “Okay, I’ll admit it, I died about two months ago.”

“Oh, well I feel a lot better.”

“How?”

“Your showing up here when what we discuss doesn’t have any affect on you indicates you really do care about the issue, as opposed to just showing up because it’s good politics or because you figure you had to.”

“Oh.”

“By the way, does Freddie know you’re Deputy Chairman?”

“No, and I’m keeping it that way.”

246 looks at Andrea. “Who’s Freddie?”

Diane answers him. “Frederica 17, one of the Justices on the Court of Appeals. She’s also one of the Conference members.” She smiles. “Apparently she’s also the only woman on the court you haven’t screwed yet. Don’t you remember, 246, that time when you were talking to me in the transfer chamber, I said how Freddie had referred to the ‘reprobates that infest the Frontier?’”

“Oh, yeah. Anyway, what I want to hire Andrea for is to be my backup conscience. Since you’re here and I’m concerned I might make a mistake I’ve decided I want to have her in on the things we do so as to have a check against us not being careful of what we do to others.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You remember when I came before the board of directors because I wanted to test out Endless Orgasm? I could have just gotten George to do it, but I did ask the whole board. And you were the one who pointed out I might not be as considerate of women as I am of men. So now we have another woman whom I can bounce off ideas and perhaps make me think if I’m not careful in what I considered.”

“Oh, I never thought of that.”

“Well, anyway, I offered her a seat on the Legislative Counsel. I figure you’d want to be on so we’d need someone else anyway to make sure we have an odd number of members.”

“That’s not a bad idea. But what made you decide to pick her?”

“It was what happened when we tested this on the first rapist, Chavez. She first gets in on this by pointing out to me that I’d been a little cavalier over the rights of the slime we grabbed in the Frontier. Then she points out that we never offered Chavez counsel. How people act under normal circumstances isn’t as strong a predictor of their conduct as how they act under extraordinary circumstances or when the issues are overwhelmingly against the other people...”

“Excuse me, could you clarify that a little?”

“How we treat others when things are okay and there isn’t a crisis, or where their misconduct is not excessively offensive, doesn’t really show how we as a society would treat people when they do something when there’s an emergency or they do something we think is really bad. It’s when our patience is stretched to the limit, or when we are in trouble, that really shows our character and our values. Do we mean what we say, do we act accordingly? And her comments made me realize maybe I wasn’t thinking about it. But she was. A woman was more concerned about the rights of slime who had been abusing women than *I* was. So now, since I don’t have the protection of a Chairman who might disagree with me or is willing to argue the point of things I have to make sure I have someone I can depend upon to think about things I don’t think about so I don’t make too many mistakes.”

Chapter 178

“It’s... having the point made that... all are equal under the law.”

“Good Morning, Diane.”

“Good Morning, Andrea. You wanted to talk to me about something.”

“Yeah. I want to consider having the immunity granted to the Chairman be taken off the books. Not that I think you’ve done anything wrong, but I think it would be an important gesture.”

“In what way?”

“I think it would clearly show that we operate under the rule of law. No one, not even the Chairman - or in your case, the Deputy Chairman - is above the law.”

“Yeah, well we have a real problem. It is conceivable that we could do something in my case, but how do we impose a penalty on someone who isn’t here?”

“It’s mostly a symbolic gesture, the Chairman or the Deputy could always give themselves a pardon for what they did, but having the point made that not even the Chairman is immune from legal process makes a compelling argument that all are equal under the law. It also gets rid of a lot of people’s complaints about how the Chairman is such a hypocrite because he imposes laws upon us that he himself is unwilling to live under. And it also would tend to make people think of him less as being God or something similar. Either that, or perhaps he should call himself King or Emperor or something. But I do think it would be a positive step.”

“You know, we never thought about it. The main thing was, in view of the fact we weren’t here, we didn’t want to have some headline-hungry prosecutor trying to grab headlines, sort of like what happened with all those dreadful Independent Counsel cases investigating the President of the United States and all the trouble that it caused, basically making a tempest in a teapot. We didn’t even think of that, we just simply didn’t want to have the issue happen since we weren’t here.”

“So, we can put in a provision that there can only be a prosecution after presentment to the Supreme Court, err, excuse me, I mean the Court of Appeals, or maybe set up something like a Constitutional Court specifically for such issues. Or perhaps that in the event of an accusation, the Court of Appeals and the Legislative Counsel together substitute for a grand jury. The main thing here is we put forth a positive statement of respect for the law and we don’t make anyone unequal.”

“Okay, you’ve sold me. Write up a proposal for next month’s meeting.”

“Also, we need to strengthen the provisions on pardons. Most people forget, the justice system is supposed to act impartially. Which means that, in some cases, the impartiality of the system tends to mean some people get really severe punishment, much worse than what they deserve. The use of pardons, commutations and exoneration serves to correct the overzealousness of the system. At least we don’t have the problem on earth where people don’t realize this and think use of this feature is letting people ‘get away’ with things rather than making the justice system fairer to the individual. I think we also need to make it clear that the Chairman is expected to regularly issue pardons and so forth specifically to correct what would otherwise be unfairness on a case-to-case basis.”

“Good idea.”

Chapter 179

“...it’s just an excuse for us to bring Joan down here and have some fun..”

“So, George, how are things with Jack since he took over for Diane?”

“Well, let me ask you a question. I think Jack told you that the only reason he had an open relationship with Diane was because she was so sexual that she’d be miserable if he agreed to a monogamous relationship?”

“Yeah.”

“Now, personally, what was your opinion at the time?”

“Basically I thought it was bullshit, he’s rationalizing the fact he likes having a wife *and* being able to go out and screw other women. I mean, I don’t really see it as a problem for people to have an open marriage, but just admit to yourself you like the idea of having it both ways, a regular spouse and spicing it up but not having to sneak around. Don’t try to pretend that you’re just doing it because it’s for someone else.”

“So how has Diane been?”

“Well, it depends on how you want to look at it. If this were earth, it’d probably be considered scandalous conduct. Basically I think she’s on a mission to out-fuck Terry. She makes me by comparison look like something I once threatened to become: a celibate priest. Up here, it’s reasonable behavior and probably just on the edge of the norms of society. So maybe he wasn’t bullshitting me, if she was even a small fraction as sexually active as she has been here.”

“Well, anyway, I have some news. Jack met a nice lady and they got married.”

“Oh well, that’s nice.”

“But here’s something, you’ll never guess who introduced them.”

“Okay, tell me.”

“You did.”

“Huh?”

“I’ll tell you the story.”

About six months after you left her world, Ellen got a telegram. It was a message to her from a man who used to run a bicycle shop, inviting her to come to Milwaukee. He invited her to the opening of the new motorcycle factory that she was apparently co-owner with him, you, and the people who had invested in it. He wanted to completely surprise her, make her think he had simply taken off. Apparently, it was an even bigger success than they thought it would be. They made a lot of money. I mean a *lot* of money. So, about four or five years later, once they knew that they really were successful, Ellen wanted to let you know that he really had kept his word. And apparently she wanted you to know she was still going to watch over your part of the profits as if you were coming back. Apparently, in that world, your share is about half a billion dollars a year after taxes.

“I’ll be damned.”

“You’re already dead, 246, that’s highly unlikely.”

“Very funny.”

Anyway, she wanted to contact you. But she knew that you weren’t really there, in that

world, so she thought of something. Apparently, you left behind the instructions on how to contact us when you were ready to leave. She had saved them, something to remember you by. So she decided to use them, and called the number. What she didn't know was, since Diane wasn't in residence, when you used it, it went to a recording which then told a local operator to call back whoever placed the call for verification. Once Diane's widower took over her job as ruler, it was the direct line to him. So Jack actually answered the phone.

"Operator, would you get me Albuquerque, New Mexico, Pueblo 2-81462."

"Hello?"

"Wow, there's actually someone on the other end of the line, I thought it would be a recording, like I think it was when 246 called."

"You know 246?"

"Yeah, I wanted to leave him a message."

"Who is this?"

"Ellen Richards."

"The Ellen Richards, the one who was co-founder of the new company that took over Harley-Davidson after it went bankrupt?"

"Yes."

"I'm curious, how well do you know 246?"

Ellen sighed, and gave a far-off smile. "I know *everything*."

"Well, look, why don't you come and see me, I haven't had much of a chance to meet anyone new who knew 246, maybe you can tell me a little about him."

"Okay, who are you?"

"Well, it's kind of hard to explain and I think you might not believe it. Do you know what this number is?"

"Yeah, I presume it goes somewhere to Area 51."

"Not exactly. Rather than tell you something you probably won't believe, how about I have you call me back on my other number."

"Okay, who do I call?"

"What I want you to do is hang up, then ask the operator to connect you to the Emperor's Palace in Washington. When you get on the line, tell the operator who you are and that you want to speak to the new Emperor. She'll put you through to me."

"Are you trying to tell me you're King Jack?"

"Yes. Queen Diane was my wife before she died, so I ended up taking over."

"Oh wow. I never thought I'd have such a thing happen."

"Well, anyway, do that then."

"Okay."

"Operator, would you connect me to Washington, I want the palace of the Emperor."

"Imperial Palace, how may I direct your call?"

"My name is Ellen Richards. I don't know if it's true, but someone claiming to be the new King, King Jack, told me to call there and verify it was him."

"Please hold."

“Hello?”

“I am amazed, you weren’t kidding!”

“Yes. So anyway, I’ll have the police send a cruiser to take you with lights and siren to the express train from Denver to Washington, and you can be here in, oh, what, about five hours?”

“Yes, sir.”

A few hours later she shows up and they meet. “I am impressed.”

“You’re supposed to be. The Imperial Palace was designed to make visitors feel humble and intimidate them.”

“Yeah, just like the White House in 246’s world.”

“Okay, now, you can stop the pretense like his world is real and tell me the truth. What do you really know?”

“I don’t think it’s a pretense. What I really know for certain? Nothing. What I know based on what has happened and what I’ve been able to figure out, I think, just about everything.”

“Okay, go ahead and tell me.”

“246 followed me home and we had a torrid romance over a week. He then does some what would otherwise be simple changes to some electrical equipment that nobody had ever done before, and he gives them to me, some woman he hardly even knows. A development that is worth, well, let’s see, his half of the profits is in the billions of dollars. And he put up the money for the development in the first place. Now, no one had ever done anything like he did before, so it stands to reason a number of things. First, if he had this kind of ability he would have gone into business to do this a long time ago, not hand it off to some woman he barely even knew. Second, why would he sit on it for years and years if he was able to develop it? Even he realized it would be worth a lot of money. I believe that what he purports to be in his show is in fact correct, that he was at one time alive, in a world other than the one we are in now, and that he died and what we see in the show is a representation of the afterlife of his world. At least, I think this makes a lot more sense than him essentially giving away, uh, let’s see, ten billion dollars in profits just to convince one unimportant woman of something which is otherwise unbelievable.

“It’s a straightforward, simple answer that makes more sense. He brings into our world knowledge of technology which we do not have, and since he has no need for it since he’s not part of this world, he could just give it away, and I happen to be the one who was the recipient. It also explains how the company that does his program could produce such massively improved television shows over everyone else. Because the technology is not of this world. And which also explains why they’ve turned down huge, lucrative contract offers to license their technology, because they don’t have the capacity to do what they are doing in our world, they actually are capturing video from another world and thus they can’t license what they are doing for use here. “I mean, in the five years since I last spoke to him I’ve not seen or heard from him again even though his show continues. Even if he wasn’t interested in me any more, I can’t see him simply ignoring a ton of money that he earned. I can’t see a person ignoring that much money, even if he was of the opinion that there was nothing he wanted - and I find the idea that someone has so much money that they couldn’t use any more, and have nothing they would want unbelievable - they’re bound to want to offer it for some charitable cause. I believe everyone has some thing that they think is a good idea and would offer assistance to it if they could. The fire department,

the public library, a hospital or a treatment for a disease, a public park, something for children, an art museum, even donating money to have a building named after yourself. Or something. But he's done none of these things, he simply never came back.

"Is it possible that he could have simply done this for no reason? Yes. But to actually believe this to be the case strains all credibility beyond any capacity for reason. Or let's put it another way. I let him have me; he didn't have to offer me anything. And yet, even if he wanted nothing else from me, there must be some other woman he would have wanted that he might have had to spend money on, and for him to not even want money for that purpose just strikes me as so odd, that no other possible conclusion seems likely.

"I've done some research about history to go back to the time of the War of North America. The war just suddenly stopped, a peace treaty was signed and the form of government went from a constitutional republic to a constitutional monarchy. After we had, only about 50 or 60 years earlier fought a miserable and bloody war to get out of a monarchy, we suddenly take one back, seems odd. Unless it was imposed upon us by an external force.

"I could be completely wrong. But there are other things. Things I have found out once I had the time and the money to hire people to do the digging. I obviously could not confirm what I believe but I have received enough evidence to support the inferences I have made from what I have learned that I believe what I understand to be correct, even if I can't necessarily prove it to the point of certainty."

"I've had this capacity, I don't know how to explain it, but I've often been able to integrate concepts and figure out things even when I didn't have all the evidence. And I've been right more often than not. And I think I have a little bit of something similar to what 246 claims he has, only in my case it's the ability to sometimes tell what someone is thinking, or feeling, or something like that. I can't quite tell, but I suspect that you knew 246 personally."

"Yes, I met him once."

"Just once? Hmm."

"Well, actually maybe twice. I'm not trying to lie about it."

"I can tell. I want to say something here, but I don't want you to feel insulted if I say it, okay."

"Ellen, you can tell me anything, I won't be upset."

"I got to hear the conversation from his side, and I get the impression from how he phrased it, that he had some kind of romance with Queen Diane, and that apparently it was something you approved of, I get sort of a reading that it made you and her a lot closer than you were. And that's why you wanted to talk to me, it at least gave you some connection to your late wife, even if only indirectly. Hmm. But I can feel it, you're not sad about it. Maybe you won't tell me, but did she really die, or is it that she faked her death because she didn't want the hassles of running the country but didn't want to abdicate? No, I'm not getting that; you're at peace with her because, something, something I'm not sure about."

"Queen Diane is really dead. Now that's not... Listen, Ellen, I'm thinking of a few things I'd like to say to you, but if I do, you have to understand whatever I tell you is to be considered top secret, you can't reveal it to anyone else. This is very serious, do you understand?"

"Yes. To quote from 246's world, I'll give you my solemn promise not to reveal anything you tell me to anyone else. With the exception that if you tell me something I already know or have direct evidence of I will tell you that so you can be aware of it, is that fair enough?"

"Fine. Essentially everything you've told me is true. Neither I nor Queen Diane are from this

world, and 246 isn't from our world or this one. Yes, there really is an Afterlife but it is not connected to the people of this world. And the reason I'm not sad is that Diane went there when she died. Apparently 246 gave her an even better time than he did when he was here. I'm having a lot of fun running this world, so I'm in no hurry to die, but when I do, I expect to see her again.

"The reason we came to this world was to provide for the security of the Afterlife. We had to find a place to set up the Afterlife which was separate from our own universe to protect it against damage in case something went wrong. So basically, our people came in and stopped the war of North America and imposed a constitutional monarchy by force. Whether it was better than the alternative of what happened in our world with all the wars that broke out, I can't say. But I believe that most people do find that this is a nice place to live. But actually, we've kind of had our eye on you for some time."

"Me?"

"Yes. I think, if it hadn't been for the fact you called me, it is quite possible in a few years you would have been called in and made aware of these facts anyway. It's part of a strategy we have. If your business got too successful you might start inventing new technology that either might be dangerous to the public or to our Afterlife. And so we would have wanted to prevent you from going much further than what you have done. Now, if you're as good as I think you are, you can guess what I would have offered you."

"A guaranteed admission to the Afterlife?"

"Yes. Although it might not be the one 246 is part of, it might be the one we will be developing once we capture this world. Or we may allow them to cross over, although that's a big problem because of the show, too many people from this world know things about that world that might be inconvenient. So we'll have to figure out what things to change. As it is, since you know so much about that world from the show and your research, I'm considering offering you the job of helping to set up the Afterlife for this world."

She jumped up, about as excited as you can imagine, and ran over to Jack. She stopped. She sat down on the edge of the desk and picked up his hand. "You're conflicted by a number of feelings, and one of which was you didn't want to admit you find me attractive, you simply wanted this to be a business meeting, in effect."

"Yes."

"Look, I've known that a lot of men find me attractive, and before 246 taught me how to make sure they give me pleasure, I put up with an incredible amount of what I now know was bad sex. No, actually it wasn't bad sex, it was *really* bad sex. Since then, I haven't once had a guy that didn't give me what I wanted when he got what he wanted. But I've more-or-less kept things quiet because if you have a reputation as a slut, you don't get as much respect even though apparently if a guy does the same thing it's usually acceptable. But anyway, I had figured on going to bed with you if for no other reason than to be able to admit that I'd actually gotten the Emperor, and I could see if you were any good. We can consider it part of the agreement and have some fun together, or just prove me wrong: look me in the eyes and tell me you don't find me attractive. Otherwise, stand up and take me to one of your beds, and let's see who can teach the other more."

Jack has never been the type to turn down a willing woman, so obviously they went together, and from what I understand, liked each other so much that they decided to get married.

246 looked over at George. “Well, that’s amazing.”

“There’s more.”

“Oh, so I gather that she’s going to need access to records and such, possibly interviews of some of the programmers who helped develop the world, maybe talk to Diane, that sort of thing?”

“Yes, but there’s a few other things.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, basically we’re doing another experiment. A direct swap. She’s coming up there to see you, and do research, and Joan is going to take over her body for six calendar months. Might not have needed to be that long, but we figured that she’ll probably spend close to a month or more getting laid. Not necessarily with you alone, she also wants to try some of the other famous men from your world. And she needs to do a considerable amount of research, and because of what she has to do it will be a lot faster to do it from within your world. And in the mean time, Jack can get reacquainted with Joan, he said she was the hottest woman he’d ever been with. We also get to discover what effect having another personality does to a person’s body over a serious long time, six months or more. Also, are there residual effects from changing a personality over a longer period? In all the other tests like your visit we’ve either done clone brains that never had a personality or we only swapped one person out for a week. So this gives us a chance to see what happens.”

“In view of the circumstances I’m surprised you didn’t send Diane back.”

“Actually we thought of that, only problem is Ellen really needs to do a lot of consulting with Diane, so it makes more sense to have them both in the same place. Besides, Jack never admitted it, I read his mind and he actually found Joan to be even more passionate in bed than his wife, even though Diane was very sexual. Actually, I gather Ellen was extremely passionate too.”

“I see. As a matter of fact, yes, she was quite passionate once I taught her how to make sure she enjoyed sex.”

“Of course the reason could be that Joan was over 30 years younger than Diane and probably a hell of a lot more limber, hard to say. But since he knows how Ellen is in bed, and he knew how Joan was, he can see how Joan is in Ellen’s body. Joan is fairly intelligent, she can do the set up work with help from Diane and Ellen, it’s not much more complicated than ordering stuff and setting up factories. Technical details about how the internals of the Afterlife are to operate are much more complicated and it’s going to be easier if Ellen is there.

“Hell, let’s face it, it’s just an excuse for us to bring Joan down here and have some fun with her. And knowing how she is, she’s going to have a lot of fun with us. Obviously I wanted you to know, considering how you feel about her.”

“It’s not like she’s dying or something, or rather, being recycled, she’s just leaving for a few months. Presumably, she’ll be back. Worst case, if something goes wrong and she won’t kill herself, in a few decades. I’m sure I’ll miss her, but it’s not like I’m going to be celibate while she’s gone, nor would I expect her to be.”

“Well, that’s good. It took me years to lose the jealousy I had toward Lynn, and I’m not always sure that I’ve purged myself of it. Anyway, Ellen will be coming to see you in about a week or so, once they figure out all the arrangements. I’m sure I don’t have to tell you to see to it she has fun.”

“No. But I might have someone else love her into the world. I don’t want her falling for me again - I know she felt a great deal for me - and get her used to the idea that having multiple simultaneous sex partners is nothing we’re ashamed of here. I gather that’s something she’s not done. Or maybe... Have you had Ellen?”

“No, what we had planned to do was for me to have her just before she leaves, then when Joan comes back, I get to have her first so I can feel the difference. It’s sort of a, I’m not sure what to call it, but since Jack got the privilege of having Joan first when she showed up here, he’s going to let me have her first when she shows up this time. But I agree Ellen would need to learn to be willing to realize that in our circle and in your world we don’t consider female promiscuity to be wrong, as you put it, it’s just a way for people to find happiness.

“Okay, I’ll leave it in your capable hands - or whatever appropriate body parts! - to make the arrangements for her. And, obviously, she’s to have access to anything and everything. We did a psychological profile and mind exam on her a few years ago as part of our watch on any significant person on her world, so we know we can trust her. Actually, that’s why Diane allowed you to meet her, because we knew she would keep her mouth shut if she learned anything.”

“You mean Diane knew that they would pick me out of the audience?”

“No, actually she had planned to have you meet Ellen after the show, apparently it was just a lucky coincidence that you got spotted. Although probably not all that unexpected since it is extremely likely that basically anyone in the audience who has watched your show knows you by sight.”

“I see.”

As it turned out, Ellen and Joan switched places for a while, both had a marvelous time, they actually got some work done, then switched back, and apparently over time, Ellen has not noticed any difference, except that both Jack and George have noticed that she’s *even more* passionate than she was when they first went to bed with her before the great switch. So maybe a little of Joan stayed behind when Ellen went back. But 246 hasn’t noticed any difference in how Joan acts, so maybe she has so much passion and love that she can share a little with others. Or at least, I’d like to think so, anyway.

Chapter 180

“...I never dreamed I was actually right.”

Years and years go by. Life goes on. People are born, they grow up, and they die. Actually, that's how you'd describe *our* world. But this isn't our world, it's 246's world. So... Years and years go by. *Death* goes on. People recycle themselves, are born, they grow up, and they die. 246 meets many of the famous people from earth, and some not so famous ones. Here, for example, is one of the meetings he has. He stands up and shakes hands. “Hi. I'm Supervisor 246, Administrator of the Welcoming Department, you can call me 246, practically everyone does around here. Have a seat.”

“Thank you.”

“So, what do you think of the place?”

“This is amazing, I never expected it to be so much like earth.”

“We do it that way on purpose so it's less frightening for people who have just arrived.”

“I see. What happens now, do I have to go through some kind of judgement for my life on earth or something?”

“Uh, no, we don't do that here. Although I do want to talk with you a bit about your life on earth. Did anyone tell you how you died?”

“No. I don't remember anything, I was getting ready to meet a couple of people and then I saw myself going through a tunnel of light and I figured that I must have died.”

“That's correct. Well, I'll tell you what happened. You pissed off a number of people at various times either from the assassinations you did or some of the dirty tricks you pulled, and one of the people that didn't like you set off a bomb that was embedded in the plaster of the wall you walked past. Basically you were at ground zero when it went off, you were effectively vaporized in the blast, and there was almost nothing left.”

“Oh. And I'm not going to have to go through some sort of punishment or anything for what I did?”

“Nope. You start over with a clean slate here. I basically wanted to tell you something regarding one of the incidents that stumped you.”

“Oh?”

“Now, I want you to realize we know everything about what you thought or did throughout your entire life, so don't be surprised at what I'm going to tell you, okay?”

“Oh, yeah, this is Heaven, you guys would know everything, that would make sense.”

“Well, you'll find this out in the Orientation classes but we call this place the Afterlife.

Anyway, I'm sure you remember back a few years ago when you were following up on an intelligence intercept of a cell phone call in the U.S. made from Mexico City, and when you got there the place was cleaner than an operating room, the people involved had vanished, and it was so thorough, you said that you thought that they must have escaped to another universe?”

“Oh yeah. We never did figure out what happened, we just had to write it off as an unexplained event and leave it at that. So you can tell me what happened?”

“Yes, if you're interested.”

“Oh yeah, I am. I always wanted to know.”

“Well, how about I give you a hint: One of the people on the phone call was me.”

“Ohhhh. You came back to earth and used that office. And whoever was helping you left

through whatever method you used, which is why nobody saw anything.”

“Exactly. I just wanted to let you know that you were right when you said that whoever did it must have escaped into another universe even though you probably didn’t realize it.”

“No, I didn’t. I was kind of kidding about it, I never dreamed I was actually right.”

“Okay, well, I have a little bit of bad news for you.”

“Oh, well, I might as well get it over with.”

“First, are you mad at the guy who killed you? Be honest.”

“Hell no! I’ve been having so much fun the last month I’ve been here that I’m sorry I didn’t die a long time ago.”

“Well, some of your victims are not so forgiving. At least five of them are forswearing vendettas and want to hurt you at the first chance they can. I wanted you to be ready in case you get attacked.”

“Will I need police protection and how much danger am I in?”

“We don’t even bother with police protection as it’s usually not necessary. Probably the worst they can do is beat the crap out of you, and if they do they’ll end up in jail.”

“That’s the worst? So what if one of them decides to shoot me or something? I saw someone simulate a shooting with a machine gun in an ad for some law office on the nightly news, I think it would be worse.”

“It wasn’t a simulation; he really was using a machine gun on them. Now, if I promise you that it won’t hurt you, can I show you something?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Central Computer, grant Immunity from Assault privilege to all persons within 2 meters of me and confirm.”

“Privilege: Immunity from Assault granted to 000405 KQ Robert 91187. Completed.”

246 picks up a piece of letterhead paper and draws two circles on it, turns it over and traces the circles on the other side.

“Central Computer, instantiate one box 12 gauge shotgun shells and one 12-gauge pump-action shotgun manual load.”

The items appear on the desk in front of him. “Wow!” 246 opens the breech and loads two shells into the chamber, then hands the man the piece of paper.

“I’m going to have you put up a target so I want you to hold this for a moment. Thanks.”

When the man has the piece of paper in front of his face, 246 raises the gun and shoots at him through the paper. The blast hits him dead on, his chair tips backward and he falls to the floor.

246 gets up, walks over to him, aims at his heart, and pulls the trigger at almost point-blank range. 246 turns around and gets back in his chair. “Central Computer, revoke Immunity from Assault privilege from all persons within 2 meters of me. When you’ve recovered

yourself, you can pick up your chair and sit back down.” The man, utterly stunned, does so.

“So, what was it like?”

“If I hadn’t actually seen the pellets go through the paper I wouldn’t have believed it. All I felt was like someone pushed on my face. And when you shot me in the chest, it simply felt like someone pushed on my chest for a second. And not very hard, either.”

“All I did was to prevent the shot from hurting you. If someone shoots you and you’re not protected like this, it will hurt like hell. You don’t get injured. You’re already dead so you can’t die again. They can keep shooting you until someone makes them stop, you can get away,

or they get bored and quit.”

“Oh God. So what do I do about it?”

“What I’m going to do is this. Here’s the list of the five people. Here’s a script I want you to study and learn, just as an idea. You’re going to go to each of them. You tell them you were sent by the Welcoming Department because it’s understood they are in deep pain, and you want to try to help them overcome it and learn to be happy again. If you’re as smart as I suspect you are, you should be able to get the idea of what we’re trying here. But you do not tell them who you were on earth, that comes later. If you can’t get them to release their hatred, then you see it there, if they get to the point of saying they wish they had the person there so they could wring his neck. Then you introduce yourself. Tell them who you were and how you murdered them. Use that phrasing; make it clear that you’re not afraid to admit what you did. You’re not asking for forgiveness, or offering atonement. Or you can, if you think it will work. You just realized that they were hurting and you wanted to offer them some way to make it better. I think if you go to them first before it’s announced on the news, it might just be the ticket to make things better for them.”

Chapter 181

“At 2:18 local time this afternoon, there was an accident...”

“Well, I’ll be. Okay. I’ll tell him, this is going to be great news. I’ll be in my office.”
He walked in and closed the door. “Central Computer, call Board of Directors.”

“Office of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife, this is a recorded line with trap and trace.”

“Hello Winona, you substituting for Nancy while she’s on vacation?”

“Yeah, Grim, this is fun.”

“Well, anyway, I have an audio Armada Signal.”

“Accepted.”

“Thanks.” He hangs up.

The telephone rings. “Office of the Grim Reaper.”

“Is your office secure?”

“Yes it is, Mr. Chairman.”

“Go ahead, Charlie.”

“I wanted to pass this on to you first because I think you would want to know and you’ll probably want to handle passing it on. At 2:18 this afternoon - that’s local time - there was an automobile accident...” he gives a description of what happened. “There are about a dozen people who want to be at *Tunnel of Light* viewing, do you want to permit it, or make a special case and route this one differently?”

“No, we do everyone the same unless there are special instructions. But let’s keep it private to them, have them brought in quietly, and hold the viewers until after Welcoming.”

“Okay then.”

“Thanks again, Charlie.”

“You’re welcome, sir. “

”Anyway, what we will need to do is be prepared in case it becomes worse. We can get a couple of police officers to help if we need to, and in the Frontier we can...” A buzzer sounds.

“Yes?”

“I’m aware you’re discussing a plan on what to do in the event of a serious riot in the Frontier, but someone has called and used your priority emergency page code.”

“I know exactly who it is and I’ll have to do something about it. Okay, put them through.”

“Are they on?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Listen to me you creep, I have important people here. I know who you are and how to get hold of you, in about 5 minutes I’m going to see to it that you get some serious treatment for using an emergency code when you know you’ve got no authority. This is going to be fixed right now. You can just wait right there, you’re going to be very sorry you called. Ladies, Gentlemen, I hate to break up this conference but this caller has been bothering me for a long time and I intend to take care of him once and for all. So I’ll have everyone take a ten minute break in order to take care of this. If you will excuse me, I’d like everyone to go for ten minutes, I don’t want to give him the satisfaction of seeing any of you. Oh, wait, Joan, you can stay, I’m probably going to have you violate and arrest him after I finish. Thank you, all of you. It will only be a few minutes. Thanks. Joan, lock and seal the door. Okay. George, how

are you?"

"So I'm a creep, am I?"

"Only because you're a minor pest. Had you been calling me a lot more often I might have called you something much worse. Basically I wanted you to look like a medium irritant that I want to get rid of rather than one so irritating I'm willing to teleport him in and confine him immediately."

"Oh. I thought you were going kind of easy on me."

"Well, I'll try to avoid that in the future. So what can I do you for, you prick bastard?"

"That's more like it. At 2:18 local time this afternoon, there was an accident between a tractor-trailer and a pickup truck on Interstate 66 near McLean, Virginia, the pickup made an unsignalled lane change, cut off the tractor, which caused it to rear-end the pickup, knocking it over the guardrail and into oncoming traffic where it had a head-on collision with a Vectai station wagon, killing the drivers of both vehicles."

"Uh huh. So we have a couple of people arriving?"

"Yeah, I think one of them deserves special treatment."

"Okay, who is it?"

"The driver of the pickup was Lawrence Giltow. Do you know him?"

"No. Should I?"

"I didn't think so but he's been involved in a number of hit-and-run accidents."

"So who's the other driver?"

"Nobody important. Her name was Maria Consuela Lopez-Sanchez."

"George?"

"Oh. Hi Joan. What, he's stunned speechless?"

"You could say that. 246 just fainted."

Chapter 182

“... the best ... experience on earth ... [was] almost nothing.”

Since this is a special case and a special event, Maria arrives in a reserved, for lack of a better term, arrival room. 246 is waiting for her when she shows up. Perhaps significant events in one's life cause one to remember them for the rest of one's life - or perhaps forever, as in this case - but the fact is, Maria recognized 246 immediately.

“Dos Quattro Seizes!” she cries out, as she runs over and hugs him. “I... I never got the chance to tell you how grateful I was that you saved me and... Oh! Does... Does this mean... I mean, does it...”

246 understands, of course, most everyone is so afraid of death they don't want to think about it. Or use the term. “Yes, Maria, you died. A pickup truck cut off an 18-wheeler and he crashed into your car.”

Maria lapses into Spanish. “Mi hija.. Estrellita... ¿Mi hija estuvo lastimada? ¿Cómo está ella? ¿Dónde ...”

246 responds, but in English. “She's fine, amazingly she wasn't hurt at all. They got hold of your husband, he went to the hospital they took her to and she checked out okay.”

Calming down, she resumes English. “I... I'm so relieved...”

“And now there's something else.”

“Oh, yes, I understand. I guess I'm going to have to go before Christ and be judged for my life on earth. Am I going to have help in figuring out what I need to do, I mean...”

“Maria, that's not what I was referring to. Take a deep breath and relax, whatever you did on earth died there too. You don't get punished for whatever you might think you did wrong, and you don't get extra points for what you did right. You start over fresh here. No, it's something else. I've been watching you for a long time, and I could tell, when you saw me, back on earth, you found me interesting. I could tell, so I left you fast because I didn't want to cause you a problem in your life. But you're no longer subject to the promises you made, once you died your obligation to stay faithful to your husband ended. And we have no rules here against experiencing something wonderful. Take my hand, and we'll do some things you will not believe, I've been waiting a long time to be able to make you happy.”

She does.

Popping both of them into his room, she is again amazed. Gently, tenderly he kisses her, and he feels her body soften and mold to him. Taking her over to a mirror, he removes the robe she was wearing, (much easier to get someone's clothes off if you put them into fewer clothes to begin with!) and allows her to see herself naked. Reading her mind, he starts to reshape her body in ways that he can tell she likes, changing things about herself that she didn't appreciate. She squeals with excitement.

Moving over to the bed, he lifts up the covers and she slides in. He follows her, holding her in his arms as they resume passionate kissing. Not being earth, and having lots of time, he doesn't have to try to get to her quickly (as too often guys on earth do because they're afraid if they give the woman more time and attention she might change her mind), and so this continues for an inestimable period of time, as they just hold each other and kiss. As he senses she is ready for him to stimulate more of her body, he does so, sensing a little bit of fear, she is extremely sensitive in her breasts, and is afraid he'll overstimulate them. He decides to calm her, “Maria,

I can hear your thoughts, if you don't want me to touch you there, I won't, but it's not going to be so sensitive as it was on earth." To allow her to calm down, he ignores her breast and proceeds to touch and stroke the rest of her body with his fingertips. As he reaches her sex, he uses his hands to gently touch and rub her most sensitive areas. She gasps with pleasure as he rubs her clitoris in a circular fashion. Sensing she's moist enough, he inserts a finger into her, and begins also stroking her G-spot. She arches her back and moans as wave after wave of pleasure hits her. Again, as there's no need to hurry this along, he continues stimulating her. Then he does sense that she wants him inside her. Noticing what she wants, and allowing her a chance to recover from the tremendous pleasure she's been experiencing, he slowly stops. He gets out of bed, and drops his robe, so she can see everything about him, especially the part she was thinking about.

He then gets back into bed, and begins stroking her, bringing her closer to another orgasm. As it hits her, to be nice to her, he entered her easy, slid in deep, and begins gentle thrusts into her. Again, she arches her back in response to the unbelievable pleasure she'd been experiencing. She continues doing this as wave-after-wave of pleasure strikes her body, feeling him move inside her. Now 246 decides to tell her the good news.

He slows down and stops, still inside her. "Maria, I have to ask you something."

"Oh that was wonderful, it was unbelievable! Do you think this was just because we like each other a lot or is it going to be like this again?"

"Oh we'll be able to have this again. But there's something I have to ask you to do."

"Oh yes, anything!"

"So that men don't use women, we have something special here. You get to decide when you want me to come inside you. I don't. So I have to tell you how to let me. Not only that, but when I come I don't get soft, so I can keep making love to you. Yes, really. So here's what you have to do." He explains the procedure, and she picks a phrase. "So now, when you want to feel it, you do that. I'm going to start again."

He resumes thrusting in and out of her, and hears her hiss and moan. He suspected as such, and the next time a climax hit her, she arched her back and he felt himself about to come. He moved in deeply and held still as he came and spurted into her. She cried out, apparently very pleased by what had happened. Then 246 started moving again, and her eyes widened. Again, she arched her back as another orgasm hit her, and she gave 246 another climax. This time, he didn't stop, but kept moving. This was so much for her that she couldn't believe it, she began moving with him, grabbing him on the ass to get him to thrust deeper and more forcefully into her. As this continued, eventually the accumulated frustrations of what she had experienced on earth left her, and she realized how much pleasure she was having. She screamed out a full-throated orgasm as a really strong one hit her.

While she hadn't been the type to put up with not getting an orgasm from a man, at least regularly, like she's heard some of her girlfriends had done with their husbands and boyfriends, she'd sometimes let her husband have her or had sex when she wasn't really ready or interested, and as a result didn't come, by comparison, the best and most mind blowing experience on earth might as well have been almost nothing. All she knew was that more than anything else, all she wanted to do than allow this wonderful man to do this to her, and let her give him pleasure as well.

Chapter 183

“The last time this... happened... she cut my throat.”

How long this would have went on for is hard to say. Two people, in love with each other, who have unlimited capacity to make love to each other, and do, and don't notice anything else, are going to spend a lot of time doing so. This is supposedly the reason people have honeymoons when they get married, to get to know each other. That the original reason for the honeymoon was that the bride was often kidnaped from her tribe, and the purpose was either to hold her long enough that she got pregnant, or that the rescue party got tired from failing to find her and quit, has long been forgotten. In any case, 246 and Maria were busy for a long time. I suppose it could have continued for years. But what happened was, after a few weeks - basically a standard month, 100 days - the reminder 246 set went off in his head.

246 thought about how the tables were turned. This time he had tried everything he could think of to her, and she had been the enthusiastic novice, unlike the last time when she, as Elizabeth, had introduced him - quite literally - to a whole new world. And he remembered, as she had told him some things, now he would do the same. “Maria, I have some things to tell you.” She smiled at him. “Okay.”

“I actually have been watching you a lot longer than after I died.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. Actually I was watching you before you were born. I came to earth just to get a look at you while you were still alive.”

Her eyes opened wide. “I thought there was something really.. really... I think... strange... over the way I felt about you when I met you. Were you my guardian angel, or something?”

“No, not exactly. Let me tell you something. Before you died, I had a friend here, his name was Tom. He was my best friend. He discovered that he wanted to be more than just my friend, but neither one of us is interested in men. So he decided to go to earth and become a woman so the two of us could be lovers. And we have.”

“You mean... you knew me before... and... and... I was a man?”

“Yes.”

“I... I don't know what to say. You really cared about him, a lot?”

“Yes. Now you see why I left you alone when I saw you. I loved you enough that I didn't want to do anything that would spoil your happiness or your life on earth.”

“I'm amazed, I guess.”

“He left you a message. It's for you, personally. Do you want to hear it?”

“Yes.”

“Central Computer, grant voice access to Maria 844323. You need to say what's on this note.”

“Central Computer, private replay message Tom One.”

She lies there for a moment, looking off into space. “I see. I also understand some things. So you're usually called 246?”

“Yes.”

“Well, according to the message, I have to ask you to execute stored program Tom Five.”

“Are you sure you want me to do that?”

“Yes, he has a lot of memories he saved about you that I want to know.”

“Okay, you need to stand up.” She does. “Central Computer, execute upon Maria 844323

stored procedure Tom Five, authorization 00000 space space Supervisor 000246.”
246 watches as Maria stares off into space for some time. She comes out of it suddenly, gets back into bed, then moves over to him, and very passionately kisses him, pushes him down on the bed, gets on top of him and begins having sex with him, again. After a few minutes, she releases climax privilege to him, and does this about four more times. (“At least I don’t have to worry now. The last time this sort of thing happened - a close female friend of mine aggressively wanted sex - she cut my throat.”)

Maria stops. “I now know why, all my life, I’ve always felt so, like, something was missing. I didn’t have that piece of me that Tom kept. I wonder something. You don’t have to tell me, I know you love me; the fact we’ve been together this long tells me so. And you don’t have to answer this, but did you care about Tom because you liked him, or because he used to be Elizabeth?”

“I’ll say it. Obviously, I cared about him because of her. But I can’t say if I love you because I knew you as Tom or because I knew you before as Elizabeth. But you’re right, I do love you.”

She smiled. “*Primus inter pares?*”

“Yes.”

“I’m glad I did ask you to give me memories from before I was born. If you hadn’t we might still be having sex for years from now and doing nothing else. There are some things I want to do and some privileges I need. If I can’t get you to buy them for me do you think we can talk to whoever is Administrator now?” 246 laughed. “What’s so funny?”

“I’m the new Administrator.”

“So what happened, you wouldn’t let George appoint Putty Tat? I didn’t think she would have been very good as Administrator, but I wanted you and I figured you wouldn’t let things get too bad while I was gone.”

“Maria, you’re a lot brighter than I realized. She was Administrator after Tom quit...”

“246, let’s not duck things. I have Tom’s memories. I quit.”

“Okay, she was Administrator for a while after you quit until she ticked me off so bad that I quit. George put her back as Deputy Administrator after I made him give me the job.”

“In that case, write me a note giving me 10 privileges of my choice. I don’t want you to know what they are because I want to surprise you. And because things probably have changed while I was gone and what I want to do may change.”

He wrote out a note, and gave it to her. “Knowing you, you’re probably itching to get back to work. But I’ll say something else, too.” She looks him in the eyes. “If I hadn’t gotten the memories Tom left me, I would have been horribly jealous and possessive. I wouldn’t have been able to stand the idea of sharing you with someone else. And it would have poisoned our relationship; you’re not the type to be a one-woman man. So I’m not going to require that of you, *but*, I do get to have you any time I want, agreed?”

“Of course. Actually if you had wanted it I would have given you an exclusive arrangement.”

“I can guess what would have happened: it wouldn’t have worked for long. I wouldn’t have realized it as a woman, but as a woman who knows how a man thinks, I know that a tiger can’t change his spots, err, I mean its stripes. A leopard can’t change his spots. And I can’t expect a man whose been with a lot of women to suddenly change. Too many women think they’re

going to be the one who changes their guy and end up disappointed.”

“I am really amazed at you.”

“In what way?”

“I wanted you as a woman. I never expected you to catch on so fast or be so bright. You didn’t seem that way the short time I met you on earth.”

“I kind of understand why you were worried about me getting Tom’s memories. I know that it has changed my personality, but for the better. I am more confident now. Before I was the typical subservient woman who more-or-less did what she was told. Now, I have the capacity to be everything I want to be. And that starts now. There’s supposed to be a way to go places immediately, can you give that to me?”

“Sure. Central Computer grant transport privilege to Maria 844323.”

“My dear friend, thank you for everything. I’ll be back in a while.”

“Bye, Maria.”

She disappeared. As she predicted, 246 went back to his office.

Chapter 184

“Don’t tell 246 ... it would hurt him.”

Over the period of a few weeks, Maria went to the Public Library, the University, and several other places. Being the type of woman she was, once she got horny she’d go back to 246 for some “wonderful things,” then go back to what she was doing. “Lather, rinse, repeat,” as Wilfred would say. After a while, Maria got to be known as “important phone call” because every time she showed up 246 would interrupt whatever he was doing to go back to his room and make love. So people would make jokes how they got interrupted by an important phone call, because Supervisor 246 “was busy with some ding-a-ling.”

246 was rather surprised to find he enjoyed this sort of thing, being with one woman. It kind of hit him, and made him think about it, he loved Maria. As much as he felt about some of the other women he would see on a regular basis: Nancy, Terry, Diane or even Joan, he understood it wasn’t anywhere near the same. He wasn’t sure if it just meant he was shallow and callous, or it’s just that what he felt for Maria was something much more than what he felt for the others. And the funny thing was, Joan had never even met Maria and knew what would happen. About a standard month after Maria started going out in the real world - or at least, the Afterlife’s version of the real world - she had acquired what she needed. She went to see a friend of 246’s.

Maria walked into the police station and walked up to the front desk. Greg is still there. “I’d like to see the Watch Commander.”

“Your name please?”

“Maria 844323.”

“Okay, well she’s kind of busy, you’re not on the list, you can either wait until an appointment doesn’t show up or you can get an appointment in about two days.”

Maria leans over to Greg and whispers in his ear, “Knit 2, Pearl 4.”

Greg gets up. “Hold on a moment.” He walks off, then comes back. “She can’t interrupt her current appointment but she can see you in 40 minutes or when they leave, whichever is first.”

“Okay.”

About 35 minutes later, she is escorted into Joan’s office, and the door closes. “Nice to meet you,” Joan says, as she shakes hands.

“Not bad, for someone as mad as you are at me, you’ve been extremely cordial and polite, but I can feel your emotions and I know you don’t like me.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Look, you don’t have to hide it. We both know that basically I took 246 away from you. He was with me the whole month I first showed up, and I strongly suspect he’s been seeing only me for this past month. So let’s admit the fact you’re jealous of me.”

“Well, yes, but I try really hard not to let personal opinions cloud my professional judgment.”

“And I think you succeeded. But I’d like to go back to the old arrangement.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean the one where 246 and I were sharing *you!*” Maria kisses Joan, passionately.

Joan, being the way she is, didn’t quite react for a while. When she did, she whispers, “I... I’m sorry, but I don’t go that way with women.”

“Nor do I, Honey Bun.”

“But, that was...”

Maria doesn't let her finish as she grabs her again, kisses her passionately, then puts her fingers in Joan's ears. Joan moans. “But I.. I can't do that with a woman... I still think it's not right...”

“Feel my package.”

Joan reaches down and discovers that “Maria” now has a “gear shift,” e.g. a dick and balls. She leans back and discovers the person holding her is now “Tom,” just as she remembered him.

“Let's go over to your place for a while.”

Joan pushes the annunciator, and her secretary answers. “Yes?”

“Cancel my appointments for the rest of the day, tell Harry he's in charge until I get back, and tell anyone who needs a decision to speak to Harry.”

“Yes, ma'am.”

Joan and “Tom” teleport back to her apartment. They head straight for the bedroom, as their clothes fly off. Tom slips his head between her thighs, and begins eating her. She gasps with pleasure as she remembers how good he was - and still is - and enjoys the new aggressiveness of her old lover, but in a pleasant way. He moves back up and kisses her some more as he uses his hands to stimulate her G-spot - similar to the way 246 had done to him when he was Maria - and just as much as she had enjoyed it, Joan does too. Then he pushes her back, spreads her thighs, enters Joan with a smooth, forceful motion, then vigorously thrusts into her, and begins very passionate sex. As the next orgasm hits her, she releases climax privilege and feels him come inside her. He stops and changes to a different position, and they do this for the rest of the day as they try basically all of the significant positions an man and a woman can have in sex. As it turns out, he tried every position 246 had done with her as a woman, now as a man, on Joan, who also liked trying all of them, too.

“I gather you're not mad at me anymore, now that you'll be able to see 246 again, plus you can see me.”

“Yeah, you're right. I remember telling Tom, if he wanted me to be aware it was him, to use my pet name and stick his fingers in my ears when kissing me. But I never expected it to be a woman.”

“I know. Tom left me some of his memories from before I was born.”

“One thing though.”

“What's that?”

“I'm presuming you can switch back to being a woman.”

“Oh yes.” “Tom” changes back into “Maria.”

“Don't tell 246 you have the capacity to switch from woman to man and back. He's kind of old fashioned and might not understand. I think the conflict between how he feels about you and the fact you can also be a man might be too much for him to take, it would hurt him.”

“Okay, I'll remember that.” She switches back to ‘Tom’ and does a lot more things that Joan likes doing with him, to him, or to her.

Chapter 185

“Don’t tell Joan... it would hurt her.”

Maria is back in bed with 246, and decides to broach the subject. “246, have you made any plans to go see Joan? I’m sure she misses you after I’ve been taking up all of your time.”

“I’m happy with you.”

“You say that now, but I can guess that at some point you’ll probably be wondering why you’ve gone back to being a one-woman man. Then you’ll slip and feel guilty about it even though I told you that I don’t expect a monogamous relationship with you. Plus, if you’ve had a regular relationship with her and all those other women, she’s going to be unhappy about losing you to me.”

“Funny you should say that, she more-or-less told me, years ago, that when you came back she’d probably lose me to you.”

“Well, I still don’t like the idea of stealing another woman’s boyfriend.”

“You’re not, I made the choice.”

“Still, having a friend of yours probably hate me is going to cause problems. Maybe I should try and make you jealous. Or shock you.”

“I doubt you could shock me, but what do you mean by ‘make me jealous’?”

“Well, from what I know about her, she’s very passionate and very sexual. So, if you’re not going to see her and console her, maybe I should.”

“I never thought you went both ways. But she doesn’t, she’s only interested in men.”

“So here’s how I could shock you: I could change myself into a man, and go see her. If she’s used to what you do to me, I’ll bet she’s horny as hell.”

“Kinky. Okay, you win, I’ll go back to seeing her, too.”

“Does the idea that I could be a man as well bother you?”

“As long as you can change back into a woman, I don’t care.”

“You mean it doesn’t? You’re a lot more open minded than I thought.”

“A while back we were working on something which gave women tremendous pleasure, and was very strong on men too. We call it Endless Orgasm. We’ve had to restrict its use because it can be addictive. Consider how you and I were the first month, only multiply the feelings we had for what we did to each other by a hundred. When we first worked on it, I said that I might become female if necessary. I didn’t, but I realize that in the Afterlife, gender is more-or-less an opinion, and some people can handle being either sex.”

“I see.”

“Besides, the woman who discovered Endless Orgasm was a man when she died, and became a woman after she got here. She was really good at it too. I learned some of the things I did to you by her showing me how to do them to her. Just one thing.”

“What?”

“If you actually did do such a thing, I’m thinking. Don’t tell Joan you’re a woman too. She’s not as open as I am and I think the idea that a man she has as a lover is also a woman would be too much and it would hurt her.”

“Okay.”

Joan is in bed with “Tom,” enjoying what he’s been able to do to her. “So, anyway, I hear

246 is back seeing you again.”

“Yes.”

“Actually I made him think the reason that I was letting him off the hook of being with me exclusively was because he wouldn’t be able to be with just one woman. Once I realized I could be both a woman and a man I knew I couldn’t be just one way or the other, I’d want to be both. I was so happy when I first got here and had him do everything to me. Then once I realized I’d have to go both ways to stay happy I’d have to find some way to allow it. Now I find things are - to coin a phrase - heavenly. I just wish I could find something else to make him as happy as he made me. Or makes me. I mean, I have fun with you but I also have fun with him, a lot.”

“I know what you mean. I mean, I knew that once you came back, chances are he’d be with you a lot, you’d be the typical jealous woman from earth and I’d never see him again. And even though I knew this, as you realized, I hated you like I never hated anyone before in my life. Then you come along, and not only do you give him back to me, but I also have you again. It’s like you never left, I’m so happy now that I have both of you again.

“I have an idea. He doesn’t really like being top boss, despite what he pretends. He likes being able to get things done, but he’d prefer someone else have the responsibility. I have a suggestion you can make to him and he’ll take to it like a duck to water.”

Chapter 186

“...it gives you even less to have to do.”

“What I want to do is open a new spot for Deputy Administrator. So what I’m thinking is that we’ll create a position for you called ‘Executive Director for Operations’...”

”And I have a pretty good idea of whom you want to appoint to my old position.”

“Yes, the standard practice is the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator be opposite sex. The person I’m thinking I want appointed to be Deputy is in the room with the three of us.”

“I see. So what are you offering me?”

”You finally do know enough about this place and how it works to do most of the administrative tasks involved. I’m thinking that we’ll have the Administrator and Deputy Administrator only be concerned with setting policy, while having the EDO carry it out. That means you’ll actually have the authority of the Administrator without the headaches of having to be responsible for decisions. As it is right now, since you don’t have any authority to do anything unless I’m not around I think you might find that more to your liking.”

“Hmm, you know, I think you’re right.”

Maria turned to 246 “Which means it gives you even less to have to do.”

“Exactly. And you can guess what I plan to use all the extra time for. Or rather, whom I plan to use all the extra time for.”

She blushed and smiled, sweetly. The two of them looked at Marilyn. She looked at him.

“Okay.”

At some point, every story has to come to an end even though the story continues. And maybe we’ll get to hear more details later in another forum. But for now, we’ll just have to end our story here, a look back on the strange life - and death - and relife - and redeath - of ‘a strange and complicated person’ as his friend Eric called him.

And his friend, friend *primus inter pares* who was formerly known as the Incoming known as Tom Johnson, who was formerly known as Elizabeth. Maria 844323, the new - or you could say returning - Administrator of the Welcoming Department.

Arlington, VA - Fredericksburg, VA - Silver Spring, MD - Stafford, VA - Washington, DC -
Sterling, VA - Prince George’s County, MD
August 2002 - February 2011

The following defines all the slang terms, code words and references used in the book.

Antirape Page [25](#) Technology that prevents the trauma of rape, by doing the following: disconnects all feeling in the vagina in the event it is forced to accept a penis when not ready; immediately provides lubrication to the vagina and substitutes an instruction from the brain telling it to become pliable as if the woman was ready for sex, then allows the vagina to transmit some of the usual sensation of pleasure which would occur under normal circumstances, or partially simulates orgasm.

Big Time Page [8](#) A lot, as in a large number or large amount, or something very good or superlative, or both, depending on context. If you go to town on someone and enjoy it immensely, you can say that you enjoy it 'big time'

Board Certified Page [223](#) A person who is authorized to know one or more names or likenesses of the Chairman or members of the Board of Directors of the Afterlife.

Bounce Tube Page [34](#) Technology to go upward in a building, the next step up in elevators. Pun unintentional. An example of something similar is used in ID Software's video game *Quake III Arena*, in which you step on a pad and it bounces you up one floor, where you land on the exit spot as gently as if you stepped off a step. The difference is that with a bounce tube you would punch in the floor number you wanted to on a keypad at the entrance to use it as opposed to it being reserved for a single trip from one floor to one other spot. Does this by precisely calculating how hard to throw you so that your upward momentum reaches a certain point such that your flight runs out of energy at the top of the curve, and you start to fall, but let's say you start to fall only about 20 cm or so above the exit point. Think of tossing an egg up in the air, if you tossed it just enough near a building with the exact right amount of force it would go up and then slow down and stop at a precise point, then it would start to fall under the force of gravity, but if the point where it started to fall back was a half a centimeter above the ledge, you could make it land on the second or third floor without even cracking it.

Centimeter Page [11](#) A centimeter is about 0.4 inches in length. In the story Supervisor 246 says it's about ½ an inch, which is 'close enough for government work.' I decided to do all measurements in this book in metric. Just like Tom, I can't really think in metric but I think I have to start somewhere.

Climax Privilege Page [23](#) A protective system placed into the brain of a man that prevents him from having an orgasm if he is engaged in sexual activity with a woman (actually, what it looks for is if you are in proximity to someone having a Climax Privilege Release, which is always a woman). The privilege to climax and orgasm is granted to the man by the woman he is using for sexual gratification only at such times as she chooses to do so. She has exclusive control; he has no control over the matter whatsoever; all he can do is ask her to allow him to come.

Climax Privilege Release

Page [318](#) Protective system placed into the head of a woman that prevents any man from having an orgasm if he is engaged in sexual activity with her unless she lets him.

Deathday Page [151](#) The anniversary of the day you died, just as your birthday is the anniversary of the day you were born.

De-Instantiate Page [22](#) When an object in a computer system is destroyed, or

removed from the list of existing objects it is de-instantiated. If the system shows the object visibly, it will appear to vanish. The object ceases to exist or becomes inaccessible. Don't confuse with dematerialize which is sometimes used to mean the same thing but is used in a different context.

Dematerialize Page [32](#) When an object in a computer program - a person or a thing - vanishes, we say that it *dematerializes*. It may materialize elsewhere if it's a person who is transporting to another location or it may have been destroyed by being de-instantiated.

Double-Plus Ungood Page [135](#) Something bad or horrible. Comes from Newspeak in George Orwell's *1984*. In order to try and destroy the ability to think, words are eliminated from the language. So, instead of good, better and best, you have good, plus good and double-plus good. Instead of bad, worse and worst, you might have bad, minus bad, and double-minus bad. Or you might eliminate bad altogether and have ungood for bad. So if you mix metaphors, something really horrible would be double-plus ungood. Double-minus ungood and double-plus ungood would be the same thing.

Drop Tube Page [32](#) Converse of a bounce tube, used to go downward in a building. Think of jumping off the top shelf in a barn into a big pile of hay, as kids would do on farms. Well, if you set a specific floor to land on, and then jump down a hole, and using the equivalent of a bounce tube to absorb the impact and then return you to the floor you want to go to, you'd have a drop tube.

Favor Page [2](#) Generally a promise to do something which takes about an hour. Usually traded to someone in exchange for something they did, or will do, for you. Same meaning it has on earth, only difference is, since we can make anything we can define, to get other people to do things for you, since you have no money or anything you could give them except for a favor to do something for them.

Flag Page [113](#) To put a note on someone who has gone under the knife to be advised when the person dies. May be done because you want to love them back into the world, but can, and is often done, because you want to see them when they return.

Frontier Page [13](#) The unused area between the city limits and the areas where the people don't think in English. Open territory where there is no law but the law of the jungle. Almost as bad as Detroit.

Fuck each other's brains out

Page [36](#) Vulgar slang, when two people are engaged in really hot sex and both enjoy what is happening.

Fuck their brains out Page [129](#)

Fuck your brains out Page [42](#) Vulgar slang, someone else is going to have really good sex. When you say 'I'll fuck their brains out' or 'I want to fuck your brains out' it means you let them have sex with you and they will enjoy it immensely. Usually you are doing the same; but where they are but you're not enjoying it, see 'violate you six-ways-from-Sunday.'

Fuck my brains out Page [525](#) Vulgar slang, essentially the same thing as 'Go to town', when having sex with someone, to have really hot sex and you are enjoying it, big time. They may or may not be doing the same, usually they are; where you are but they're not enjoying it, see 'violate you six-ways-from-Sunday'

Go to town Page [102](#) Do whatever you want, usually in terms of having sex, with someone, it's the polite version of 'fuck your brains out.' Where it's exploitation and only one

party benefits, see ‘violate you six-ways-from-Sunday.’

Grant Climax Privilege Page [233](#) When a woman allows a man who is having sex with her, to climax (have an orgasm) she does so by granting him a climax privilege.

Instantiate Page [108](#) To create an object or data structure within a computer program. If the program can display the object being created, and you were watching the display generated by the program, the instantiated object would appear as if by magic. The object may be removed by de-instantiating it.

Involuntarily Recycled Page [28](#) To be forced ‘under the knife’, the equivalent of the imposition of the Death Penalty on earth.

Jeffrey Dahmer Treatment

Page [426](#) To be violently murdered in prison by another inmate who doesn’t like whatever crime you were convicted of doing.

Love Me Back Into the World,

Page [26](#)

Love Them Back Into the World,

Page [424](#)

Love You Back Into the World

Page [6](#)

To be the first person in this world to have sex with you.

Materialize Page [36](#) Where an object - a person, or a thing - appears at a place. If the object was created rather than just something that was moved instantly from one point to another, we say it was *instantiated*.

Mattress Tag Team Page [302](#) When a tag team, usually male and female, both decide to have Real Sex Changes; if they do meet after going under the knife it’s sweepstakes odds they will become lovers, hence the term ‘mattress.’

Meter Page [11](#) 100 Centimeters, or about 39 inches. See also *Centimeter*.

Point of No Return Page [388](#) The age at which a person is no longer considered an infant and not subject to automatic recycling. Anyone under 20 is considered an infant and recycled absent someone objecting. There are some exceptions but it’s usually 20 years old..

Pour the Pork Page [31](#) When a man climaxes and ejaculates (or sprays), usually into a woman.

Queue Backup Page [250](#) When Welcomers fail to go out to meet newly dead people, the ones that have not been met end up sitting or standing in the waiting areas taking up space. If a queue backup is serious enough, people stop dying on earth, maybe even babies stop being born because the computer can’t store any more souls in the waiting areas until some are removed, and it’s not going to release any more new ones to earth to make the queue backup worse until backup pressure is relieved.

Real Sex Change Page [28](#) To change one’s sex as a part of going under the knife, i.e. someone who is a woman, goes back to earth and is born as a male baby, or vice-versa.

Recycled Page [109](#) To go under the knife. If it’s forced upon you, see Involuntarily Recycled.

Release Climax Privilege

Page [146](#) See ‘Grant Climax Privilege’

Road Molester Page [161](#) Someone who robs, molests, hurts, or plunders those traveling on The Road, or who damages or breaks The Road, stops traffic or causes people to

leave it.

Rule #1 Page [28](#) Comes from Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. The primary axiom of human rights. "No person shall initiate force against another except to retaliate or prevent initiation of force by the other person."

Spray Page [33](#) The act of a man generating spray into a woman or (in the case of a woman) to feel a man spray, inside of you. Also the fluid result. Since people here do not reproduce, spray is not the same as semen, but it is the afterlife equivalent of 'ejaculate'.

Sweepstakes Odds Page [112](#) Normally in a sweepstakes or contest your chances of winning are very low, but since 246 thinks backwards, in this case, 'sweepstakes odds' is something with a very high probability, a near certainty.

Tag Team Page [302](#) When two close friends decide to go under the knife together with a bond, they have a 'tag' in their personality to cause them to have a reason to meet again on earth, to at least give them the chance to find each other

The Road Page [160](#) The highways that run through the Frontier.

Under the knife Page [28](#) To be 'cut loose' from society, go back to earth and be reborn as a baby. Their equivalent of suicide. If involuntary, their version of the death penalty.

U.S. v. Alvarez-Machain Page [295](#) U.S. Supreme Court case where the U.S. sent people into Mexico to kidnap a Mexican National, despite there being an extradition treaty between the two countries, and over the objections of the Mexican government, in order to bring him to the U.S., to stand trial for an alleged crime committed in Mexico (the murder of a DEA agent). The original trial court said it was not legal to do this; the U.S. Supreme Court said it was. I think the closest parallel would be Iran sending some people to kidnap H. Ross Perot from the U.S. to have him stand trial for hiring a mercenary to rescue Perot's employees after the government there grabbed them. (He did this some two years before the Iranians would grab American hostages in the same manner. The difference being that unlike the U.S. attempt to rescue its hostages, he *did* get his people out of the country.) What was most embarrassing about the whole sordid mess was that after all this, Alvarez-Machain was found not guilty at trial.

Violated Page [1](#) To inform someone that they have committed a violation of law, or have broken Rule #1 in that they have initiated force or violence against someone without their consent.

Violate You Six-ways-from-Sunday

 Page [12](#) To exploit someone or to be allowed to exploit them, or to do anything you want to them, whether or not they want you to do that, including things that are unpleasant or painful to them. May or may not be sexual in nature. Where it is sexual, if you're just going to engage in some really hot sex where both of you have fun at it, then you'd be 'fucking each other's brains out'. What was done to the mother in the first, and the daughter in the first two *Death Wish* movies is an example of where the rapists 'violated them six ways to Sunday.' Slim Pickens and his band of Merry Men planned to do this to the women of the town of Rock Ridge by doing a #6 on the town in *Blazing Saddles*, where they would 'rape the shit out of them' at the #6 dance. The eternal torture of Hell - and what it does to you as well as what the supervisors there do to the regular occupants and Incomings - as defined by most religions as an example of a nonsexual way of being 'violated six ways to Sunday'.

Welcomer Page [6](#) Someone whom, seeing an Incoming, decides that this person is sexually attractive and wants to make love and have sex with them, so they mark the person so someone else won't choose them also, then go out to the reception area where the person is, make themselves look attractive to the Incoming, and invite them back to the Welcomer's apartment. The Welcomer shows them a video, answers their questions, then propositions them for sex if the Incoming hasn't tried to proposition them first. If the Incoming does want to have sex with them, then what the Welcomer does is 'love them back into the world'.

One of the things that has started happening in movies, especially comedies, is the use of outtakes at the end of a film. Well, at certain sections of the book, I originally wrote it one way, then changed my mind later because I felt the item didn't work or I expanded upon it or changed it. So, where the material was in the book, there is a marker here for that area. Sometimes the ideas changed. I'll explain my original thoughts and you can see how the focus of the book changed as I figured out what I wanted to say. I thought it might be interesting for people to see how the ideas in a book can change as they are refined into the final work.

Also, there are some places where I make comments about the book; those are included here also.

i From the preface: An editorial "An Overdue Memorial" in the June 23, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* says that "The middle estimate of Stalin's victims is 40 million." Wikipedia's article about him says that some estimate the number to be as low as 9 or 10 million; I know, because I also edited it to include the above item from the *WSJ*. So I'll stick with "over 20 million" as it seems a reasonable number for an unreasonable act.

ii Page 3. Chapter 1, "She isn't going to make the decision either."

In the original text of the first chapter, I originally refer to the main character at the opening and subsequently thereafter as "246." Basically I have to do that; we know nothing about him except that the security guard calls him 246. I changed it so that when Joan refers to him as "Supervisor 246," she continues to do so until he says, "Nearly everyone calls me 246, you can do the same." At that point, I revert to calling him 246. I thought it would make the story work better; when it opens, all we know about him is that he's called 246. When we know his full title, we call him by that, in effect, as a sign of respect. When we know he likes to be treated informally and called 246 after all, I do that. I thought it was cute. Also, the name of the agency got changed from Welcome Department to Welcoming Department. Also, I indicate in a later revision that he arrived from the United States, specifically California, so that the reader knows that while the people there speak English, they are not in the United States. This is originally how it appears.

"Hi Bill, how are you doing?"

"Good afternoon 246."

"I presume that's him there," 246 says, pointing at a man sitting on a bed, with his trousers and underpants pulled down to his ankles.

"Yep. 15022 EN Leroy 504337. Unbelievable, isn't it."

"I was so surprised when I heard. The last time this sort of thing happened was, oh, I can't even remember it's been so long, must have been years ago. Usually it doesn't happen this fast. Can we take him up to my office?"

"The police are already here to take him."

"Oh no they don't! I want him in my office." He turned to his right. "Oh hi, Joan. Let me introduce you, this is Sergeant Bill 774 of Welcome Department Security.

Bill, this is Police Watch Commander Joan 20319.”

“How do you do?”

“Charmed. Where’s the perp?”

“On the bed over there.”

“Okay, well anyway, I have my handcuffs, I’ll take him.” She turned to the man on the bed. “Sir, you can pull your pants up.” The man does so. “You are hereby violated. You have rights under the law and you are advised to say nothing until you are informed of them or have access to counsel.” She reached over and began to put the cuffs on. “You are under arrest for..” She doesn’t get to finish her canned speech as Supervisor 246 interrupts.

“Ah, no.”

She stops. “Supervisor 246, I want this guy.”

”You know the rules, Joan, whoever catches him first owns him. In fact, you’re only allowed in this department because you’re my friend. Normally the police can’t even enter unless my best friend Tom, the Administrator, grants them admission. Now I know he’s your friend too and you can always get him to let you in, but as far as the alleged perpetrator here is concerned, even he won’t overrule me on this. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, as they say, and I caught him first. I’ve got him so he’s mine until I decide whether you can have him. Right now, the answer is no, I want to take him up to my office.”

“How much do you want for him?”

“He’s not for sale. You can’t have him.”

Her response was nearly a scream. “WHAT? You turned *down* a sale?”

“First of all, I don’t know how much he’s worth to me yet; I might discover he’s very valuable and regret later that I sold him to someone for too little. Then, I have to hate myself for a while for allowing myself to be cheated. And I don’t want to hate myself; I love myself too much. Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* is asked to sell a business man one of his golden chocolate egg laying geese for the business man’s daughter, and he says, ‘They’re not for sale, she can’t have one.’ So I present to you the same response.”

“Maybe Willy didn’t want the man’s daughter. I do want *him*.”

“Very funny, Joan. You know what I mean.”

“I’ve never heard you refuse a sale, 246. Name your price.”

“Hmmm. Hmmm.” 246 smiled. “Do you really mean that?”

“I want him. What do you want?”

“Don’t be so quick to ask. You might not like it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Maybe you can’t afford it.”

“Don’t bet on it.”

“Okay, you come work for me in my department for twenty five years. No wait, strike that; you might think it was worth it; I’ve got to make sure the price is too expensive, so you *have* to turn me down. Come work for me for one hundred and twenty five years. For that, you can have him.”

“You’re out of your mind.”

“Absolutely. And I’ll take your response as ‘no’. Since you turned me down, the answer is ‘no’ to you in return. It’s really not my call to make in the first place, but there’s a chance I could have made a big profit out of the deal, and I always look at my own self-interest first; I’m not a humanitarian. But in any case I’m not going to make the decision on which of us he goes with.”

“You’re not?” She smiled. “Okay, I’ll go ask the girl.” She started to leave.

“Joan, dear, before you leave to go bother Anita, it might interest you to know something. She isn’t going to make the decision either.”

“Well who the hell is?”

246 pointed at the man on the bed. “He is. And I can bet you 2000 favors he’ll pick me over you.”

“That’s not fair!”

246 smiled. “Who said death was supposed to be fair, babe?”

“Please?”

“Are you begging?”

“Yes.”

“It doesn’t matter.” He turned to the man on the bed and started to talk very softly, as if he were talking to a small child. “Young man, look at me. Bill, would you get us a couple of chairs, please?. Thank you. Young man, I’d like you to sit down in that chair, if you don’t mind. Thank you. Would you like a glass of water or something?” The man shook his head. “Very well. Do you mind if I sit down here next to you?” The man shook his head again. “Joan, would you like to sit down here next to us?”

“No, I’ll stand.”

“Well, I’m going to sit down right here next to this young man. Now, young man, I’d like to know if you would be willing to tell me your name, or what you would like to be called?”

“Leroy Washington, sir.”

“Okay, ah, Leroy, ah, do you mind if I call you Leroy?”

“Uh, no sir.”

“Okay then, Leroy, my name is Supervisor 246. You don’t have to call me sir, just about everyone calls me 246 so you can do the same thing if you’d like, okay?”

“Okay.”

246 points at her. “You can probably recognize by the fact that she’s wearing a uniform, that this nice lady standing next to me, whose name is Joan, by the way, is the Police Watch Commander. In fact, Leroy, would you be willing to stand up, say hello and shake hands with Joan?”

iiiPage [92](#), Chapter [20](#), “...almost everything you know is *wrong*.”

For the original first scene where 246 meets David, originally, I wanted some excuse to get in the comment about “If rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it.” Later I would have 246 go in and meet David in order to have Marie blow out the measuring meter so I could insert her story in at that point. At the time when 246 is in David’s office explaining his report to him I was not aware how I would write the rape scene and did not know then it

would turn into a crisis intervention and was going to make 246 look ‘mercenary’ rather than simply greedy. Then again, you might not see any difference! Basically the whole point was to get in the dialog “That doesn’t make any sense.” and “You haven’t been here very long.” Later I decided that he would query his boss on whether he knew why 246 was taking it less seriously, with the technologies they have to make rape, or rather, the injury from rape impossible. This is the original scene.

Supervisor 246 is in the office of Manager 12032, his boss, who is having a bit of trouble with what he’s reading, especially since he’s new on the job. “246, I’m looking at your report, and I want to ask you about one item.”

246 Looks at him. “I think I know which one.”

“Now let me get this straight, one of your women was raped by one of the Incomings.”

“Yes.”

“And you filed *that* under ‘trivial incidents?’”

“Yeah. I’ve got him sitting on ice while I decide. I am asking for advice from some of the others in the department. We’re trying to decide whether to hold onto him, toss him into the general pool of holdouts until we can fix him, send him back, or possibly lead him around on a leash as a pet. I’m getting a number of recommendations for the last one. No biggie anyway in terms of what happened.”

“You seem to be treating this incident as less than a serious matter. A man was in a woman’s apartment and raped her.”

“A *staff* woman’s apartment. Not just an ordinary woman. A woman who took a staff assignment here. Otherwise it would have been taken more seriously.”

Manager 12032 reads from the report. “Okay, a man was in a staff woman’s apartment, pushed her down on the bed, she said to him, ‘Hold on a minute.’ He ripped off her panties, pulled his trousers down and jumped on her, saying ‘shut up bitch, you know you love it,’ then assaulted her for 45 minutes. Your report stated that she did not try to stop it because - and I’m quoting you here - ‘she was so amazed by what had happened she didn’t think to react, and at the time she was having so much fun that she forgot to make him stop.’”

246 Nodded. “That’s correct.”

“This doesn’t make any sense.”

“You haven’t been here very long.”

“Supervisor 246, I can kind of understand that in this line of business there may be a tendency to have less respect for women, but I do not believe that the subject of sexual assault deserves the old macho stereotype of ‘If rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it.’ No woman should have to put up with that kind of attitude by a man, especially from a supervisor such as yourself. And why hasn’t this man been turned over to the authorities since apparently this business is legitimate here?”

“First we’re not in a line of business, we give it away. Second, I got a contact from the cops when they found out about it. I told them we caught him first, we’ve got him, and ‘possession is nine points of the law’ as the saying goes. If they want him, I’ll rent him out for a negotiated fee but I get him back.”

“You would *rent* him out? And you’d want him *back*?”

“Yeah. A lot of cops would love the opportunity to beat the shit out of this guy.

Well, he doesn’t have any in him to start with but that’s beside the point.”

“Okay, I’m kind of new here and this sort of vigilante justice is strange to me. But what about the poor victim?”

“Anita 71603? Fine, fine, not like they haven’t tried this before. And probably will again.”

“You’re acting like this is not a serious matter.”

Supervisor 246 decided that he had better figure out how much this guy knows about what is going on, he seems so clueless. “Sir, may I ask how you got this position?”

ivPage [99](#), Chapter [21](#), “Greedy Bastard”

If you go to an Office Depot catalog, change the first three numbers I use in both examples to the current catalog number, you’ll find there is an actual desk and chair that really do use that number. The last 6 digits of the Office Depot catalog number for the desk and chair are correct (I’ve seen them in more than one catalog with the same last six digits), the first three have been changed as they tell you which catalog they came from, which would tell you what year I wrote that part or it would date the story to a specific time period.

vPage [99](#), Chapter [21](#), “Greedy Bastard”

When writing the SQL for the room redecoration, I was kind of tired. Later I realized I made a mistake, then I decided to leave it in, in order to make 246 more “human” by showing that even as careful as you would suspect he’d be, he still makes mistakes from time-to-time.

viPage [101](#), Chapter [21](#), “Greedy bastard.”

When I originally started writing this, a Canadian Dollar was worth about 0.65 U.S. Cents, so I set the rate at 55 Canadian = 40 U.S. so as not to date it to a specific period. Since then, this has inverted, so I decided to make 55 Canadian = 80 U.S. Thus I had to raise the amount that 720 favors are worth from US\$28,000 to US\$56,000.

viiPage [108](#), Chapter [24](#), “Call it *Future Shock* on an exponential scale.”

When I was writing this I felt I needed some means to explain why everyone spoke English and all the other things but I wasn’t sure if it was a good plot device. I decided to see if perhaps breaking character and entering the story might work as a bridge. In the mean time I actually found it did work once I fleshed it out more.

“I see. And just 10,000 people? I thought the numbers were higher. I mean, Blue Oyster Cult sings a song called Don’t Fear the Reaper, which says that 40,000 people die every day.”

“That’s probably worldwide numbers. This particular town only handles Incoming people who think in English. There are reception areas elsewhere that handle other languages. It makes it easier... Oh hell, that’s enough of this crap. Central Computer, Stop Story. Paul! Paul!”

“I heard you already, “ I said, “What do you want?”

“I have heard of thin plot devices, but I’ve seen molecular bonds that were thicker than this.”

“Yeah, well it was the best thing I could think of at the time.”

“Yeah, well it makes me sick.”

“You can’t be sick, 246,” I said, “You don’t have a stomach or intestine.”

“Oh yeah, right. Darn.”

“Darn?”

“Fuck you.”

“That’s more like it. Okay, how about I try to think of a better plot device to explain why everyone in the story understands English, okay?”

“Okay. Now make me forget this whole scene before I quit and find a better writer.”

“Central Computer, revoke stop story privilege from Supervisor 246. Central Computer, rewind story one paragraph. Central Computer, Restart Story,” I said.

246 resumed where he had left off. “That’s probably worldwide numbers. This particular town only handles Incoming people who think in English. There are reception areas elsewhere that handle other languages. It makes it easier...” Something made him feel he was supposed to say something here, but he could not remember what it was. He continued, “It makes it easier to manage since otherwise we would have to have every possible language everywhere, or people could not understand what was around them, they could not communicate, they could not operate in a technologically advanced society which is dependent on computer support. You wouldn’t want someone to go to the recycling center when they intended to go to the Main Entrance, now, would you?” He smiled.

viiiPage [118](#), Chapter [27](#), “I have an Armada Signal.”

Originally I was going to have 246 explain in much broader terms why I (through him) disagreed with the primary plot device in the book *Down to a Sunless Sea*. And I get to throw in an item from *Atlas Shrugged*.

“I think I asked you what that was about because the exact same term was used to indicate World War III and the end of the world in the book *Down to a Sunless Sea*.”

“That is exactly what it is for. That was a great book. I knew that the reason that they had Britain become the economic powerhouse again and the U.S. becomes a disaster area was a plot device, but I wish they could have figured some other way than oil as the key as I didn’t think it was everything. What was it Ayn Rand said about agriculture?”

“You can run a country’s agriculture using horse and oxcart if you had to.”

ixPage [166](#), Chapter [36](#), “Request permission to ‘up Chuck’ sir.”

Here, 246 gets it wrong, at least slightly. The Fourth Geneva Convention says that a Lawful Combatant must wear “fixed distinctive insignia recognizable at a distance” while 246 said “a distinct fixed insignia recognizable at a distance.” Yes, it’s nit picking but, it also shows that he’s not a perfect machine, he’s human.

xPage [167](#), Chapter [36](#), “Request permission to ‘up Chuck’ sir.”

I kind of realized later that the whole bar scene is reminiscent of the bar scene in *Star Wars*, although the scenes aren’t really that close. Maybe more like the bar scene in *Airplane!*

xiPage [206](#), Chapter [45](#), “Of course I care about feelings, I’m ... in a whorehouse, not a steel mill.”

Actually, it’s Rearden’s *mother* who asks Rearden to give his brother a job on the basis of pity. Later in *Atlas Shrugged*, Phillip begs Rearden for a job with the implied threat that he could have had some of his friends in Government force Rearden to take him. (Phillip then realizes with horror that there are so many ways that he could be killed in a steel mill due to industrial accident if Rearden got mad at him that he decides it would not be a good idea.)

xiiPage [218](#), Chapter [47](#), “Because you’re afraid to admit that you are homosexual..”

Note that in the text I mention that someone with a video camera was recording the whole thing. When I originally wrote this I said they were *taping* it. The first video camera our family had - probably in the late 1960s or early 1970s - made movies using silent 8mm film. Later, we owned a video tape camera. I personally now own a video camera (and since I wrote this I bought two more inexpensive ones) which records onto a memory card as a video file. So I realize that using the term “taping” dates the story. However, note that in an earlier chapter, Marilyn is still using a video cassette to show David a 246 a scene from *The Evening News*.

xiiiPage [218](#), Chapter [47](#), “Because you’re afraid to admit that you are homosexual..”

I wrote this scene several *years* before Quentin Tarantino produced *Inglorious Basterds*, so I had to change the scene so that having the misspelling be a result of popular culture rather than because the guy is ignorant or stupid.

xivPage [223](#), Chapter [49](#), “246 Strikes Again.”

If you noticed carefully, when 246 is walking through the Picketing Zone, one of the signs says “Ajax Notary sucks, ask me about Wilson’s Notary,” but when he calls Wilson’s and discovers he can’t get a Board Certified Notary, he says “Gee, the guy in the picketing zone was right, they do suck,” referring to Wilson’s Notary, even though the sign criticized Ajax. This was intentional to show that 246 isn’t perfect, he still makes mistakes from time to time, same as you or me.

xvPage [231](#), Chapter [52](#), ““..if I must be Recycled, let it be said, this was my finest hour.””

This quote is actually a mashup of two of Winston Churchill’s speeches. The first being, in part, “we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender” and the second

being "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

Old Winnie is probably spinning in his grave after what 246 did to his comments. Or whatever people spin in when they're in the Afterlife, if they are.
xviiPage [292](#), Chapter, [71](#), "Well, you're half right."

This is also true in my case, I read Robert Bork's book on Antitrust Law years before he went through the Supreme Court confirmation hearings. It was so far back that I had borrowed it at the time from the main branch of the Los Angeles Public Library *before* it had the fire.
xviiiPage [329](#), Chapter [82](#), "Plan to sacrifice a few virgins, perhaps?"

After doing the two "who vs. whom" jokes, the first involving General Ryland on page [594](#), and the one involving the earth representative to the afterlife on page [607](#), I realized, having re-read the section, on page [641](#) where 246 says "He's going to run through the crosswalk and probably kill whoever he runs over", the grammatically correct term would be "whomever" but if I fix it, it shows he's fairly good at the rule and wouldn't need to learn anything. Unlike me, for example.
xixPage [431](#), Chapter [104](#), "All you get from women out at the Frontier is very low grade sex."

About a year after writing how Melanie died - by being on a bridge which collapsed during an earthquake - the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota collapsed, so I decided to change this section in that the bridge collapsed and she landed in the water, that way you couldn't identify *which* bridge she was on. Maybe it's that one, or maybe it's one in New Orleans, or the one in New Jersey, or the next expected bridge collapse in California, or someplace else.
xixPage [436](#), Chapter [105](#), "...the rides don't always work right..."

To get the idea of what the Amusement Park looks like, I'm thinking of something like a cross between the Fashion Island / Newport Center shopping center and office complex and Disneyland or Knott's Berry Farm, all of which are located in Orange County, California. I first saw Fashion Island and the surrounding office complex perhaps 30 years ago, and it amazed me. Just consider a huge office complex, like a bunch of large buildings in the middle of an enormous amusement park (these contain the things that require space but can be stacked on top of each other on separate floors, like swimming pools and bowling alleys). Roller coasters are outside because they have to be on an expanse of land and spread out. If you were doing the same thing on computers, call it something like the world building capability of *Roller Coaster Tycoon* meets *Sim City* meets *Doom*, *Duke Nukem 3* and *Half Life 2* (minus the monsters) and put yourself in the middle of it as opposed to just watching it through a monitor, with the ability to change the world in any fashion you see fit, and you'll get some strange and wonderful

inventions, things we couldn't do in reality.

xxPage [447](#), Chapter [109](#), “This is to show ... the individual is much more important than the State.”

Some translations of the Bible have this section as “In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you”, which, in my opinion, doesn't make any sense.

xxiPage [516](#), Chapter [124](#), “Do you really expect us to believe that crap you just told us?”

Notwithstanding what they say in the video game *Portal*, in this case the cake is *not* a lie.

xxiiPage [563](#), Chapter [137](#), “If they don't have vacuum tubes, how do they have television?”

This is an interesting case where in this book I use two very similar words. 246 is holding a copy of a legal statute, which is an *ordinance*. Elsewhere in the story I refer to weapons and explosives, which are *ordnance*. Just like with 246's pet peeve, the difference between who and whom, people sometimes confuse them.

xxiiiPage [564](#), Chapter [137](#), “If they don't have vacuum tubes, how do they have television?”

It's been pointed out that the RFD-TV network, which carries a lot of rural television programs, such as tractor pulls and such, operates a full 24 hour cable/satellite network with something around 20 people, fewer than some local TV stations.

xxivPage [564](#), Chapter [137](#), “If they don't have vacuum tubes, how do they have television?”

When I originally wrote this, Ellen worked for Queen's University of California at Los Angeles, then 246 decided to follow her home and so she had to live closer to Albuquerque, and since her world doesn't have airplanes, the trip had to be by fast train, which meant someplace reachable in 3 or 4 hours. I realized that it's just historical accident that movie and television production ended up in Los Angeles, you can study television shows just about anywhere, so she does from Colorado Springs. Note that I said “246 decided to follow her home” I didn't say “I changed my mind and had 246 follow her home,” the more I'm writing this story the more it seems like I'm just reporting what's already happened rather than I'm making up something.

xxvPage [572](#), Chapter [139](#), “...let me guess, you're still in character...”

I have been working on this story for five years, and this is the first time that I 'discovered' that 246 had been a motorcycle courier in college. See, he doesn't even tell *me* everything!

xxviPage [614](#), Chapter [147](#), “...if I didn't know better I'd say... they came... from another universe...”

If your curious about that item about the movie *Murder on the Orient Express*, it's because, yes, I saw it, (no, I'm not from Asia, I just threw that in to get in the item about keywords) and yes, I thought it was terrible, the worst movie I'd ever seen and yes, I was

disgusted because I had to sit through all of it because I wanted to know who the killer was, but I'll be damned if I remember now, I think everyone on the train stabbed the guy. I had to wait probably 20-30 years before I saw another movie as bad, *Fargo*.
xxviiPage [633](#), Chapter [155](#), "This particular part of my vacation isn't fun."

I wrote this part two years before Sirius/XM merged, predicting they would, eventually. At the time I decided the merged company would end up being XM/Sirius, then I decided to leave it that way to give an important clue: 246 is from yet another universe that is almost the same as but not exactly ours.
xxviiiPage [636](#), Chapter [156](#), "...once a politician is bought he'd better stay bought..."

One of the times that I visited the Five Guys in Alexandria, Virginia, and actually put the card up on the wall with Supervisor 246's words. They generally remove the cards people post after a while, but I thought it would be cute to do it for real.
xxixPage [682](#), Chapter [170](#), "What was I supposed to do?"

Originally, Diane mentions how, in the context of her husband fucking her babysitter that some girls use birth control pills as a check on acne as well as for contraception. That's when I realized it was a better line to use in the context of being able to explain 246's first time.