

A MIGHTY FORTRESS



H. A. Covington

A Mighty Fortress

by H. A. Covington

I.

“Be a gentleman tonight, and don’t clip any of the bimbos.” – Bobby Bells

Kelly Marie Shipman and William Cody Brock were both born on the same day in June. Both of them lived in Washington state. Both were newly graduated seniors at Hillside High School in Seattle, and both gratefully received welcome birthday presents from their friends and family. For her gift on the day she turned eighteen years old, Kelly received a new car from her proud and doting parents. To celebrate his eighteenth birthday, Cody got to kill a man.

Kelly’s birthday began at seven o’clock on a fine summer morning, when she bounded down the stairs of her home in the affluent Seattle suburb of Mercer Island, a bundle of joyful youth and energy and anticipation at the beginning of her life. She was tall and leggy, an athletically perfect blonde teenager with ivory skin, crystalline blue eyes, and a killer smile of capped teeth that had set her father back almost ten grand. He had been able to deduct the dental work as a business expense, since Kelly had been modeling for advertisements and acting in commercials and on local television since she was three years old. The profits she made were scrupulously placed into a special trust for her by her father, who was administrator of the trust but who wasn’t above spending it on his daughter, especially if it gave him a good tax write-off. The Shipman family lived in one of the last remaining small islands of the American dream, in a split-level ranch dwelling located in a gated community which was flawlessly landscaped, well lit, and discreetly fortified against the outside world. The house had six large bedrooms, a swimming pool, a basement rec room containing more sports and games and entertainment gear than the downtown YMCA, and a capacious garage containing at any given time at least four late model motor vehicles, including her father’s prized Ferrari. The house carried a mortgage larger than the municipal debt of some American towns, but the Shipmans could afford it. They were among those lucky Americans who were not only still employed, but very gainfully so indeed. Kelly’s father, Dr. Edward Shipman, was a cardiologist who ran his own clinic and HMO in Seattle. His company provided three essential services: heart attack and stroke recovery, emphysema home care including home oxygen supplies, and out-patient AIDS and HIV care. Dr. Shipman used to remark wryly that “Our clinic cashes in on the three great health disasters of the past hundred years: smoking, AIDS, and the American diet.”

He wasn’t joking. With Medicare and Medicaid long gone the way of Social Security, Shipman’s HMO catered only to the dwindling number of Americans who either still had health insurance, or who were sufficiently wealthy to pay for the services of himself and his doctor-partners to keep them alive. Doctor Shipman had also developed a reputation for discretion which brought him a number of special celebrity patients whom he treated for assorted embarrassing conditions in a consulting room tucked away in his home. Kelly’s mom, the elegantly attired and flawlessly presented Marty Shipman, was senior vice president of a major medical supply firm linked with the HMO, and Kelly herself had already brought in more money in her lifetime of modeling and minor acting gigs than some blue-collar workers ever earned in their lives. The American dream was very much alive in the Shipman household.

This morning Kelly was attired in spotless, glistening tennis whites. She was holding a covered racket under one arm, while in a tote bag over one shoulder she carried jeans, shoes, and a knitted top. “Tennis this early, Kel?” asked her father, looking up from the breakfast table. Shipman was a tall and distinguished-looking, avuncular man with a suave bedside manner which stood him in good stead with his well-heeled patients. “Tomorrow morning I could see, since you’re going to have a huge birthday dinner to work off,” he continued. “How’s eight o’clock at the Belvedere sound? And you can certainly bring Molly along.”

“Why not invite Craig as well?” suggested her mother, referring to Kelly’s intermittent boyfriend. She approved of Craig Crabtree wholeheartedly. Dr. Shipman wasn’t quite so certain. There were one or two dimly perceived warning flags up in his mind regarding young Crabtree, although he couldn’t have explained why. Something in the boy’s manner, a slight oiliness, a few small but definite indications of dishonesty, a little too casual interest in the drugs cabinet in Shipman’s home surgery had put him on his guard where Craig was concerned. Shipman looked at the young beauty at his breakfast table in silent wonder. He knew that she had been a woman for a good while now, and today would make it official. Once again he fought down his panic and his fear at the terrible world she was about to enter, where he could no longer protect her. In the America of this day, to love a child meant quiet, lifelong terror.

“Great, Dad! They’ve got a ricotti quiche to die for!” laughed Kelly. “And I already invited Molly to wherever we’re going.” She pointedly did not mention Crabtree, which her father found relieving. Maybe they were having another spat, and maybe this time it would last. He was honest enough to admit to himself that it wasn’t just that he didn’t want his daughter with Craig Crabtree. He didn’t want her with anyone. Not until she was thirty. Or thirty-five.

“Well, good, because that’s where we made the reservations,” said her mother, who kissed her daughter’s cheek. “Happy birthday, honey!”

“Don’t worry, I’m hitting the court tomorrow as well and every morning for a while,” Kelly told her father as she sat down at the table. “I’ve got a couple pounds I need to drop before they get too comfortable on my butt, so I’m going to get in a couple of sets with Molly before class starts every day. We can change in the locker room.”

“Oh, Kel, for heaven’s sake, you are not fat!” exclaimed her mother in exasperation.

“The scale decrees otherwise,” replied Kelly. “Manny says I’m now at optimum weight and I need to nip any gain in the bud before it gets to be a problem.” The Emmanuel Skar Agency was representing Kelly’s talent down in Hollywood.

Kelly and her best friend and tennis partner Molly Bergstrom were beginning their first day of AT, Advanced Track summer school at Hillside High School. AT was one of the many dodges that genuinely concerned teachers and administrators had developed in order to try and salvage something out of the ghastly wreckage of the American educational system, without actually admitting publicly that it was a ghastly wreck. These days the public schools consisted of little more than social and political engineering with a heavy dose of mandatory diversity training and multicultural brainwashing, essentially warehousing the kids until it was time for a few of them to go

on to college and most of them to go into the army or the workforce. Stripped of all its politically correct psychobabble, the Advanced Track was essentially a way of making sure that at least some of the high school's student body, those who were capable of learning, actually got some kind of education. In this manifestation, AT took the form of a selection of college-level courses for academically gifted students, i.e. those who could read beyond the level of the TV Guide and those who had demonstrated that they could at least think a little on their own. Even though she had already graduated from Hillside, Kelly was attending a dramatic arts class for those who wanted to get into acting and cinema as a profession, partly for the practice and partly for something to do over the summer before she entered UCLA in September. Kelly was majoring at the university's School of Acting, and had already arranged her class schedule around her latest movie; students at the School of Acting got course credit for actually working on set in any capacity.

She had begun her serious acting career that spring, i.e. her first actual movie and her first venture outside the limited Seattle market. By special permission from Hillside High, Kelly had taken her final course exams in March, which she had aced with straight A's as she always did. She had then spent April and May in Hollywood, on the set of the movie studio. She had landed an extensive supporting role in a Grade B-Plus teenaged romance flick filmed in Hollywood for a major cable network. The male lead was a rising and arrogant young star with blow-dried hair and a \$700 dollar per day cocaine habit at age seventeen. The female lead was a mediocre actress, aged twenty-eight but playing seventeen, who successfully gained plum roles through her expertise on the casting couch and didn't care who knew it. In the movie, Kelly Shipman played the female lead's best friend, her character being the head cheerleader that Kelly was at Hillside High in real life. The role had started with a good allotment of speaking screen time for Kelly's character Jill, and the director had been sufficiently impressed with Kelly's talent and camera presence actually to write in some more for her, largely in order to shore up the lead starlet's lackluster performance.

Her newly acquired agent Manny Skar had assured her that the exposure would be noticed, and Manny's prediction was already proving valid. Although her first movie wasn't even released yet, Kelly Shipman had already been signed for another movie, a Disease of the Month made-for-television weepy wherein she got to play not the sick girl, but once again the best friend. "Don't worry, you'll be past the sidekick stage in another flick or two," Manny assured her ebulliently, waving his cigar in the air as he sat behind his desk. "You've got ingenue written all over you. In between B's I can get you into some C horror and slasher flicks too, if you want. Every star needs at least one bow-wow in their youth they'd rather forget it when they make it to major stardom. It's kind of a Hollywood tradition." At the same client conference before she returned to Seattle for graduation, Skar had also made some insinuating suggestions about how Kelly could go a lot farther in the business if she would agree to at least take her top off on camera. Kelly, who was by no means a dumb blonde, had gotten the clear signal that it would also materially assist her career if she agreed to take her top off in Manny's office as well, on a regular basis. She had firmly but diplomatically turned the conversation in other directions, and Manny had taken the hint with good grace. This time, anyway. Kelly decided there was no point in mentioning any of this to her parents. She would deal with it when she moved to California, and Skar wasn't the only agency in Hollywood. "What time is summer school class over?" asked her mother. "Three o'clock," said her daughter. "Molly wants me to go over to her house afterward. I think she's planning a surprise party, although I haven't let on I know."

"Well, make sure you get back in time for your birthday dinner tonight," said Ed. "And don't eat too much cake and nachos."

"Oh, don't worry, I won't be late. After all, you two have to give me my present," said Kelly with a smile.

"Your present will be rather hard to fit into a restaurant," said Ed. "Oh, what the hell, might as well give it to you now. You're going to see it when you leave anyway. Take a look outside in the driveway." Kelly looked out the window and saw a brand new silver Ford Explorer sitting on the concrete with a large red bow and ribbon wrapped around it. She squealed in delight and ran outside.

"Fully loaded, of course, all-wheel drive, front and side air bags," said her father as her parents followed her outside, beaming. "Leather upholstery, full climate control since you will definitely be needing the air conditioning in L.A., CD player and DVD screen in the back seat for your passengers, and fold down back seats for the move. I'm driving you down to California, by the way, and no argument. The keys are in it. Just what the budding young movie star needs to be tooling down Rodeo Drive and Hollywood Boulevard," said Ed.

"Now come back inside and eat your breakfast. You'll have time enough to drive it over the summer. By September it will be old hat."

"Oh, Daddy, it's wonderful!" said Kelly, hugging him.

"Yeah, well, when you sign your first million-dollar contract I expect a second Ferrari from you for my birthday," said Ed.

"You got it," laughed Kelly, and Ed understood she meant it. The cable news was coming on the kitchen TV, with the newscaster describing the latest suicide bombing against the American occupation forces in Saudi Arabia. The screen showed a roadside in a desert background with several burning American military vehicles in the foreground. Ed Shipman hit the remote to mute the sound of the tube. "No, leave it on!" insisted Kelly. "I want to see."

"It's just the same old depressing crap," countered her father defensively. "Nothing new ever happens over there. Good grief, honey, don't we get enough terrorist bombs here in Seattle? You've seen more than enough horrible scenes like that riding by on the freeway. Why do you want to see them on the television?"

"Yes, but with Jason over there in Saudi I want to keep up with what's going on," said Kelly, sitting down and buttering her whole wheat toast.

"Which is why your mother and I have acquired the habit of ignoring the news," said Ed quietly. "A habit I recommend you adopt, Kel. It's not as if we can do anything about it, so why dwell on it? We could have gotten Jason out of military service on a college deferment if he'd let us, but he was a real man about it and wanted to do his bit for America, which is admirable of him but pretty wearing on our nerves. What if one day you're watching the news and you see your brother dead on CNN? That's happened, you know, more than once."

Kelly pouted. "I know, Daddy. We've been fighting in the Middle East now for how long? Almost since before I was born. Nobody my age can remember when there was no war, at least no war in the Middle East, I mean, not the war here in Seattle."

"There's no war in Seattle, there's just a lot of horrible crime and terrorism committed by crazy redneck white supremacists," said Marty angrily, pausing with a fork of poached egg in midair.

"The spuckies aren't white supremacists, Mom, they're white separatists," said Kelly, buttering her toast and adding grape jelly. "And who told you that?" asked Ed suspiciously. "You haven't been reading those damned illegal leaflets scattered everywhere, have you?"

"No, it's on the news talk shows. That's why I watch the news, and I will keep on doing so," she said primly. "There's nothing wrong with keeping informed. Whatever you want to call it, either here or in the Middle East, it's obviously not going to be over any time soon. Everybody needs to keep up with what's going on in the world. You can't let yourself be worried every time a bomb goes off over there. Or here."

"Well, at least this one's not in downtown Seattle," said Ed in disgust.

"Not today, anyway," said Kelly.

"I swear to God, I think your mother and I are going to have a nervous breakdown!" complained Ed. "We worry ourselves sick about Jason getting killed by Muslim lunatics in Saudi Arabia, and you getting killed by the white racist lunatics here just by being in the wrong place at the wrong time! I'll be glad when you can move down to L.A. and get the hell out of here, and that's something I never thought you'd hear me say. Believe it or not, we left California twenty years ago partly because of all the violence, so you kids could have some kind of decent life."

"And also to get away from the Mexicans?" asked Kelly impishly.

"Jesus, honey, don't say that even in jest!" cried Ed in horror. "Kelly, do you know what could happen if you made a remark like that in public and—and somebody heard, and it was misconstrued..."

"You mean if some informer called the Hatecrime Hotline and turned me in for the reward?" asked Kelly in a sour voice. "Yes, Daddy, I know. Jennifer Flagler in my biology class was ratted out to the Hatecrime Hotline, and Mark Jenot from the tennis team too because he told an African-American person joke. The Fatties came and took them away to be denazified and have their brains washed squeaky clean. So don't worry, I promise I shall commit no inappropriate japery in public."

"I mean it, Kel! It could ruin any chance you ever have to make it in movies!" warned her father sternly. "A denazification course on your resumé won't exactly impress all those Jewish producers and casting directors, never mind your Jewish agent, even if it is just over some careless offhand remark. I don't want you to end up working in a grocery store checkout your whole life because of some inappropriate joke you made as a teenager! You've worked too long and hard and you've got too much talent for that!"

"I know. Oh, Daddy, don't worry!" she exclaimed, her mouth full of muesli now. "I grew up here, remember? The Trouble has been going on for five years now. Jeez, I know what to say and what not to say in public!"

"And that goes for when you move to L.A. as well," said Ed.

"There aren't any spuckies in Los Angeles," said Kelly. "Down there it's the crime, the Somali gang-bangers, and the junkies. I hardly got to go out at all when I was in Hollywood, except for a couple of daytime tours to Grauman's Chinese theater to see all the stars' names in the sidewalk. The studio surrounded us girls with armed guards like we were gem-encrusted. About all I saw of L.A. was through the windows of the shuttle bus between the cast condos and the sets. From what I smelled of the air, I didn't miss much. At least the studios and condos had air conditioning and air filters. The security was tighter there than in the Federal building downtown, and they're not fighting a revolution in Los Angeles. And you know, that's at least one thing you can say for the goots. They ran all the gang-bangers and street trash out of Seattle. If you don't get blown up in one of their bombs, they've actually made the city a lot safer."

"Now what did I just say about making silly statements like that?" snapped Dr. Shipman.

"Kelly, please!" wailed her mother. "You mustn't say such things! Don't you know that under the latest executive order on speechcrime, now your father or I can be arrested as well if someone overhears you?"

"Not to mention what the goots themselves might do if any of them overheard you calling them goots," put in Ed, his voice urgent.

"Kelly, please take this seriously and watch what you say out loud! These people are heartless murderers, and whatever you may think, they don't just murder minorities! I know because we have to take overflow from the emergency rooms every time there's a major bombing! At the very least, even if they didn't kill you, these bastards might kneecap you with a gun or break your legs with a baseball bat if you said something they didn't like, and the situation has gotten so out of hand that most likely nothing would be done about it if they did!"

"Number one, Hillside High is a rich kids' school and there aren't any goots there," Kelly responded. "Goots are all trailer trash who drop meth, and auto shop kids. Our shop kids at Hillside all practice on their parents' Lexus. Number two, you two can't be arrested, not after today, anyway. I'm eighteen and you're no longer legally responsible for what goes on in my mind." She looked up at the television. "Well, speak of the devil! That's the Eastgate Mall! Turn it up!"

She grabbed the remote and unmuted the small TV. The cable news program's dramatic music and the well-known Terror on the Home Front logo in the background came on, the canned lead-in they always used for NVA activities. Terror on the Home Front was replaced by an unctuous middle-aged white man in a suit. For many years the station's regular reader in this slot had been a Chinese woman, but she had suddenly disappeared from the television screen without explanation several months before. The newscaster spoke in the grimly solemn tones reserved for reporting rebel strikes. "Two members of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization were shot and killed last night at around 8 PM in the Eastgate Mall. A caller to Station KSTA news who identified himself with an authenticated code word stated that the action was carried out by members of B Company, Number Two Seattle Brigade of the Northwest Volunteer Army."

"Why don't they call these racist bastards terrorists any more?" demanded Martha Shipman irritably. "Why isn't there any sense of outrage like there used to be back when all this started?"

"Because Jerry Reb will shoot the media people if they call them terrorists and make a big deal out of it," said Kelly. "Everybody knows that. What do you think happened to Gloria Tang? They kidnapped Jeannie Vandenberg and tattooed swastikas on her butt, and ever since then the news media are too scared to say anything really bad about them. They just call it balance now."

"Jerry Reb?" groaned Ed. "Is that the latest you kids have come up with? Oh, beautiful! You'd think these racist murderers were some kind of heroes now!"

The local news announcer went on to report that the two off-duty officers of the FATPO, a man and a woman in civilian clothes, had apparently been followed into the upscale Belvedere restaurant on the upper level of the Eastgate shopping mall in Kirkland by two unidentified White males, and had been shot dead at their table. There followed two artists' photofits of the suspects, one a middle-aged man, smooth-shaven with dark hair. The second gunman was a younger man with long blond hair and a beard. The suspects had fled through a fire exit into the mall's parking area and escaped. Then came police mug shots of a craggy-faced, red-headed man of about forty-five, scowling into the cameras. "The Number Two Seattle Brigade is believed to be commanded by this man, James R. Graham. Department of Homeland Security spokesman told KSTA News that in view of the latest racially motivated criminal activities of the NVA in Seattle, they are raising the Domestic Terrorist Bounty for Graham's capture or termination to one million dollars." Kelly noticed her parents had turned slightly green.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I think we'd better cancel our reservations at the Belvedere for tonight," said Ed. "Marty, do you think we could order in something really nice and catered?"

"My God, if my birthday had been one day earlier we might have gotten caught in the middle of an NVA hit!" said Kelly excitedly. "As it is I'll probably just get waiters and waitresses singing Happy Birthday!"

"You think all this horror is funny?" asked Dr. Shipman, annoyed.

"Well, not if I was the one getting shot, I wouldn't," said Kelly reasonably. "Everybody else thinks it's exciting, though. When all the other girls down on the Cheerleader Love set heard I was from Seattle they all wanted to know what it was like living in a war zone. They were disappointed when I had to tell them I'd never actually seen a shooting or a bombing. Just a lot of black guys and bull dykes in body armor riding around in Humvees, and both of 'em trying to look down my top at the checkpoints. But I did get some funny looks when I came to a cast conference wearing a blue, white and green pants suit."

"So that's what we're famous for now?" groaned Ed. "Terrorism?"

"Well, what did the Northwest have to be famous for before the spuckies came along?" asked Kelly. "Rain and Sasquatch. At least there's no question that Jerry Reb exists."

* * *

Just as Kelly Shipman was rolling out of her driveway in Mercer Island, on the way to Hillside High and the tennis courts in her new Explorer, a black Ford sedan with tinted windows and Federal government license plates pulled into a grass-grown alley beside a dilapidated-looking two-story house with peeling paint in the north Seattle suburb of Ballard, just off 85th Street. The car slid into the back yard and turned around, ready to make a quick exit. A man got out. He was a tall and rangy individual wearing a rumpled blue pastel shirt and tie and a light sports jacket. The second man who emerged from an upstairs apartment in the house and came down the outside stairs to greet him was shorter and stockier, and nattily dressed in full Brooks Brothers ensemble. "Any problems coming in?" asked the man in the suit.

"You were right, there's a new Fattie checkpoint on the 520," said the tall man. "Thanks for the heads up. I hate the thought of getting boxed in on a bridge. They got Tagger Thornton on a bridge." In the bright morning sunlight they climbed back up the outer stairs and entered the upstairs apartment. The room had an air conditioner, a device increasingly common in Seattle. Due to global warming, the Puget Sound summers were becoming hot and muggy to the point of being genuinely uncomfortable. The air conditioner was suddenly switched on, although it wasn't really that hot this early in the morning. But the electric motors of older window air conditioners could also interfere with shotgun mikes and bugging attempts.

The house was one of the many floating headquarters of the Northwest Volunteer Army's Number Three Seattle Brigade. The building was owned by a cranky old lady who lived on the first floor, and who appeared to be not only deaf but deranged whenever anyone attempted to speak to her. Mrs. Sweetzer wasn't unbalanced, unless it was through hate and grief since her only daughter had been abducted from the convenience store where she worked, then raped and murdered by black gangstas many years before. Her house was now divided up into cheaply furnished apartments with plastic furniture, stained porcelain in the bathrooms, and cracked linoleum on the floor. Officially all the apartments were occupied by elderly people on pensions or private charity doles of various kinds (Social Security was long gone) as well other residents with Hispanic and Asian names that were listed on the doorbell. A truly diverse dwelling, if you looked at the mailboxes and doorbells. No one ever actually saw many other tenants in or around the building, diverse or otherwise, but the house was isolated by large green hedges on one side and the brick wall of a paint store on the other, and was the soul of nondescript, so few people ever actually looked. The boarding house was used as a transit point, arms dump, occasional field hospital, and conference and training facility by the Third Brigade. The blatantly governmental vehicle which had just parked in the back yard was a form of camouflage occasionally used by the brigadier and his executive officer. There were all kinds of spook cars rolling around Seattle these days, and the citizenry had learned to look the other way and pretend they didn't see, which was the way the NVA wanted it.

Commandant Frank Barrow, commanding officer of Number Three Brigade, was the tall and tired-looking man in his late thirties who had arrived in the black ZOGmobile. He took off his jacket and eased down into one of the plastic armchairs, in front of the air conditioner, removing a nine-millimeter Beretta pistol from the belt clip at the small of his back and setting in on a lamp table beside the chair. "Damn, I never can get used to it being hot in Seattle," he grumbled, stretching back to catch the cool air from the air conditioner. "Goddamn corporate bastards and their pollution, creating this heat trap in the atmosphere! We never needed these damned electric boxes in our windows in the summertime when I was growing up."

Barrow's dishwasher hair already starting to turn gray. His face was seamed and his hair beginning to go prematurely gray from five years of tension and underground living, and before that from years on the bottle. The NVA's strict regulation against drinking had probably saved his life even as it was endangered by his participation in the war. He struck one as a haunted cubicle denizen at some marginal computer company, or a burned-out used card salesman, tired and worn and defeated, but his demoralized appearance helped him in his job. In the America of the early twenty-first century, it didn't pay for a white man to look too sharp. White males weren't supposed to hold their heads up, especially in the Northwest, where some alert FBI agent or Fattie might wonder just what the hell a white boy was

looking so chipper about. Like most men of his generation, the first generation to be forced into the army in large numbers due to a combination of unemployment and the draft, Barrow was a military veteran with a two-year extended tour in Iraq under his belt. Iraq had left him with a shrapnel tear in his calf, a frantic aversion to any temperature over seventy degrees, and a sick and visceral loathing for anything bearing the face of George W. Bush. In his drinking days he had gotten in trouble for screaming fits and wanton destruction of various advertisements, posters, memorials, book jackets, and television screens where in the jug-eared visage of the former President was displayed.

Frank Barrow was a former police detective who had gotten royally screwed by the Seattle PD because he had successfully busted a high profile African-American city councilman on drug dealing charges. Barrow had found himself back in uniform so fast it made his head spin, and within the next year he had accumulated enough trumped-up disciplinaries and bad efficiency reports to wreck his career. He finally got the message and resigned from the force. It was then that he went on the bottle, paying for his booze with a series of dead end jobs. His wife had responded by engaging in a string of increasingly blatant affairs, then she finally left him, taking their two children and moving back to Wisconsin after cleaning out the remains of their joint checking account and making the mortgage check bounce, so Barrow lost the house. From that point on life had gotten worse and worse, until Barrow was seriously considering suicide. Then came the Coeur d'Alene uprising of October 22nd, and all of a sudden white men with guns in their hands were fighting back against the country and the society that had increasingly degraded and humiliated them for almost a century. At long last, someone was saying out loud the things that Frank Barrow had always known in his heart to be true. Barrow knew some people who were affiliated with the Party from his police days. He was able to track one of them down, and through that contact he joined the underground Northwest Volunteer Army. He had begun with one of the first Seattle crews in the bleak winter weeks after 10/22, when the life of the uprising had hung by a thread, and from then on he had used every ounce of the street smarts and knowledge of the city that he had gained as a cop to make Seattle dangerous for Federal employees and anyone with a dark skin. Bullets and betrayal brought down the men above him in the chain of command, and he had moved up through the brutal ladder of natural selection which is war. Lieutenant Joe Dortmund, Barrow's 2IC for Number Three Brigade, was a dapper man in his forties who was about twenty pounds overweight, but who was always flawlessly dressed in a Brooks Brothers suit, with a fresh haircut and manicure, and who usually carried an expensive leather briefcase and palm pilot. He looked like an insurance salesman, and that was his cover. He actually represented a national brokerage and made good money at it, in between supervising murders and bombings. On more than one occasion, he had pitched cops and Federal officers when he was stopped at various checkpoints, and so good was his patter that he had even sold a few life insurance policies to FATPOs. They needed it. The lifespan of a Federal officer of any kind in Seattle these days was likely to be nasty, brutish, and short.

The two men met approximately once a week like this, always in a different hideout, with Barrow bringing Dortmund up on everything going on in the command and the two of them assigning the coming week's mayhem quota to the crews and individual Volunteers who comprised the hundred or so people in Three Brigade. Other than such meetings as this, they stayed apart so that the Federals could not take them out both at once. If Barrow died or was arrested, Dortmund would be able to step in immediately and keep Three Brigade going without a hiccup. If Dortmund bought it, then any one of half a dozen company commanders in the Brigade were capable of stepping into his shoes. Despite the danger, these personal conferences were a necessary evil. The NVA could of course communicate among its various elements by telephone and computer and sometimes had to, but all electronic communication in the empire was monitored by the Federals and analyzed for anything even remotely suspicious, and so phone conversations and e-mails necessarily had to be short, to the point, and in code. As risky as it was, there simply was no substitute for direct sit-down. Neither men carried or used any notes; if the Feds seized Dortmund's palm pilot they would find nothing but insurance.

Barrow began by going over the various activity for the past week. "Right, let's get the routine stuff out of the way," he told Dortmund "Next time you see Jock Graham, give him my compliments and my congratulations on his becoming a millionaire. Looks like those two Fatties his boys took out in that yuppie fern bar last night pushed DHS over the edge."

"Yeah, I saw that on the tube," said Dortmund. "He's officially a million-dollar man now and they were running his picture again. The Feds sure do love to create these super-terrorist constructs. Like Bin Laden and Zarqawi in Iraq, and Hamed Burghash in Syria. Graham's hot as bubbling cheese these days. Count yourself lucky ZOG doesn't seem to know who you are yet."

"Jock seems to have the old rebel luck keeping his head down. Let's hope it holds. Never mind Two Brigade. How are we doing this week?"

Dortmund sat back with a sigh. "The bad news first. We took two arrests in Bellevue," he said. "Volunteer Charlie Burke and Volunteer Steve Swearingen. Tuesday night. They were clocking FATPO Captain Kyeshia Stancil, who as you know is the press officer for Fattie in Seattle, the negress everybody sees on TV flapping her bubble lips about how we gone get dese racist honky muthafukkas. They spotted her and another FATPO, a black male, going onto the beach at Lake Sammamish, dressed in jogging suits. They called it in and said it looked like the stupid Sheba was dumb enough to go jogging with only one man as an escort. They were strapped, they asked my permission to take them down, and I gave it."

"You think even a nigger is stupid enough to go jogging in public after what's been happening in this city for the past five years?" asked Barrow sourly.

"It happens," said Dortmund defensively. "I figured this might be one of the times when we got lucky. I also weighed the possible propaganda value of removing the public face of FATPO. The men were willing to take the chance..."

"Joe, no need to apologize. You did what you had to do. We're officers in an army at war. We have to take targets of opportunity, and we have to order young men to their deaths. At least these guys aren't dead, although after a few interrogations in the FBI electric chair, they'll wish they were. How did it happen?"

"Not clear. I never heard back from them and we can't find anyone who saw it go down. It may have been some kind of set-up with the Stancil woman as bait, either with or without her knowledge. It may have been our guys just plain flubbed it. We just know from our sources in the Federal system that Volunteer Burke and Volunteer Swearingen were signed in at Auburn FCI yesterday, so they got them

somehow.”

“They’re good men,” said Barrow sadly. “Well, we broke Auburn open once, we’ll break it again, and one day they’ll be free. Good news now. Tell me about those tickles in Green Lake and out on Highway 169.”

“Those were ours,” confirmed Dortmund with a grin.

“Me like, me like!” exclaimed Barrow, clapping his hands.

“Green Lake was Sammy Feet’s crew,” Dortmund went on. “Targets were Colonel Allen Armbruster, U. S. Army Intelligence, and one James R. Spannhaus, Department of Homeland Security. Big ZOGknobs both. Nightshade spotted them in some after hours club up on Capitol Hill. One of them tried to pick her up, and she recognized Spannhaus from one of our web sites, so she stroked him and she was able to set the both of them up for A Company. Said she and a friend would meet them in the Pirates’ Lair in Green Lake the next night, and she’s good enough so they believed her.”

“What exactly were they involved in?” asked Barrow.

“Nobody seems to know quite what the hell they were doing up here, working with the FBI or what. God knows what all these Federal spooks do with their time here in the Northwest. There’s so damned many of them they must be tripping over each other’s shoelaces. But in any case, whatever they were up to, they’re not doing it any more. Sammy Feet and Georgie Brenner blew them both away in the Pirates’ Lair Sunday night, with the charming Miss Carla Sobic doing the honors behind the wheel of the getaway car. Textbook. No muss, no fuss, no bother. Nine mils at close range. Our guys walked into the bar, made the spooks, clipped them both, and walked out. Extraction neat and clean, finito.”

“Great! Convey my congratulations to Samuel and his team on a job well done,” said Barrow with satisfaction.

“The other major tickle out on Highway 169 it was a simple Baghdad banger in a recycle bin beside the road. Humvee blown off the asphalt just out of Maplewood Heights. Three dead Fatties. Pyrotechnics courtesy of Doctor Doom, some good old bathtub gelignite just like Mom used to make.”

“Doctor Doom...that’s that kid who always has his nose stuck in a computer game, right?”

“Yeah, if we can tear him away from his Nintendo for long enough, he makes a hell of a party favor,” Joe told him. “Other than the loss of the two Volunteers, things went well this week. The EO unit successfully detonated four other bombs besides the Baghdad banger, nothing that big, though. Three against economic targets run by non-whites or Jews, one at the police motor pool when they did the old Trojan horse trick and got the cops to tow an impounded Volvo that was wired up. The tow truck driver was killed as well. From now on, even at \$800 a car, I think we can safely say that no private contractor in his right mind will be towing any more wheels in Seattle. Uncle Slime’s boys want a vehicle towed, they’re going to have to use their own tow trucks and their own personnel, which gives us more targets and cuts down on civilian co-operation with the occupation. Eight hundred bucks isn’t worth one’s life. We’ve got six snipers out hunting this week, and last I’d heard they got one kill and twelve hits.”

“One kill? That’s all?” asked Barrow skeptically. “What are they doing, taking time off to go to the movies?”

“No, it’s just that there is an increasing shortage of suitable targets,” explained the executive officer. “The white man’s enemies are finally learning to stay the hell off the streets. The snipers pop at Fatties whenever they can, but it’s hard to catch a Fattie without his body armor, hence all the wounded. I gotta say that damned new hardened nylon ensemble of theirs works, but we’re at least making the Fatties keep their heads down. Oh, and one major arson, Dickstein’s Bargain Shoe Barn, which was just about the last remaining openly Jewish-owned business in Seattle. Hallie Wainwright’s little brother did that one. I think he’s about thirteen. Not sworn in yet, although Hallie wants to give him his button. I know Corby Morgan swore in some twelve year-old a while back and sent him over to Jock when Corby went back up country to take over the Port Townsend Flying Column, but that’s still a little young for my taste.”

“Hell, half our own brigade is just barely old enough to drive, but yeah, I agree, twelve and thirteen is too young. Speaking of which, how’s recruiting?” asked Barrow.

“Recruiting is up. Every crew is working new assets and identifying the assets as possible candidates, and four new Volunteers were sworn in this week by company commanders, so despite the two seasoned men we lost, we not only replaced them but increased our numbers. And that’s our brigade alone; I understand that One and Two are doing even better. New weapons are in from the GHQ quartermaster, and we got our share. Took delivery Sunday. We now have enough AK-74s and Russian ammunition to choke a horse, which we can use to arm new men when it gets to the open fighting stage. They’re being distributed to company quartermasters for dispersal and storage, with 800 rounds per weapon. Also, the Agitprop unit sent out two million e-mail spams and was able to scatter two thousand leaflets in Bellevue Square.”

“That’s kind of pre-10/22, isn’t it? Leaflets are much more dangerous than e-mail,” Barrow reminded him. “Are they sure they want to be taking that kind of risk just for a damned leaflet?”

“Yeah, I know, but leaflets can be touched and are something physical, much more impressive to people than mere cyber-junk. It really rattles cages, They know that Jerry Reb was here. It’s almost as exciting to find a leaflet in your mailbox as it is to watch a hit on the news. I do have one major new thing for you,” said Dortmund.

“So do I,” said Barrow. “Me first. Mr. Chips is coming in tonight and wants to talk with both of us. You need to be back here at eight sharp.”

“Any idea what he wants?” asked Dortmund.

“No, he wouldn’t say, but it’s something urgent. He didn’t want you at the meet at first, but I told him we were Siamese twins.”

“I appreciate that, sir,” replied Dortmund.

“I get cacked, you need to know everything I know. But this isn’t just his regular circuit for the Army Council. It’s something urgent. They’re probably going to launch some kind of new offensive strategy. They keep diddling with various new ideas they think might make a dent. Personally, I think we’re starting to get close now with Applesmash and Pigkill.”

“You think they want us to try something like that here?” asked Dortmund keenly. “Shut down Seattle?”

“What for?” wondered Barrow aloud. “We’ve already damned near run all the non-whites out of town. The city is actually a better place

to live for white people now, even with us fighting a war in the middle of it, than it was five years ago. Same in Portland. The buses and light rail are safe now, the traffic is a hell of a lot better with all those crazy Third World drivers off the freeway, and other than us, crime is damned near non-existent now we've run off all the crack addicts and Mexican gang-bangers." Barrow did not know that Kelly Shipman even existed, but he would not have been surprised to learn that she had agreed with him at her breakfast table in the wealthy suburbs just a short time before. NVA intelligence confirmed that there was a high level of very quiet approval among the people of the city regarding the changes the ongoing revolt had wrought. One of the reasons that life in war-torn and locked-down Seattle was tolerable was the virtual disappearance of crime in the ordinary sense. One had to worry about getting stopped and harassed at FATPO checkpoints, and possibly caught in the vicinity when things went boom, but common street crime was a thing of the past, and the gabble of foreign voices and dark faces was gone. In addition, bottom-rung unemployment was now for all practical purposes non-existent. Employers couldn't hire cheap Third World immigrant labor if there were no cheap Third World immigrants to hire. The most loyal of Americans had to concede, at least in the privacy of his own thoughts, that Jerry Reb did have his uses.

Operations Applesmash and Pigkill were the guerrilla offensives undertaken by a series of highly trained and motivated NVA active service units, the most daring and resourceful men and women the revolutionaries had. Their purpose was to shut down two of the main American centers of power, New York City and Washington, D. C. Once it had become clear that the NVA and the Party now had a sufficient infrastructure to establish a government in the Northwest after independence had been won, the decision had been made by the Army Council to take the fight right into the belly of the Beast. The message was simple: there would be no business as usual until the Pacific Northwest was free and white. After months of preparation, the NVA had struck at America's vitals. The decrepit United States régime had reeled under the onslaught, and the government was being driven mad with hysterical fear and hate.

Explosive and poison gas bombs were detonated on subways and on key bridges and traffic points in New York and Washington, cutting off arterial transportation and disrupting the flow of the business which was these cities' business. Getting in to work in either city had become a four-hour slog each way on jammed crosstown streets, as the New York expressways and the Capitol Beltway were cratered and rendered impassable, and overpasses blown to powder. The lily white suburbs and gated communities where the affluent had retreated were no longer safe, as NVA assassination teams homed in on the key corporate moguls, media magnates, politicians, military officers, law enforcement personnel, reporters and television producers, economic gurus, bureaucrats, intelligentsia, judges and district attorneys, celebrities, technocrats, and key people that kept the United States functioning, stalking them, cutting them down, causing untold chaos and paralysis at every nexus of power. Mints, banks, government offices, the postal system, television network headquarters, methadone clinics, anything to do with the welfare system that redistributed white wealth to non-whites, newspaper offices, the hydroelectric grid, trendy restaurants, yuppie fern bars and yacht clubs were bombed. Anywhere America's ruling élite met to eat, plot, hobnob, seduce and be seduced, and network with one another was no longer safe. The obituaries in the New York Times and the Washington Post now read like Who's Who.

Over thirty members of Congress from both House and Senate were shot down or blown to pieces. The head of the Federal Reserve took a header out of a forty-story window on Wall Street, with an assist from two NVA Volunteers who died moments later under a hail of security bullets, but Nathan Morgenthau still had not been replaced, and the economy of the empire was in free fall. Specially designed computer viruses destroyed government and private databases and IT systems of every kind, causing untold loss and confusion and in many cases massive unemployment among the largely non-white and perverse populations who now comprised the majority of both cities.

In New York, NVA black propaganda operatives skillfully incited tension and created incidents between the city's huge Jewish population and the various minority groups, sometimes leading to riots and pogroms where Hasidic rabbis were hunted through the streets by black and Hispanic mobs. In Washington, D. C. the Capitol building was mortared and rocketed four times, and finally shut down as too insecure; what remained of Congress now met in undisclosed location. The White House itself was now the regular target of mortars and rockets every time President Chelsea Clinton was known to be in residence, and a White House dinner was penetrated with an exploding cigar that got blood on Clinton's plate as well as her hands. The woman was so terrified that she fled the historic home of America's chief executives and now lived hunkered down in a bunker at Camp David. The government was now on its fourth Director of Homeland Security in five years. The United States Attorney General was splattered all over the Ellipse by a bomb in his limousine, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was found dead in his private washroom in the Pentagon, sitting on the john with his throat cut. The Israeli ambassador was abducted and shipped back to Tel Aviv by air express in nine pieces, collect.

These operations had been ongoing for almost eight months now. The carnage hadn't been all one-sided. Dozens of Northwest Volunteers had died, and a batch of eight were now in the middle of a televised show trial in the Big Apple. The amount of damage done to the American economy was now estimated to be in the quadrillions of dollars, and that was over and above all the other expenses of fighting a counterinsurgency war in the Pacific Northwest and maintaining a tentative but iron grip on a huge oil empire in the Middle East, where America ruled hundreds of millions of sullen and turbulent Muslim peoples by the sword. Add to that the fact that one of the main targets of the NVA was the Internal Revenue Service and the tax collection system, records, computers, personnel, anything to choke off the flow of tax dollars to D.C. Tax revenue was dropping through the floor. It was a very poorly kept secret that essential Federal personnel such as FBI, military, and FATPO had not been paid in months, and were now receiving a kind of Monopoly money in the form of vouchers that businesses and merchants wouldn't honor except at gunpoint. Off-duty Feds were being apprehended robbing banks and committing burglaries. Female FBI agents had been caught dancing in strip clubs and committing prostitution to feed their families.

It was clear that something had to give. It was believed by the NVA's Third Section intelligence monitors and analysts that the actual function of government in the United States was now at the point of collapse, and Barrow had received orders a month before to begin preparation for the possible implementation of the boldest NVA offensive yet, the seizure of certain sections of Seattle and the establishment of "no-go zones" where the NVA and the Party would establish a provisional government for the Homeland. "Why weren't we doing Applesmash and Pigkill years ago?" complained Dortmund.

“For one thing, we didn’t have the resources or logistics to maintain that kind of highly active presence right up the Beast’s asshole,” replied Barrow. “Those are our best people who are bombing those subways and whacking those bureaucrats, there’s a lot of targets, our losses are heavy, and they need a lot of support in terms of manpower, money, and supplies. The first couple of years after 10/22 it was all we could do to stay one jump ahead of the bastards and bite back every now and then. No way we could have mounted an offensive like this. But the main reason is that suppose we did bring ZOG to the table five years ago? What did we have to negotiate with? Now the Party has the infrastructure necessary to run our own country. We didn’t have that before. Anyway, we need to meet Mr. Chips here at eight tonight. I wanted to use the Big Rock Candy Mountain, but the Turtle tells me that some guys he didn’t know were sniffing around the place and I’m chilling it. Now what did you have for me?”

Dortmunder scowled. “We may have to do another off-Broadway production, sir, as in offing somebody on Broadway. We’ve got a problem shaping up in Capitol Hill. Again.”

“Okay, that problem being?”

“Country Joe Krajewski,” replied city Joe Dortmunder.

Capitol Hill was at one stage one of the most prestigious old neighborhoods in Seattle, sitting draped on a hillside to the east of downtown. It has been founded during the city’s brawling early days as a pioneer port shipping lumber, furs, and fish. The northern part of the neighborhood near the arboretum was still a place of mansions and stately older homes, some of them still trying to operate as bed-and-breakfast inns in a city in the grip of a violent revolution. The campuses of Seattle Central Community College and Seattle University marked the southern edge while two commercial centers still managed to maintain a viable if reduced economic life: a small, fairly quiet strip along 15th Avenue and Broadway. The center of the district was the Broadway Market, once a thriving set of offbeat shops, boutiques, and alternative bookstores. Before the revolt it had been a Northwest version of the San Francisco’s Castro district or New York’s Soho. Broadway on Capitol Hill had been Seattle’s main drag for buggery and boogie-woogie for almost a generation now. The grunge rock scene of the 1990s had originated in Seattle and on Capitol Hill, and the district was renowned the world over for its large gay population and drug scene as much for its musical ambience. Seattle, rock and roll, far-left political causes, and alternative lifestyles had once gone together in the public mind like cheeseburgers, fries, and Coke, a natural combo.

But much to everyone’s surprise, the NVA established itself in Seattle on the very day of the October 22nd uprising in Coeur d’Alene, when two Volunteers had machine-gunned a black police officer and his Asian female partner right on Pioneer Square. Ever since then, no matter how rough the going for the rebellion throughout the Northwest Homeland, the city’s streets had crackled with nighttime gunfire and the thud of bombs going off on a regular basis. The result was an increasingly unfriendly environment for perversions of both mind and body. As the NVA vise had slowly clamped down on the Northwest over the past five years, Capitol Hill had lost much of its left-wing cachet, as those artsy-fartsy habitués who were dusky of skin or sexually inverted either fled to more hospitable climes or got well and truly wasted, shot dead on the pavement by the NVA gunners. The rest of the pervs and the Third Worlders took the hint, and they got the hell out. The once eagerly-sought apartments and studios in the charming Victorian houses which had commanded a king’s ransom in rent were now fifty percent vacant and going for a song. It was hard to find a Chinese or Korean-operated bodega any more, anywhere in the city, never mind a Jamaican reggae bar or a Marxist bookstore or a shop specializing in homo sex toys. The city’s dwindling non-white population tended to keep off the streets, and the bugger boys were now cowering way back into the closet.

Barrow rubbed his jaw in rumination. “Country Joe Krajewski, eh? Hmm. I lost track of the rock scene when I got over Pearl Jam as a kid, but yeah, the name rings a bell from my days in the blue. Yeah, I got him now. Ayatollah rock and roller. Long-haired greasy freak, covered with tattoos, big druggie. We roused him a couple of times for crack and heroin and other such comestibles, but he could always hire the most expensive lawyers in town, and if memory serves we were never able to make anything stick. Jeez, is Joey still around? Thought by now he would have booked it down to L.A. or out to New York, once things got hot for his kind around here.”

“He couldn’t make it outside Seattle,” Dortmunder responded. “His muse, such as it was, didn’t translate. Country Joe is an aging specimen of what used to be called grunge rock. At one stage he pretty much mastered the R & R scene here, lived out on Bainbridge Island in a big mansion, threw wild orgies, chartered jetloads of hangers-on to fly to Maui or Taos for a weekend, etc. Since the war began rock and roll has kind of gone downhill in Seattle, what with us greasing all the nigger bass players and drug pushers and other essential appurtenances of the scene. Country Joe lost his mansion and ended up in a seedy walk-up on Capitol Hill. He seems to be taking it personal. He was always a parlor pink like all of these people, and he and his Jew buddy and drug connection Jake Kaplan have got this idea of trying to revive Rock Against Racism.”

“Kaplan, yeah, now him I remember. Coke dealer to the stars, used to be the retail representative on the street for the Colombians. Boy, that’s a blast from the past! Those assholes were among the first to go back after 10/22,” said Barrow. “In fact some of my own first hits were when we cacked the lead vocal in Ooze, and the drummer in Stomach Pump, plus a couple of Jew agent and impresario types. Those rock and roll antifa characters haven’t dared to so much as strum a chord in Seattle for years. What gives?”

“Yeah, well, seems Country Joe is having a midlife crisis. He’s getting nostalgic for the good old days of sex and drugs and rock and roll, and he wants to try and trot out some of those golden moldies from Rock Against Racism. He has been in touch with Homeland Security and they like the idea for obvious propaganda reasons. They’re thinking of staging a big Rock Against Racism concert in Discovery Park.”

“They think they can get away with that and not get hit in the head by the NVA?” asked Barrow in amazement.

“Oh, they know the risk is too great for any real concert,” replied Dortmunder. “That could just get all kinds of embarrassing when the RPGs start flying. But this won’t be real. It will be a virtual concert.”

“Huh?” asked Barrow.

“I’m not one hundred per cent on the technology, but apparently there is a way for the rockers to get up on a stage and actually do their gig in Discovery Park, presumably under massive guard from FATPO and the military, and then have the government computer tech people add in a big crowd at the central broadcast point. To those who watch the concert on TV, it will look like they’ve got the park packed with thousands of cheering, boogying fans. The idea is to broadcast the concert worldwide, make it look like the people of

Seattle came out for it by the hundred thousand, and by appearing to hold this gig with impunity, show the world that the NVA is a paper tiger, the battle for democracy and diversity is being won in spite of all the dead Feds in restaurants, so forth and so on.”

“And needless to say the world media will go along with this hoax?” asked Barrow in disgust.

“Does a bear shit in the woods?”

“Okay, we need to nip this one in the bud,” said Barrow decisively. “Country Joe seems to have forgotten his manners. He needs a ticket to that great crash pad in the sky. What exactly have you got on this little project and where did you get it?”

“Nightshade again,” said Dortmund.

“Nightshade is diamond,” agreed Barrow. “Damn, that chick is on top of it! Has Third Section got her spying on rock degenerates now?”

“This was kind of serendipitous,” Joe told him. “She’s been sleazing around Capitol Hill in Ghoul, trying to set up Fatties. A lot of them sneak out of barracks when they’re off duty to do the clubs and score some drugs and pussy for the male officers. Drugs and pussy for the female officers as well.”

“Ghoul—that’s the Morticia Addams look, right?” asked Barrow.

“Yeah. Kind of decayed Goth with a touch of Elvira, but not as classy. You make your bones by making your bones, literally. You dig up a grave and...”

“Yeah, I get the idea,” said Barrow, waving it away queasily. “God, every time I think America can’t sink any lower...go on.”

“Anyway, she started hanging with some punk rockers meeting in those sleazy clubs off Broadway on Capitol Hill, and she hooked up with Krajewski and Kappy. They’re meeting with some character from Homeland Security tonight in the Eclectic Strawberry Veggie Bar, at ten o’clock. If we get on it quick we can not only whack a couple of degenerates but a Federal suit as well. The Fed might be a very nice little bonus. Homeland Security generally stays far away from the Homeland, so to speak.”

“You read my mind. What do you say? Should we give Sammy Feet a tickle tinkle?”

“He’d love it, but no, I’d say give this one to Bobby Bells,” advised Dortmund. “He and his people know that Broadway area like the back of their hands. Remember that Take Back the Streets for Love crap?”

Back in the early spring, the tattered remains of the local gays and lefties who hadn’t been killed or run out of town had decided on one last attempt to restore their previously paramount profile within Seattle and recover their chic. They had joined with the city government and an approving liberal media, and with great fanfare they had declared the Capitol Hill district to be a “Hate Free Zone.” In order to enforce this, they had declared so-called Walk for Love areas where homosexuals and race-mixers would parade around holding hands and otherwise getting tactile with their multifarious same-sex and/or different-race significant others, snogging on the sidewalks, and generally showing a high profile. This was not quite as hare-brained an idea as it might appear at first glance, since before they ventured out to do this, the whole area was heavily infiltrated with plainclothes FATPO and Seattle PD teams, waiting to pounce on any rebels who tried to do anything about the displays of degeneracy. The idea from the Federals’ point of view was to use the same-sex and racially mixed couples as a kind of live bait to lure the NVA out, and indeed the FATPOs themselves obligingly provided a number of mixed decoy teams of every conceivable race and gender combination, concealed weapons at the ready to jump up and start blasting in mid-snog at the slightest manifestation of evil racism and homophobia. It was a measure of how desperate the Federals were for targets, and how deficient was their intelligence in every sense of the word. They couldn’t figure out any other way to draw the NVA out.

The NVA had countered Walk for Love with an operation called Springtime for Hitler. The commanding officer of the Third Brigade’s A Company, Lieutenant Robert DiBella, aka Bobby Bells, had been assigned the task of preventing this public relations embarrassment for the NVA, and he had developed a full court press offensive that cleaned it up in two days. Bells was a natural-born street fighter, an instinctive tactician like some untrumpeted Patton of the asphalt. He knew that it was suicidal to get up close and personal with the couples scattered all along Broadway, because there was an armed enemy lying in ambush behind every window and lamppost just waiting for the Volunteers. So he decided to use an indirect multiplier effect to shut the project down by sucking all the propaganda vitality out of it. The unit was able to obtain a number of heavy weapons, some RPGs and proper mortars, but also things like sticks of dynamite and military-issue white phosphorus grenades that were attached to sticks of wooden dowling, which were then inserted into single-shot 16-gauge shotguns which were loaded with shells from which the buckshot had been removed, thus making a ballastite cartridge. By pulling the pins on the grenades and firing the shotguns into the air, they was able to create a primitive mortar which burst high on the rooftops or in the middle of the street, showering everything around with a snowfall of white, burning fragments that immediately set multiple fires. This plus several quick hit-and-runs with the RPGs and the mortars fired from the back of pickup trucks caused all manner of damage and set more fires, at a distance. The arrival of the fire trucks inevitably disrupted all the interracial and homosexual love-walking, the crowds and confusion not only diverting and snarling the target couples and their plainclothes escorts but making it fairly obvious to keen-eyed observers who was who on the street. On several occasions running gun battles broke out between teams of NVA shooters and the FATPOs, with casualties on both sides, but the news at ten that night was about flying bullets and burning things on Broadway, not loving interracial and gay couples standing tall and proud for diversity while canoodling and grazing in the grass. On the second night of the Walk for Love, a daring NVA pilot hijacked a small private airplane from the King County Airport, aimed it dead center in the middle of Broadway, and bailed out at the last second, making a big hole and an unholy mess in the street.

The lesson was clear: the Northwest Volunteer Army had no intention of coming out in person to attack the individual couples and their heavily armed escorts, but the rebels would continue to steal the liberals’ propaganda thunder and create such disruption that the government’s PR purpose was not being served. The undercover Fatties were hard put to it to defend themselves, never mind protect the bait, and what is worse, it was clear from people who were watching the news coverage that this was the case. FATPO were being made to look like incompetents. The result was the collapse of the Capitol Hill liberal and gay scene, which was why Barrow was surprised to learn that this Country Joe Krajewski character would even try to revive a dead horse. “Yeah, Bobby knows the lay of the land around Broadway, but isn’t he a bit short on triggers right now, since we took Slim Jim and those others to form E Company?” he asked.

“He’s got some new people he wants to break in,” replied Dortmund. “That’s another reason I suggested him. He’s got a couple of kids who are just itching to make their bones, and Bobby thinks they’ve got the stuff.”

“Okay, give Bells a bell and set it up.”

“One red flag, though. There’s a good chance that Nightshade herself is going to be with Country Joe and Kappy when it goes down. She’s been playing groupie and she had to really feign an interest in this Rock Against Racism project in order to gain entrée. And get Krajewski interested in her.”

Barrow pointedly avoided asking how far Krajewski’s interest had gotten him. It was irrelevant so long as the intelligence was good.

“Can’t she find some excuse to do a fade just before it goes down?” asked Barrow.

“Maybe. But she also wants to maintain her cover on the Hill, and cops and Fatties aren’t stupid. Any time there’s a hit they know there’s a finger somewhere, and somebody who disappears just before the bullets start flying is an obvious suspect.”

Barrow scowled. “I know those Third Section ops have got balls the size of grapefruits, male or female, but we can’t risk her getting shot by one of our own, and let’s face it, sometimes the boys do get a bit trigger-happy. You or I will have to go along and make sure both Nightshade and her cover survive the evening, although I’m not happy with anyone who doesn’t need to know finding out what she looks like. It won’t just be Auburn if she’s caught. The Feds are starting to give Third Section people secret military tribunals and needles in the arm.”

“What about Mr. Chips?” asked Dortmund.

“Oh, crap!” swore Barrow. “Damn, that’s right! If he wasn’t Army Council I’d send a message to re-schedule, but I got the definite impression that this is something serious and we need to take the meeting. Look, Bobby’s a cool hand and he keeps his boys on a tight rein. You tell him just don’t shoot any females. Make sure he understands that! That little girl has got the right stuff, the old iron in her. If she has to die in all this, I don’t want it to be in some stupid accident. We’re all going to have enough on our karma for what we’ve done intentionally during this war without adding something like that. You tell DiBella, no women tonight.”

“God, to think there was a time when something like that wouldn’t even have come up,” sighed Dortmund. “It’s bad enough that men do things like this. Now that women are doing it too, you wonder if there’s any hope left for the human race.”

“Yeah, well, that’s why we’re doing this, Joe,” said Barrow. “So that one day a girl like Nightshade can grow up in the world of Jane Austen again, instead of Clockwork Orange. When you’re lost in a swamp and up to your ass in alligators, you know you’ve made a wrong turn somewhere. The only way is to quit blundering deeper and deeper into the darkness, turn your ass around, struggle back to where you made the wrong turn, and make the right choice this time. And try to leave as few boys and girls as possible lying dead in the swamp being eaten by the slimy things.”

* * *

Out in suburban Bellevue, in the bright morning air, Kelly Shipman and Molly Bergstrom were having an exuberant tennis workout on the high school court, with Kelly winning three sets and Molly two. The girls had an audience. Sitting on a bench and watching them volley from behind the wire fence, or more specifically watching Kelly play, was a quiet young man of her own age with brown hair slightly brushing his collar. His eyes never left the lithe, graceful blonde girl on the green tarmac for an instant.

Cody Brock was wearing a dark navy blue shirt that had come from the Salvation Army store, faded jeans, a baseball cap and cheap knock-off running shoes from Wal-Mart. He was a newcomer who had entered Hillside just that autumn as a senior, ostensibly transferring in from a high school in Ellensburg. In point of fact, his transcript from the Ellensburg school was a work of fiction equal to anything taught in the English department, and the gruff middle-aged gentleman who appeared at Hillside High whenever he was required for parent-teacher conferences was not Cody’s father, but a man known to his friends and to Federal law enforcement as Farmer Brown.

Cody’s mother had been killed an auto accident when Cody was three; he barely remembered her. Cody’s biological father was a lumberjack and sawmill turner who was serving a life sentence in Walla Walla penitentiary for a drunken bar fight in which he had stabbed a black man. He had received five years for the assault with grievous bodily harm, and a mandatory life sentence for using the word “nigger” during the affray. When Jared Brock went to prison, Cody had been eight years old and his sister Gwendolyn had been twelve. Cody and his sister had been immediately seized by It Takes A Village and sold. Gwen he had never seen again after the Federals came and took her away. He had no idea where she was and had difficulty remembering what she looked like, although he knew she was a grown woman now and probably fairly comfortable, since It Takes A Village only sold confiscated children to those who could afford the costly adoption bond. For some reason he had never fully understood, attorney Larry Sapirstein had paid \$300,000 for him.

Cody had run away from his own horrendous foster family when he was sixteen, after assaulting his Jewish stepfather with murderous intent. He had made his way from San Francisco back to Centralia, but the town was too small to conceal a runaway and there was nothing left there of his old life anyway, so he had drifted on to Seattle. After a period of living rough on the streets, most of which he spent in the public library self-completing what education he thought he needed, Cody had taken to hanging out at a soup kitchen run by a Christian youth group. One of the counselors, a trendy priest with a beard and a turtleneck, had made a quiet practice of rescuing young white people from life on the street, the drugs, and so forth, in a rather unorthodox manner. After a period of assessment, Father Andrew would take white street boys and girls off somewhere private and urge them to put their hand in the hand of the man from Germany. Sometimes he even sang it while strumming his guitar. He forwarded dozens of white kids to the NVA in this way, until one of the kids ratted him out in exchange for drugs. One snowy day Special Agent Bruce Goldberg of the FBI and a team of FATPO officers came into the mission, crucified Father Andrew with a nail gun onto one of the dining room tables, and poured a powerful drain cleaner down his throat.

By then Cody had already been assigned to Robert DiBella’s crew and enrolled in Hillside High with Farmer Brown posing as his daddy whenever needed for parent-teacher conferences and so on. He had insisted on using his own name despite the security risk, and surprisingly, DiBella had allowed this. He had been profoundly impressed when the boy told him with quiet, dead certainty, “The Jews took my father and my sister, and they tried to take my name. They tried to make my family disappear from the earth. I can’t do anything about my dad and my sister, but they will never take my name again.”

Kelly had not been entirely accurate that morning at the breakfast table in her assessment of the student body. Being a poor blue-collar youth, or “grit” in the vernacular, Cody was able to attend Hillside on a special state diversity quota for underprivileged students, which in the recent absence of dark-skinned minorities had become known to most of the more affluent kids as the Trailer Trash Track. The high school gave Cody a visible and plausible cover and a reason for being almost anywhere; high school kids worked after school in all kinds of places, and they liked to cruise. Cody attended school during the day and was duly roused by Farmer Brown and Bobby Bells to keep his grades up. He lived at a number of floating addresses with his comrades, and ran every conceivable errand for the crew, from grocery runs to taxi service to smuggling medical supplies, weapons, and illegal propaganda leaflets. He planted a few bombs, set a number of fires, and also drove and occasionally acted as the finger man for assassinations. He had willingly embraced the NVA not out of ideology, but because of simple hatred for the system that had destroyed his family because his father had dared to defend himself against a sodden bully with a black skin, and also because he sought some feasible way to kill his foster family when time and place should serve, and get away with it. It was only when he had begun reading the works of George Lincoln Rockwell and Francis Parker Yockey during his nights on guard duty at various safe houses that he had come to understand why his world was the way it was and what the NVA was fighting for, and his vague sense of his own racial identity had coalesced into a personal commitment to a Homeland for his people. Like so many Volunteers, the Brock boy had started out to right his personal wrongs, and ended up as a political soldier trying to right the wrongs of history against his race.

Having no draft exemption, he was already supposedly under orders to report to the United States Army induction center in September, orders which did not in fact exist, since on paper Cody himself did not exist except as a runaway in the California police computers. Cody’s ostensible reason for extending his strained high school career by becoming a student in the summer drama workshop for a final two months after graduation was because he wanted to have a creative credit on his record so he could get into an Army public relations unit and then once he got out, go to college on the GI Bill for a degree in Broadcasting and Communications.

His real reason for taking the course was that he was head over heels in love with the cheerleader, homecoming queen and budding actress Kelly Shipman. In the social dynamic of Hillside High School, this was roughly equivalent to the stable boy in the palace seeking the hand of the princess, and had about as much chance of success outside of a fairy tale. It was virtually certain that this next two months in summer school was the last time in his life he would ever see Kelly, except on a movie screen. She was going on to college and Hollywood and stardom, to a wonderful life that he could only barely imagine, and one which he knew she fully deserved. He did not begrudge her this wonderful future. Being one of nature’s noblemen, he was genuinely happy for her. He himself would stay here in the cold Northwest to kill or be killed for a future he could imagine even less. These were their respective fates. Kelly had won the prize, and he had crapped out. Such was life. He understood this, and accepted it. Cody knew that he should have walked away from it after graduation and not drawn out the agony by wasting time in this puerile theatrical gig, but he simply could not bear to let her go just yet. The vision of her was the only memory he would ever have that was good in a childhood that had been nothing short of hell.

Not that there was any romance to let go of. Kelly was a wonderful and sensitive young girl, but the teenaged class system of Hillside High was ingrained in her, and she simply did not think of a boy like Cody in that way. Some kids were naturally in and some were out, and boys who wore clothing from the Salvation Army instead of Nordstrom’s or the Bon were definitely not in the former category.

After a year of diffident, low-key but persistent effort, Cody had managed finally to obtain a peripheral “just friends” status; even now as he watched the two girls volleying back and forth, Kelly saw him watching from the sidelines and waved at him. They spoke almost every day at school and once or twice a week on the phone, and he had even taken Kelly out a couple of times to the local burger barn and bike riding in the park, but to his chagrin she seemed to think that being male, he was a good sounding board for her on-and-off relationship with class president and football team captain Craig Crabtree, a young man of her own affluent class who was also a major league asshole. Cody had ended up as Friar Lawrence, when what he wanted was to be Romeo.

Kelly and Molly finished their game and came off the court, headed for the girls’ locker room. “Hi, Cody,” she said brightly, coming up to him. “Ready for your first starring role? I’m going to ask Mr. Newman if we can do Arsenic and Old Lace. I’m going to be doing teen queens and bitchy girls for years, and maybe a lot of screaming in slasher flicks, so I want to play one of the old ladies to expand my range. You’d make a good Mortimer.”

“Or Teddy,” replied Cody. He raised his hand to his lips, tooted an invisible bugle and yelled “Chaaaaaaaaaarge!” while waving an invisible saber. Kelly giggled. “I’ll probably end up doing the lights or building sets or something on whatever we decide to do. I’m mostly looking for something to do in the army so I won’t end up getting my ass shot off by some hadji. I’m not much of an actor, really,” he added with a smile, grimly aware of the ironic fact that he had been playing a deep role very successfully with her for almost a year, concealing his other life from her and not even giving away so much as a hint that he had a political or racial thought in his head. “I wish my brother Jason would find something to do in the service besides the infantry,” said Kelly worriedly. Then she sighed, “Well, I promised him when he left I wouldn’t worry about him. I do think you’d be a good actor, but I want to do some stage work and tech stuff as well. Every bit of experience helps, and I probably won’t get to do much actual theater for a long time, unless maybe it’s some summer stock or dinner theater. I kicked around the idea of going to New York and trying for Broadway, but I seem to have got Hollywood into my blood now. You have no idea what it’s like to actually be on set and part of a production! I live for it now. Heck, I’d work as a script girl or a grip if it got me on set! Well, see you in a few minutes.”

“Wait,” said Cody. He reached into his cheap canvas book bag and brought out a small square gift-wrapped parcel with a bow. It was a collection of four long-play CDs on language and dialect, a specialty item he had ordered online, which was put out by a famous linguist for one of the major Hollywood studios. Its purpose was to help American actors master over forty accents and dialects of the English language to fit their characters, from the flat drawl of East Texas to the consonant-less roil of the true Cockney born within the sound of Bow Bells, from Cajun to the sonorous declamation of the BBC and the Strine of the Australian bush country. “Happy birthday, Kel,” he said.

“Oh, Cody, how sweet!” she said excitedly.

“Open it,” he suggested.

“No, if it’s okay I’ll open it at Molly’s this afternoon,” said Kelly. “She’s giving me a party for all our friends, although of course it’s supposed to be a surprise and I’m not supposed to let on I know about it. Of course I’d like you to be there. You know where she lives, right? We can all go over after class is out. You can follow me over while I drive my Dad’s present. See that silver Explorer out in the parking lot?”

“That’s your father’s birthday present?” he asked, impressed. “Neat! Well, it will fit right in with what all the other stars drive down there in the dream factory. Except when you’re riding in your chauffeured limo, of course.”

“Will you come to Molly’s party?”

“I wouldn’t miss it,” he said warmly. She gave him a quick peck on the cheek and then she ran to catch up with Molly and hit the showers. Kelly didn’t return his birthday wishes because Cody had never bothered to mention to her that he had turned eighteen that day as well. It didn’t seem important.

The dramatic arts class numbered about forty students, and they met at ten o’clock in the school’s fully equipped, thousand-seat theater. Affluent Hillside was a magnet school, and as such had a massive array of science and liberal arts facilities of all kinds which were the envy of the West Coast: computer labs, chemistry and biology labs, a fully equipped television studio and student radio station, sports and track fields, an Olympic length indoor pool, and classrooms with 75-inch screen satellite TV connections where students could hear lectures and watch events from around the world. The drama class was only one of the courses offered at Hillside’s summer school; there were also courses in business for future yuppies like Craig Crabtree, law, engineering, television and film (Kelly had almost taken that one, and had arranged to sit in on some of the classes), several advanced science fields, and total immersion language classes. The corridors were almost as full of kids as they were during the school year itself. The top students from Hillside High who took these classes could begin college with one credit in their major already, plus the Advanced Track would look good on a resumé. There was also the unspoken purpose of trying to keep the largely Caucasian group of young people under supervision as much as possible. A lot of things had been going boom of late in Seattle, many NVA recruits were known to be teenagers, and the government encouraged young white people to be corralled into group activities where they could be watched. The sub rosa fear seemed to be that the devil might make work for idle hands.

The drama class was taught by Mitch Newman, who was now standing before them, casually leaning back against the stage. He was a hairy, bespectacled man in his mid-thirties who affected jeans and lumberjack shirts, as well as a broad-brimmed felt Northwest hat until it had become uncomfortably confused with the Party’s fedora. Even today, the NVA were sometimes referred to as “the hats.” Mitch encouraged his students to call him by his first name and tried to be one of the kids himself. Newman’s reputation in the theatric arts rested on his own five or six years in Hollywood, during which time he had racked up speaking parts in half a dozen minor films, including the sidekick to a major male hunk star in a cop-buddy flick that had grossed pretty well and still brought him a small royalty check every quarter. Newman had sense enough to realize that his talent as an actor was limited, and so he’d gone into production and direction. He had racked up technical, stage management and screenwriting credits on about a dozen more movies before he had suddenly returned to Seattle. The rumor was that he had been blackballed by the studios after some kind of incident with a young starlet. The word rape being whispered, which rather added to his romantic air of raffish insouciance. He certainly hadn’t let it cramp his style with the ladies, and campus scuttlebutt had it that he had been involved with several teachers and was constantly on warning status for inappropriate interaction with female students.

The actual truth of these allegations was not known for certain among the student gossips, but Newman didn’t bother to conceal the fact that he had ostentatious eyes for the luscious blonde body of Kelly Shipman. During the drama department’s mid-term production of *South Pacific*, Newman had practically drooled over Kelly every time she appeared on stage in her Polynesian grass skirt outfit, and on several occasions he had found patently unnecessary excuses to adjust her costume. A pained Cody had asked Kelly why she allowed this, and he had received a surprisingly frank answer. “Look, I’m beautiful and sexy, and every man who sees me wants to take me to bed,” she told him. “It’s been that way since I was fourteen. I’m glad, because that is an asset I have to have as an actress if I can turn it into camera presence and use it to supplement real talent, which I’ve got. I want to be a Meryl Streep, not a Marilyn Monroe. In Hollywood sex appeal is a marketable commodity, and it’s an invaluable part of my package. It means I won’t always be stuck with character parts, and I can get a shot at lead roles. Guys like Mitch copping an occasional feel is a small trade-off for the edge my looks and my body give me. I’m not a slut, and I won’t let anyone treat me like one. I have already made a promise to myself that I’m never doing the casting couch, I don’t care what part’s on offer. But I want people to look at me, the men because they want me and the women because they want to be like me. That’s one of the things that makes a star.”

Sexual harassment was a serious political charge, and it was something of a mystery as to how Mitch Newman was able to skate on it, despite the cloud of unsavory rumor that hung over his head. Cody thought he knew. Mitch was widely suspected of being Jewish, although he never actually said so. Like many Pacific Northwest Jews over the past few years, he had learned to conceal his racial identity, sometimes even to the extent of wearing a large gold cross outside his clothes. But there was one student he didn’t fool. Cody had lived too long among the Tribe, and he knew. Several times he’d attempted to interest his commanding officer Bobby Bells, or at least his friend Farmer Brown, in the idea of killing Newman, but he was unable to provide any proof of Newman’s Hebraic heritage. “Look, Cody, I don’t doubt your word,” DiBella had explained to him patiently. “I’m sure this guy is a scumbag. It’s just that we can’t go around killing people because we think they might be Jewish, or even if we know they are, for that matter. Personal considerations can’t enter into Volunteer operations. The idea behind what we’re doing isn’t simply to gun people down on the street like we’re some kind of gangsters. The idea is to win our independence as a nation, and to do that we’ve got to function like a proper army and select our targets accordingly. Now if you can bring me any proof that this guy is not only a Jew but he’s doing something to help the ZOG, or that removing him would benefit the Volunteers in any way, then once you convince me he’s a legitimate military target, your Mr. Newman is history.” But despite snooping and even a few attempts to schmooze up to Newman, dropping a few Yiddish expressions as bait, Cody was never able to get anything definite.

Now Mitch began to speak. “Guys and gals, welcome to the summer drama workshop. In this next two and a half months, we’re going

to learn a lot about a complex and exacting craft, and we're going to have more fun than a barrel of monkeys doing it. You can take that to the bank. I'm going to make sure that all of you remember this summer for the rest of your lives. Some of you, like Kelly, are already well on the way towards an acting career, but I hope to convince you that you can use your abilities and your love of drama not just to make a living, but to achieve a fulfilling and exciting life. We've got ten weeks, and I want us to work up two productions for public performance in that time. The first will be a series of three one-acts of theater in the round, for which I have selected the most modern and avant-garde short pieces I could find, carefully chosen to give the fullest range of expression possible to all the talent we've got here. You can find the scripts in the course packets that Suzanne is passing out."

Newman's harried-looking teaching aide was giving out stacks of papers which were duly passed back up the row to all the students. Cody noticed that two of the three one-acts were by Jewish playwrights he had never heard of, and the third seemed to be by some kind of Hindu, Gupta Something-or-Other. A quick glance over the scripts confirmed that one playlet seemed to consist almost entirely of obscenities shouted at the top of the characters' lungs, the second was a hippy-dippy dialogue between people pretending to be various plants and animals, and in the third the lines were all to be spoken while the characters were whirling around the stage like dervishes in a state of nudity or at least semi-nudity. "Our second production will be a proper, full-blown stage play," continued Newman. "I'd like to hear suggestions from you all now as to what that play will be. Needless to say, I think we need to showcase the talents of Kelly Shipman, since within our own community here in Seattle she has what amounts to star draw, and we would like to make something off the box office for the drama department. But no play or motion picture is a one-man or one-woman vehicle. Not by any means. Theater and film are team efforts on every level, and all of you will get a chance to learn and to participate in a professional-level production." Most of the morning was spent in a debate on what the major play was to be, and Kelly was able to carry Arsenic and Old Lace. The minute it was clear that was the play she wanted to do, Newman backed her. It was shameless sycophancy but the kids didn't mind.

Arsenic was a funny play, after all. They broke for lunch at twelve. The school cafeteria was open, and somewhat to his annoyance Cody saw that Kelly and Molly ended up sitting with Craig Crabtree and the usual affluent class clique, which seemed to have survived graduation, at least for the summer until the privileged kids dispersed to their various colleges and universities. Kelly was chattering away. "I don't see why we have to stay on campus for lunch," she said with a pout, as she wolfed down a chef salad with diet ranch dressing. (Hillside was definitely a rich kids' school.) "I wanted to take us all out to Burger Barn in my new Explorer."

"They're scared we'll get kidnapped or blown up or something by Jerry Reb," said Molly Bergstrom, biting into a cafeteria BLT.

"If we take that piece of crap Nissan Brock drives, maybe the goots will think we're fellow trailer trash and let us pass," said Crabtree with a shit-eating grin. Cody ignored him.

"Hey, they're just worried about all the bombings," he said to Kelly. "The school doesn't want any of us hurt." In a way, it was good that this part of his life was ending in a couple of months. The intermittent needling and hostility from Crabtree was increasing in frequency. It looked like that situation was building up again as Craig's hold on Kelly, tenuous as it had become, slipped away and he looked around for someone to blame. Who but the handy Friar Lawrence? There had always been an element of jealousy there, as clearly non-eligible as Cody was in the competition department. Cody didn't want a repeat of their one serious confrontation. The next time might escalate into something that would draw official attention to him.

Craig Crabtree's father had been the senior partner in one of Seattle's most prestigious law firms, and a member of the Washington state legislature who never saw a piece of political correctness he didn't like. Crabtree senior now lived in Atlanta, where he held some kind of big corporate vice presidency, which was a thinly veiled fig leaf to disguise the fact that he had fled the Northwest after being threatened by the NVA, leaving his family behind. Craig had the standard rich boy's draft deferment and was heading for Dartmouth in September, then on to Harvard Law School and a six figure income before he was twenty-three. He was an obnoxious type, large and golden and groomed like a male model, dressed to the preppy nines and rumored already to have had some plastic surgery done. He was a football star, head of the debating team, student body president, and never let anyone forget it. That handsome head had almost nothing in it, and what little was up there was bad. He had been the on-again-off-again boyfriend of Kelly since junior high school, on-again-off-again largely due to his inability to stay faithful for two consecutive weeks. In addition to Kelly he had also had been known to diddle with Molly Bergstrom and virtually every other attractive girl in his class. With amazing maturity for her age, Kelly had confided to Cody that she was fully aware of Craig's wandering eye but she kept him around "so I can have somebody, but I know it won't ever get too serious." She had also freely discussed the fact that the attraction was purely physical, with details, which was really not what Cody needed to hear, but he had sighed to himself and held his piece.

Cody had experienced a few minor run-ins with Craig when he first arrived on simple grounds of his poverty and working class background, since the kid was an arrogant ass. But since spring, when it became obvious that Kelly valued Cody's friendship, Craig had gotten the idea that there was more going on between them than there was, and was prone to fits of sullen jealousy, which Kelly found amusing yet which made Cody wary. He had been told when he started by Bobby Bells that his attendance at Hillside was conditional on his keeping a low profile. The Crabtree situation had come to a head several months before, at a spring break pool party at Kelly's house, when Crabtree had showed up drunk and obnoxious, gotten into Dr. Shipman's liquor cabinet and gotten more drunk and obnoxious, and finally attempted to use his superior size and strength to shove Cody into the pool. Cody was small but wiry and powerful, and he had more than once been required to protect himself when he'd lived on the Seattle streets as a runaway. He twisted the bully's arm viciously and sent Crabtree plunging into the water instead, which everyone had thought was great fun except Crabtree. Craig ended up circulating a version wherein "Brock knows kung fu or something" and he'd been sucker-punched. This wasn't true. Cody had simply lived rough on the streets of an urban jungle for many months, and he had acquired certain survival skills, along with the will to use them without hesitation. Officially it was teen party horseplay, but the incident had left bad blood, and Cody had an uneasy feeling the re-match would be more serious.

Just as the class was breaking up that afternoon, Cody Brock got a call on his cell phone "Take a walk on Boardwalk," a male voice told him.

"Should I pass go and collect \$200?" asked Cody.

“Yeah, go ahead.” That meant that the summons was immediate. Cursing to himself, Cody looked around, but he saw that Kelly and Molly had already left the auditorium. With regret, he called Kelly on her cell phone and caught her in the parking lot. “Look, Kel, I’m sorry, I won’t be able to make it to Molly’s party. Something’s come up at work and I have to go in,” he said apologetically. Cody maintained a no-show job at local grocery store, ostensibly as a stock boy, but the supervisor who handled his cards was a Party supporter and Cody was seldom to be seen around the storeroom in his apron.

“Oh, that’s awful!” said Kelly. He was glad to hear a bit of disappointment in her voice, although not so glad to hear Craig Crabtree’s voice in the background.

“Sorry, but they kind of count on me down there,” he said. “Happy birthday again, Kel.” Well, he thought, it probably wouldn’t have been much of a fun party anyway if I had to watch that asshole Crabtree hanging all over her and the both of them ending up snogging on Molly’s couch. Cody ran to the parking lot and got into his own car, a battered ten year-old Nissan which like most NVA wheels was souped up under the hood to NASCAR standards, carrying a few little extras like armor plating in the back seat and side doors. After a long and careful ride through Bellevue, during which he watched alertly to make certain he wasn’t followed, turned off to avoid known FATPO checkpoints and on one occasion to avoid a lumbering Stryker armored vehicle in U. S. military camouflage, Cody arrived at the current safe house which was used as a headquarters by Alpha Company. It was a private home in an upscale Bellevue suburb, with a neatly trimmed and landscaped lawn and the sprinklers turning merrily, from the outside quite possibly the home of the Brady Bunch. Cody drove by, parked a block down the street, then walked back to the house. He knocked a coded signal on the side door, which was opened by a big chunky man with iron-gray hair and a weatherbeaten face, a double-barreled sawed-off shotgun in one hand. “Hey there, Daddy,” he said to Farmer Brown, the man who occasionally played the role of his father when necessary for the school system. “What’s up? We going out tonight?”

“Looks like. The boss wants to see you downstairs,” said Brown. “He’ll tell you about it.”

In the basement Cody met with his commanding officer, NVA Lieutenant Robert DiBella, a grumpy and thickset man of about fifty. He had balding black hair flecked with iron gray, tobacco-stained yellow teeth and a blue-shaven chin. This afternoon, the man who was arguably the deadliest NVA gunman in Seattle was wearing a pair of greasy overalls and heavy work boots. He looked like any Joe Shmoe janitor or gas station attendant. As per usual, he had a large cheap cigar stuck in his mouth, glowing and spewing smelly white fumes.

Robert DiBella had joined the NVA for the simplest and most personal of reasons: he couldn’t find anything else to do. After twenty years on the factory floor of the Connerly heavy diesel engine factory in Tukwila, he had been laid off from his job when the company packed up without warning and moved to Guatemala lock, stock, and barrel. In his mid-forties by that time, he had been unable to get another job since. He had lost his home and had to move into a two-bedroom trailer. Medical insurance had vanished. His wife, who was in poor health with a congenital liver disorder, had been forced back to work, and his children had been compelled to give up college and go to work as a construction hand and a word processing temp respectively. In DiBella’s simplistic world view, when one got fucked, one returned the favor with interest, and the NVA allowed him to shoot the people who had done him wrong. He had read Rockwell’s White Power once just to confirm what he already knew, and never cracked a racial theory book again. There had been no need to convert him to racial nationalism. A working man since he had left high school, a white male who had grown up with affirmative action, open borders and Third World immigration, DiBella already knew the economic and racial facts of life. To him the idea of revolution was simple common sense. When something broke down, you fixed it. If it was beyond repair, you threw it out and replaced it. America was clearly beyond repair, so it was time to try something else. A new country for only white people seemed like just what the doctor ordered.

“Sit down, kid. We got a tickle on tonight,” Bells told him. “It’s a hit. Two confirmed targets, maybe three. Some asshole rock and roll singer and his Jew dope pusher buddy, and as icing on the cake, maybe a Fed from Homeland Security as well. They’re cooking up some anti-racist rock concert shit, and we’re going to put some manners on ‘em. This one’s a bit of a rush job. I like more time to plan, but as Mick Jagger tells us, you can’t always get what you want, and this one ain’t complex. You keep sayin’ you wanna pull a trigger. Now’s your chance. You still all hot and bothered to kill somebody you don’t know from Adam’s house cat?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Cody, striving to keep his voice calm. “I’ve been ready to make my bones since the day I took the oath. I won’t let you down.”

“Yeah, well, see that you don’t, because our information is that these two guys are packing, and the Fed will be for sure if he’s there, so if you flub it you might be the one who dies. I’m sorry in a way it’s a white man. A Volunteer should make his bones on a mud or a kike. I’m sure you’ve noticed by now that this has pretty much boiled down to a civil war between whites. Tell you what, to pop your cherry we’ll let you take down the Jew, one Jacob ‘Kappy’ Kaplan, and we’ll let Jumping Jack Flash do the white guy. Assuming we don’t fuck up, this tickle shouldn’t be no trouble. Lefties are pussies, at least in this country. They’ve got some tough Reds in Europe, and in England where Jack comes from, but not in America. Once we had some Trotskyites try to take over Local 184 at the plant, before it shut down. Jews and feminist bitches. They showed up at the union hall with all kinds of Commie newspapers and literature. We tapped ‘em with a wrench a couple of times, and they all ran away. Before the war those street-corner Commie types used to give the Party trouble, showing up any time we had a rally or a public event and throwing shit at us, spitting on us, that kind of crap. But they always were pussies, even then, and after 10/22 when a few rounds popped off over their heads they scattered and ran like mice. Now, don’t bullshit me, kid, because once we get out there I can’t have you freezing on me when the time comes. You sure about this?”

“I did alright when those Fatties jumped us downtown,” protested Cody.

“Yeah, you did,” agreed Bells. “You kept your head good, you aimed when you fired and I think you hit one of ‘em. Nicked his body armor, anyway. But this ain’t gonna be a firefight, kid, it’s just a piece of work. Clipping a guy cold ain’t like defending yourself when you’re attacked and playing Rambo all over Spring Street. You’re going to have to point a pistol at another man and pull the trigger, and then shoot him again when he’s on the ground to make sure he’s dead, then walk away and not worry about it afterwards. I think you can do it. If I didn’t I wouldn’t even make the offer. Hell, if I didn’t think you had it in you, you wouldn’t be here at all. For all I know this

Polack guy may have some little three year-old girl who thinks he's Uncle fucking Wiggly. But that ain't our department. The Party says he has to go, so he goes. Now, you want in?"

Cody gave Commandant Winston Wayne's famous answer from several years before, when in a rare media interview Wayne was berated by a television reporter for causing pain and suffering among survivors of the NVA's attacks. "I will not be blackmailed by the tears of children into failing in my duty. Yes, sir, I want in."

"That's what I figured you'd say, but I hadda ask," replied DiBella with a nod, leaning back on the sofa and popping the top on a can of diet Dr. Pepper, which he then scowled at. "I know we can't be doing this with drunks, and I understand the regulation against alcohol, but damn, I'll be glad when we win this thing and I'll be able to have a beer again!" He didn't give Cody time to comment, but Cody probably wouldn't have been a drinker even if the NVA hadn't strictly banned booze among Volunteers. Booze was what had gotten Cody's father sent to prison. Booze and tyranny was a bad combination.

"Okay, here's the spritz. We take two cars, as per usual, this time the Caddy and the Cherokee." Bells was a big man, and he liked big roomy cars and SUVs. "You and me and Farmer Brown will be in one vehicle. Eddie Hagen, Thumper and Jumping Jack Flash will be in the second car. The limey kid gets to make his bones tonight as well as you. This one is about as basic as it gets. The takedown is going to be in the parking lot behind the Eclectic Strawberry café on Broadway, just off the market square up in Capitol Hill. We wait for the targets to come out, we blast 'em before they get in their cars, and we book. I know the spot. It's set back from the street and boxed in nice and neat on either side, so it should be like shootin' fish in a barrel. There are alleys on either side at the far corners of the lot by the restaurant itself, which they could possibly escape through, but they shouldn't be able to get that far, because we're going to nail 'em quick and not let 'em beat feet. Hopefully there won't be too many cars in the lot that time of night for 'em to dodge around and hide behind, since the Strawberry isn't a bar, no liquor license, just vegetarian goulash and herbal tea and poetry readings and puppet shows and hippie-dippy crap like that. But we'll get you guys good and close, so we don't have to play hide and seek with these motherfuckers. They should be leaving any time after ten. If for any reason we miss 'em at the Strawberry we have a probable secondary attack point, McGrory's Pub on 15th Avenue, which is where Country Joe usually likes to wind up his evening. We should be able to confirm if he's there from somebody we got on the inside, but I don't want you two to have to go into a building on your first hit with no recon. Never do an indoor hit unless you've been in the joint first, you know where everything is, and you've seen all the exits and potential problems. They shouldn't get that far, anyway. This should go down at the Strawberry. We'll be in the area cruising, and I'll get a code word text message when it looks like they're about five minutes from the door, so that way we won't have to hang around the parking lot loafing and looking conspicuous for any curious busybodies."

"Country Joe?" asked Cody.

"Yeah, our targets for tonight are one Joseph Krajewski, a white male approximately age fifty with long hair and a goatee beard and assorted tats, and a Red Sea pedestrian named Jacob Kaplan, aka Kappy, short and fat and Semitic, who is also a penny-ante drug dealer. Our source tells us that both men are carrying licensed handguns, so the possibility of return fire exists. That means no fucking around. If we do our job right, no one should ever shoot back. We're not out to play Wild Bill Hickock with anybody, we're there to secure the existence of our people and a future for white children. Here's a picture of them both; they're circled." Bells handed Cody a flyer for the rock group Concussion, and he carefully looked at the faces of the two men he would be hunting tonight before handing it back. "That's your target on the right. Make sure you can recognize him so you don't plug the wrong guy, although how anyone could mistake a hose nose like that one, I got no idea. Remember, this is going to be in the dark, with only whatever lighting is on the street."

"Weapons?" asked Cody.

"Weapons will be handguns for you two and longarms for Farmer Brown and Hagen, because they will be debusing the vehicles with you and they will take out the Homeland Security Fed or Feds, if they're present, and anybody else who tries to be a hero and get involved. I'll let you two root through what we got in the closet and you can choose your own gun, whatever you're most comfortable with."

"No full auto?" asked Cody in some disappointment. "Jeez, I was hoping to hose down Broadway like you guys did last time to all those faggots and race-mixers." Cody had been a driver during Operation Springtime for Hitler, and was still miffed that he had not been given an opportunity to pull a trigger.

"No, too indiscriminate," said Bobby Bells, shaking his head. "No mortars or crashing of airplanes either, worse luck. Because you see, just to make it interesting, we got a little stipulation from Brigade. On this job, the night train is strictly stag. You might call it a surgical strike. We waste Krajewski and his Jew guru and any other males with them who get in the way, which will hopefully include a suit or two from the Department of Homeland Security, but there will most likely be a few chicks with the target group, and we have to make sure that we do not shoot any of the women. One of them's ours."

"Ours?" asked Cody in puzzlement.

"Yeah, I told you, we got somebody on the inside. She's the informant who's gonna put the finger on these characters for us. A Threesecond who calls herself Nightshade."

"How dramatic! A girl spy with a neat slinky code name," laughed Cody. "What does Nightshade look like? All black leather and a black beret, no doubt? And sunglasses, even at night?"

"Hell, for all I know she may have three tits," replied Bells with a shrug. "We don't know what she looks like. We never had no need to know before this. Just be a gentleman tonight and don't clip any of the bimbos. I'm assuming this broad has sense enough to duck when the lead starts flying. Now, we're going to have to leave early to get over into the city the long way, because according to Brigade intelligence it looks like Fattie has got checkpoints on I-90 and the 520 both laid on for tonight. Remember that if you have to end up having to E & E on your own for any reason—stay off the bridges."

Cody went upstairs and made himself a sandwich, which he ate, and then he and Jumping Jack Flash, an intense blond young Englishman with an upper-class Oxonian accent to go with his incongruous Cockney nickname, went back down into the basement where they were shown to a large metal arms locker and allowed to choose their armament for the evening. Cody was not allowed to

carry a weapon unless he was actually out on duty, since wide-eyed golly-gee teenager or not, there was simply no way to talk his way out of getting caught with a gun. This had already proven to be a worthwhile precaution on several occasions when he had been stopped, frisked, and manhandled by FATPO patrols, not to mention his being unarmed the time he'd had his little set-to with Craig Crabtree, when he might have been tempted to use a weapon despite the trouble his own father had gotten into in a similar situation. In the normal course of his day he didn't need one, anyway. But he had been with A Company long enough to have undergone extensive one-on-one training in firearms from men who had learned in the imperial military, and who were expert and lethal. He could handle and field-strip every weapon in the active service unit's impressive arsenal. "We going to be dumping the pieces afterward, Lieutenant?" asked Cody. "Nah, no need," replied Bells. "They never bother to run ballistics any more, they just call the meat wagon and mop up the blood. They'll know who did it, and if they catch us it ain't like we got to worry about going to any kind of trial no more. So go ahead and pick yourself a good piece, not a throwaway."

"Got mine, then," said Cody, selecting a 9-millimeter Russian-made Makarov automatic.

"Good choice," said Bells with a nod. Jumping Jack Flash chose a 9-millimeter Heckler and Koch P7, and Bobby Bells handed them extra magazines and boxes of ammunition to load the clips with. He himself carried on old, well-oiled Model 1911 Colt .45 in his belt. It had been his father's service-issue handgun in Vietnam and was his good luck piece. "Farmer Brown and Eddie Hagen will be backing you guys up with long arms in case anything goes wrong," Bells reminded them. He politely avoided saying in case you freeze. "They'll be packing AKS-74s with folding stocks, and armored-piercing ammo to cut through any kevlar the Fed may be wearing. We got a lot of those nowadays," he said, pointing to a table stacked high with the Russian rifles. "Came in on a freighter from the Motherland or something, along with a whole shitload of Russian-made 5.45-millimeter ammo. Might as well use 'em. They're light and compact when they fold down, and they got a hell of a punch. We're going to have to leave now, since we're taking the long way around into the city around the lake, because of those damned Fattie roadblocks on the bridges which will be stacking up traffic until eight o'clock tonight. Before we go, though, we give both the Cadillac and the Cherokee a once-over, including the engines. Functioning transportation is just as important as functioning firearms when you're on a tickle. You don't want to run out of gas or have your vehicle cut out on you because of some kind of mechanical trouble in the middle of a hit or while you're running from Fattie. Let's go."

* * *

As the two carloads of NVA gunmen crept slowly across town from the East Side into the city itself, heading for Capitol Hill, the two commanders of the brigade arrived back at Mrs. Sweetzer's place. At about eight o'clock at night, with the sky still bright and sunny outside and the temperature in the balmy high eighties, there was the sound of a vehicle outside. Barrow and Dortmund admitted a nondescript man in a suit and spoke with him for a bit while he checked out the room and saw that it was safe. Then he leaned out the door and gestured to a fourth person out on the stairs. The man who entered the room was thin and bespectacled, with salt-and-pepper hair and horn-rimmed glasses. He wore a cardigan sweater even in the summer warmth and looked like Mr. Rogers. His code name in fact was Mr. Chips, due to his former profession as a schoolteacher. "Hey, Red," said Barrow, shaking his hand. "Any trouble getting in?"

"We were stopped at a roadblock at the 85th Street exit," said Colonel Red Morehouse of the Third Section and the NVA Army Council. "Nothing out of the ordinary, couple of Fatties and some cops. They had sniffer dogs. Our guns were in the side boxes hidden in the doors. For the record, those sachets of Joe Cord's work. Our gun boxes each had one of those little bags of goo and the dogs couldn't smell a thing."

"Except maybe me shitting in my pants," muttered the driver. "God, I hate those dogs!"

"Yeah, I know they work," said Barrow. "I was able to get through a checkpoint a week ago. Dex, you hungry? I got a burger in here and a fish sandwich, and there's drinks in the fridge." He tossed the driver a fast food bag.

"Thanks, Commandant," said Dex. He took a soft drink in a can from the refrigerator and left the apartment to go downstairs and wait by the car. Barrow gestured towards another bag on the formica table.

"No thanks, Frank, but I will take a ginger ale if you've got," said Morehouse. Dortmund pulled one out of the ice box and they sat down. Morehouse got right to the point. "I normally wouldn't insult either of you comrades by reminding you of security procedure, but guys, I've got to have your absolute word that this does not go any further than this room. This is arguably the most important communication you will ever receive from command."

"The Feds have finally agreed to surrender?" chortled Dortmund off-handedly.

"So it would seem," replied Morehouse in a level voice. There was dead silence for a long, long moment. Barrow suddenly had to remember to breathe.

"Spill it," he said, his voice choking. Dortmund's mouth hung open.

Morehouse continued, as calmly as if he were lecturing his students about William Jennings Bryan and the free silver issue of the 1890s. "About a month ago the Old Man was approached in his cell in Florence Federal penitentiary by a delegation of high muckety-mucks from D.C., headed by none other than the United States Secretary of State, the Honorable Walter Stanhope. The result of that meeting was that the Old Man has been transferred to more comfortable accommodation within the prison and is suddenly being treated with all kinds of bowing and scraping, although he's still incommunicado. Commandant Alex Barrett was released from Florence and dropped off at a hotel in Olympia, about ten days ago. Barrett was accompanied by a Swiss gentleman from the International Red Cross and a second man, a United Nations diplomat from the Republic of Ireland named O'Connell. Barrett took two days to make sure that he wasn't being followed, and got rid of all the clothing and every article they gave him to make sure nothing had been planted in them by way of an electronic tracking device, and then he re-established contact with the NVA and brought the two others in to speak with members of the Army Council." Morehouse sighed and took a deep breath. "They want to talk."

"The Federal government of the United States? They want to talk to us?" demanded Barrow incredulously.

"Yes. They sent the Red Cross guy and the Irish diplomat to vouch for the sincerity of their intentions, knowing that we wouldn't trust a damned thing any of them had to say if it was written in Chelsea Clinton's blood. They want to talk about ending the war, or resolving

the civil conflict, as they put it. They want to call a peace conference. Nice polished mahogany table, briefcases, international observers, cocktail parties, re-drawing maps, the whole nine yards.”

There was a long moment of stunned silence. “Dear God, we’ve won!” choked Dortmund, his face white and his jaw slack.

“Is this confirmed?” asked Barrow, still unable to grasp it. “It’s not some kind of trick?”

“Christ, who the hell knows with these people? It may well be a trick,” conceded Morehouse. “It may well be that the Jews and the super-wealthy Anglo-Saxon bluebloods who actually run this society have no intention of giving us our independence, and this whole thing is some kind of stratagem or gull on their part. In fact, I doubt if they do intend to give us anything meaningful, but the mere fact that such an approach is being made at all tells us that freedom is now possible. They wouldn’t even have considered such a thing unless we have beaten them to their knees, even worse than we know. Applesmash and Pigkill and bombing out their electrical power grids have reduced the entire U. S. infrastructure to jelly. The whole evil empire is on the verge of collapse, we know that much. It’s possible that they’re now weak enough so we can take what they don’t want to give. But as much as I hate to throw cold water on something I can scarcely believe myself, we haven’t won yet. Not by a long shot. This whole business may come to nothing. But as nearly as we can tell, the offer of talks is genuine, and unconditional.”

“What the hell did the Army Council do?” demanded Barrow.

“We started making conditions,” said Morehouse with a grin. “We sent the messengers back and told them flat out that we didn’t believe them, and we wouldn’t even talk about talks about talks until they made a good faith gesture to convince us they meant it, specifically prisoner release. Historically, in these situations that’s always the key. No occupying power is ever serious about withdrawal unless they’re willing to release prisoners. We actually had a procedure for such an eventuality planned this far, for the time when this would happen. It’s essential that the United States understand that they are going to be forced to put something substantial on the table, and that we will not be fobbed off with words. We just heard back from the Red Cross, and while needless to say the first quibbles and caveats and yes-buts were already there, the régime has agreed in principle to release a significant number, as they put it, of Party prisoners once we agree to meet with them. Of course, our idea of what constitutes a significant number and their idea are likely to be quite different. The Army Council is drawing up a list right now, but so far it looks like this is legitimate. Now you understand why I insisted that this must not get out! We don’t yet fully understand the political and other dynamics at work here, but I can tell you right now that for anyone in the U. S. government to get anything like this through against the resistance of the Jews and the dead-enders and die-hards in the power structure must have been like pulling teeth. Somebody’s got to be serious about it. Any premature disclosure could screw the pooch for good and keep this godawful war going for the next generation. Look, we always knew that at some point the shooting would have to stop once we’d beaten the bastards down far enough, and we’d have to work out the actual nuts and bolts of a sovereign and independent Aryan nation. But we never had a clue as to when or how this could happen. This is uncharted territory, and God alone knows what will happen.”

“What do you want us to do?” asked Barrow.

“Sit tight, say nothing, and be prepared to implement any order the Army Council may give,” said Morehouse. “Any settlement talks will have two basic elements from our point of view, both fraught with difficulty and danger. The first element will be a ceasefire, a cessation of hostilities. That is going to be very hard to enforce. Shooting people is a very easy habit to get into and very hard to break, and besides, it’s such jolly fun. There will be elements on both sides that don’t want to stop. The second aspect will be the emergence of the NVA and the Party from the underground and our preparation to assume state power within the Homeland. The ceasefire while negotiations go forward will probably be theoretically what will be called ‘in place,’ meaning each side holds its position and doesn’t attack the other, but since we have no position to hold, that’s going to be a problem. We have to grab hold of one. The Council has already decided that we will use any period of non-belligerence in order to glom onto as much territory and gear as possible. If talks do begin, while they are going on we have to physically displace the Federal forces as much as we can, and get our hands on as much territory and plant and as many economic assets as possible, without actually starting the war back up again. More importantly, we have to make the transition orderly and avoid chaos and mass flight from the Homeland by millions of people who are just plain scared and confused, and who we need to stay here and help us build a new land. Remember, many of our own people genuinely believe all the Federal propaganda about how we’re criminal lunatics who want power in order to rape and slaughter at will, and establish some kind of totalitarian tyranny so we can tell everyone what color socks to put on in the morning. Some of the severe measures we have been compelled to take, and will be compelled to take in the future, will reinforce that impression. That means that we are going to have to vastly expand the NVA very quickly indeed, arm and train and organize thousands of troops, and get ready to move into the vacuum left by the departing Americans. We’re going to have to stop being guerrillas and become a real army, and we’re not going to have much time to do it in. Getting the men won’t be a problem. You know that once it became clear Northwest Migration was a serious movement, we’ve always had more people than we knew what to do with, and at any given time there have been hundreds of people wandering around Portland and Seattle and Spokane looking to join the NVA, they just didn’t know where to find us. But turning those men into a responsive and capable military force will be something else.”

“You don’t want us to cease hostilities right away, do you?” asked Barrow, thinking of the assassination of Country Joe and Kappy which must be going on even as they spoke. “I mean, shouldn’t there be some kind of formal agreement or treaty or something before we cease fire?”

“No, until such time as you hear for sure, it’s business as usual,” Morehouse assured them. “In fact, it might be a good idea if we spanked them a little bit harder than usual over the next couple of weeks to make it clear that any deals the Party makes are very much made from a position of strength. Just bear in mind that from now on, we’re on a tightrope. One slip and we can lose everything we’ve gained. We’ve lost a lot of fine, brave people in these past five years, starting with Gus Singer and his family on that October 22nd when It Takes A Village came for them in Coeur D’Alene and got their asses shot off by the neighbors. We have to make sure they didn’t die in vain.”

* * *

The city of Seattle might be hot during the day in the summertime, but global warming or not, it still wasn't anywhere near as bad as most of the rest of the country. At least in Seattle it cooled off at night. Barrow, Dortmund, and Morehouse were still conferring at the house in Ballard over an hour later, as the two NVA cars from A Company casually rolled down Broadway and through the labyrinth of back streets on Capitol Hill, wending in and out among the stately Victorian mansions that had once been home to lumber barons and businessmen in the days of Teddy Roosevelt. Bobby Bells was driving the Cadillac. They kept carefully within the speed limit and made all their turn signals. They passed the bumpy and depressed stretch of pavement where the airplane had crashed back in the spring. The car windows were rolled down, and the newly dark air coming through them was now cool, mildly damp from a light rain about an hour before.

The streetlights and the windows of the stores and restaurants and bars lit the night with pale glow, a slight mist hanging in a nimbus around each light, and the sound of the tires on the street was wet. Well-known local landmarks slid by in the lambent light. The Sorrento Hotel, Pilgrim Church, Seattle Central Community College, museums and coffeehouses, hole-in-the-wall shops that still managed to hang on by doing a reduced business with the students and remaining locals. They cruised past the hastily-renamed Diversity Park on 15th Avenue. The fine stand of greenery on the hillside in the midst of the urban landscape had originally been named Volunteer Park by the designers in Seattle's early years, but on the outbreak of the NVA campaign the chagrined city council had quickly changed the name to celebrate a diversity that no longer existed, since the Volunteers of latter days had decimated the neighborhood's alternative population, as the motley crew of colorful inhabitants been called. Within the park stood the skeletal remains of the Seattle Asian Art Museum, a ghastly 1933 art-deco structure which had been bombed out by the NVA during the first year of the war and never rebuilt. Just north of the park the two vehicles cruised by Lakeview Cemetery, then turned right and slid around the Arboretum. "We should be hearing from Nightshade any time now," said Bobby Bells, pressing the cell phone in his pocket. "I know I'm goin' in circles, but I don't want to get too far from the Strawberry." The men in the car eyed the almost empty streets. "Gee, I don't see no faggots out here walking hand in hand no more," chuckled Bells reminiscently.

"Did those guys really do that kind of thing?" asked Cody in some disbelief. Farmer Brown looked back at him indulgently.

"This young feller ain't never seen faggots in public, Lieutenant," he laughed. "Never saw this neighborhood back in its heyday, I guess."

"I grew up in Centralia, until my dad...until It Takes A Village got me and sent me to those kikes in Frisco," said Cody.

"Yeah, well, there was a time when this whole part of town reeked of Vaseline," said Brown. "How old are you now, Cody?"

"Eighteen years old today, in fact," replied Cody.

"Yeah?" said Brown. "Well, happy birthday, young man. As the commandant of Auschwitz said to the Führer, if I'd known in time I would have baked a kike. So you would have been about thirteen when the war started?"

"Yeah. I got the privilege of seeing 10/22 from the Jewish viewpoint, when I was with the Sapirsteins," said Cody with a scowl.

"That must have been a real trip!" said Bells.

"You haven't seen hysteria until you see a whole shul full of hebes who are suddenly afraid again," said Cody with a bitter laugh. "And you the only goy in the place."

"You lived in San Francisco, and yet you really never seen two men cuddling and snogging in public, joined at the beard? Or two dykes tongue-slurping each other in a Starbucks?" asked Farmer Brown, getting back onto the original subject. Thinking about the Sapirsteins was a distraction the boy could do without at this particular crucial moment in his life and career. Cody had never actually declined to speak of his foster family, but Brown knew that the very thought of that time in his life made the kid physically ill, made him shake and mutter. Something very bad had happened, that Brown and Bells could see, but everyone in the NVA had their own personal horror story of life under political correctness, and it was understood that one never asked for anything that wasn't volunteered.

"Yeewwww," said Cody in disgust. "Actually, I always say San Francisco because that's where Sapirstein had his law practice and that was kind of the center of things for the family, but we actually lived in Silicon Valley, in San José. The buggery was there, but it was all very hi-tech and discreet. All the really screaming queens lived across the Bay in the Castro. I never went up there."

"Well, they used to be all over this neighborhood like fleas on a dog," said Brown. "No more, though. I guess us domestic terrorists must be doing our jobs. Squad car at two o'clock, Bob."

"I see him," said Bells, quietly signaling and then changing lanes, the Jeep behind them following, as they smoothly slid away from the police car. If the cops noticed the two vehicles, they did nothing. The Seattle PD, like all Northwest departments, had learned that curiosity could kill the cat. Although there was no informal live and let live arrangement as there was between the NVA and local law enforcement in some parts of the Homeland, Seattle police were known to avoid getting entangled in NVA-related events as much as they could, leaving the task of fighting against the revolution to FATPO and assorted Federal agencies, whose job it was and who were presumably well paid for it. By this time, after five years of urban guerrilla warfare, any hostile run-ins between the Volunteers and the SPD were usually the result of unfortunate accident rather than deliberate on either side's part.

Cody went on. "I mean, yeah, sure, I know what homosexuality is. God, who can not know, with sex education classes starting in kindergarten and getting homo and lesbian stuff shoved at us from every angle on TV and everywhere else? But I can't imagine two men or two women actually doing that crap. Especially in public. Why would anybody want to? I mean, what the hell for?" Cody's knowledge of sexual perversion was in fact more extensive than he let on, thanks to his older stepsisters Karen and Leah Sapirstein, but that was locked away, and there it would stay.

"Cody, I long ago stopped trying to figure out why this society does the things it does," said Farmer Brown. "I used to figure America had just gone crazy, that we'd all eaten bad bread with ergotine fungus in it, like sometimes happens in your rye house if you let the grain get damp. But things have reached the point where even that doesn't explain it any more. Whole books have been written about what has happened to this country, and when, and why, but I don't think we'll ever fully know or understand. There's a definite sickness out there, a kind of poisonous mushroom that's been growing in all the dark places of people's souls. Yeah, the Jews are largely responsible, but the Jews never got away with anything we didn't let 'em get away with. Why didn't we fight up until now? God

knows.”

“Little Rock,” said Bells. “Little Rock, 1958. When Eisenhower sent in the army to integrate the schools and force niggers in with the white kids. That’s when the trouble really started. They should have never let them get away with that, the NAACP and their smart Jew lawyers. They was just askin’ for trouble, lettin’ them get away with that. What kind of man lets his own child be forced in with niggers? I never understood what the hell those white parents were thinking. The people of the South should have risen up again and re-formed the Confederate States of America and seceded again, and the rest of the country should have supported the South. And I think back then they would have won, too, if the white man had just shown a little balls. They should have started shooting back then, in 1958. Maybe if they’d shot those NAACP niggers and some of those smart Jewish lawyers, the government would have understood the word no. Nothing says no like a bullet in the head. But they didn’t.”

“If they’d done the shooting back then, we wouldn’t have to be doing it now,” agreed Farmer Brown glumly. “We could have kept all of America, and we could all have had some kind of decent life if our grandfathers had done their duty. Instead they sloughed it off onto us.”

“That’s why you shouldn’t worry about tonight or anything like this you do from now on, Cody,” Bells told him. “You got nothing to feel bad about. What we’re doing is something that’s long overdue. This is like a historical process here. Too much peace and prosperity ain’t natural, anyway. People never had so much peace and prosperity before like we’ve had in America, and they don’t know what to do with it, so they abuse it. It’s like a guy who sits around in front of the TV all the time and never gets no exercise. He gets all flabby, like me. And if you don’t exercise your mind or your heart, if you’re not forced to show strength and courage, then all those qualities get fat and flabby and useless as well, and you get stupid in the head. Nations are like that, too. They get fat and lazy and full of dumb asses, because there ain’t no war nor natural selection to weed out the bad blood. There ain’t no penalty attached to being stupid and lazy. In easy times, the dumb asses don’t get forced to wise up or die like it should happen. They gotta get a bat upside the head to wake up their ideas. There ain’t nothing wrong with the American people that a good working over with a baseball bat won’t fix.”

“You always were a cockeyed optimist, Bob,” chuckled Brown.

“But then there’s people like this rat bastard Krajewski we’re gonna grease tonight, and his Jew buddy the dope dealer. Some people do all the drugs and race-mixing and liberalism and preversions deliberately, because they’re not just dumb asses, they’re really sick fucks and bad people who like to roll around in their own vomit. Bad things don’t just happen like some kind of natural disaster. Bad things are caused by bad people. Something’s broken inside them, and they ain’t never gonna act right, so fuck ‘em. Somewhere along the line we got this ridiculous idea that bad people have some kind of right to keep on doing their preversions and fucking things up for everybody else and making kids turn out bad and fucked-up like they are. Like hell they do. Bad people don’t need to be persuaded not to be bad, they need to be hit in the head. That’s what we’re finally doing. I just hope to God we didn’t begin too late.”

“Sometimes I hear these yuppie Barbie dolls and talking heads on TV whining and crying about how the ones we take out are human beings,” added Farmer Brown with a growl. “Yeah, they are. So? All that means is that they deserve it. Human beings are the only creatures on the face of the earth who are capable of deliberate, malicious evil. Even a shark that tears off a swimmer’s leg or a rattlesnake that bites does it because it’s his instinct, because it’s the way that God made him. Only a human being can deliberately choose to harm another living thing without cause, or lie, or incite others to do harm, or come up with ideas that poison the mind and destroy what others have built, speak words that cause ruin and pain and murder hope. Where the hell did we get this idea that we have no right to make moral judgments? Somebody has to judge. Somebody has to stand up say flat out that these bastards who have been ruling the world for the past hundred years are evil, the things they do and say and think and bring into the world are evil. Somebody has got to make these dogs hear the word no. Somebody has to stop them. This character Krajewski wants to help a foul tyranny do harm to his own people, his own blood. There is only one answer to that, and Country Joe is going to get that answer tonight. You won’t just be shooting tonight, Cody. You will be speaking, speaking for that part of humanity that is of worth and deserves to be saved. Make sure you make your point.”

“No worries,” said Cody. “Mr. Kaplan will get the message.”

There was a soft beep. Bobby Bells took his cell phone out of his overall pocket, illuminated it briefly and glanced at the screen, then put it back in his pocket. “That’s us,” he said laconically. He waved his arm casually out the window to the Cherokee and then hung the next left, heading back toward Broadway Market. Less than two minutes later they pulled up onto the street right at the entrance to the small concrete parking lot at the rear of the vegetarian café. Although the parking lot was barely twenty yards deep, DiBella took out a small pair of field glasses and scoped the parked cars in the lot. “Okay, see that battered looking blue VW bus with all that graffiti-looking crap all over it? That’s Krajewski’s ride.” He beckoned to the Cherokee. Thumper, who was a former boxer and looked distinctly thumped-upon, and Jack Flash got out and came up to the Cadillac. The English youth got into the back seat with Cody. “Looks like we got some room to maneuver,” Bells told the other driver in a low voice. “You stay on the street and get ready to book. Only thing I don’t like is that kill zone is a little confined. Farmer will take the Fed if he’s with ‘em. You tell Eddie not to fire unless necessary, and unless he has an absolutely clear shot. I don’t want no mistakes.” Thumper went back to the SUV while Bells slid the Caddy into the parking lot and went down the right-hand row next to the hoarding which fronted on the street. At the end of the row he deftly back-in parked and killed the engine and the lights. Farmer Brown opened his door and stuck the barrel of the AKS-74 assault rifle out of it while he extended the folding stock and quickly chambered a round. Bells turned around and spoke to the two young gunmen in the back.

“Right, pay attention to what I’m doing here, because you’re going to have to set up your own hits someday soon. I came down here so we can come in from behind them, between them and the alleyways there and over there. When they start running it will be away from you, towards the street and the other guys. Jack, I brought you into this car because I don’t want two shooters coming at the targets from different angles and maybe ending up firing into one another. You guys got your weapons set like I told you?”

“Affirmative, lieutenant!” said Jack crisply.

“Round up the spout, safety on,” confirmed Cody, hefting his Makarov .

“So all you got to do is just cock and fire. Just to make sure you don’t forget to take the safeties off, I’ll order you to do that just before

we roll out,” continued Bells, his voice firm and calm. “When the targets come outside, we let them get about halfway to the van, then I slide in behind them. I’ll hit the lights and tell you guys to move. You get out of the car and step forward to point blank range, but just out of arm’s length. You don’t want ‘em grabbing your gun or jumping on you and turning this into a wrestling match. They’ll turn around when I hit the lights and be blinded for a quick second or so, and they’ll be all lit up for you. This isn’t a drive-by, and you need to get close. Maybe you’re worried your hands will shake and you’ll miss or something. Don’t worry about it, you’ll both do fine. Adrenalin will kick in and it will be over before you know it, and we’ll be rolling back to Bellevue and three-four large pizzas from Tony G’s. First shot dead center, when they’re down another one dead center and a third in the head. Don’t worry about the Fed if there is one, Volunteer Brown has got him, and if there’s two suits Eddie’s got the other one. Just concentrate on your own target and put him down. And no conversation, no White Powers or Sieg Heils or tally-hos and pip pips from you, Jack. Remember, we’re the silent killers. That really freaks the media out, the way we keep silent while we shoot. Good propaganda. Jack, once Krajewski is down, you don’t look back, you run for the Jeep. Since Krajewski is the main target, I’ll be sure to run his ass over on the way out, just for good measure. Cody, once you cack the kike, you get back in the car and don’t dawdle. There ain’t no reason for this to take more than ten seconds. I will also repeat for about the fiftieth time, do not shoot any females among the target party. One of them is a Volunteer, and one hell of a cool and brave chick. Any questions?”

“Uh, shouldn’t you keep the car engine running?” asked Cody.

“Nah,” said Bells. “If they’re even halfway alert, the first thing they’re gonna spot when they come out the door is a parked car with the engine running. This is another reason why you make sure your vehicles are in tip top shape before you go out on a tickle, so you can be sure they’ll start when…” The lighted doorway over the rear entrance to the restaurant began to open. People came out. “Showtime,” said Bells.

Cody immediately recognized the tall figure of Joe Krajewski: long-haired, slightly stoop-shouldered, big belly flowing over his belt, wearing a black cowboy hat, a dark T-shirt and brown leather vest above faded jeans. Beside him waddled the dumpy, proboscidian figure of Jacob Kaplan, wearing a loose outfit of runner’s sweats and a baseball cap. Two women were accompanying them. One was a brassy-looking blond with a generous rack encased in what appeared in the pale light to be a purple half-sweater top, a white faux leather skirt, and patent leather heeled boots, a baseball cap on her head as well. The second was a thin girl with long dark hair, a very white face, very red lips and eyes shaded with dark makeup, wearing a dark wool pea coat, black leotards, and black running shoes. She carried a canvas handbag over one shoulder. There was no sign of a man in a suit or anyone who might be an officer of the Department of Homeland Security. “No Fed, just four of ‘em,” said Bells with satisfaction. “He must have gone out the front or left early. Oh, well. This will be a piece of cake. Safeties off.” There were two small clicks in the darkness. Bells started the Cadillac’s engine, then smoothly and slowly slid out of the parking space and turned left down the center row, inching forward, closing the gap behind the four people walking to the van. They were talking, Krajewski on the left was gesticulating, and they didn’t appear to notice anything until the Cadillac was about ten feet behind them. I ought to be gibbering right now, but I’m not, reflected Cody. I’m just waiting to do what I have to do. I’m either a good soldier, or else I’m insane. Then he stopped thinking about it and fastened his eyes on the heavy figure of Kaplan.

Bells hit the Cadillac’s headlights and the four people were illuminated. They all started to turn. “Now!” he commanded.

Cody opened the right rear passenger door and heard the left door open as Jack got out. He was around the door and running forward. Jacob Kaplan had turned and was now facing him. He seemed to understand what was happening, and his mouth opened and closed in the headlights like a fish. His hand fumbling in the waistband of his sweat pants and came up with a black .38 snub-nosed revolver. Krajewski shouted wordlessly. The expanse of Kaplan’s chest was so broad Cody didn’t even have to aim. He simply leveled the Makarov in a two handed stance, cocked the hammer back, and pulled the trigger in one smooth motion. He saw the flash from his muzzle and heard the shot, and almost simultaneously he saw another muzzle flash and heard another echoing bang from the other side of the car.

But Kaplan didn’t go down. He staggered and jerked and stepped backwards, his gun weaving in the air, squeezing off a wild shot into a parked car’s rear windshield. Cody fired again. That one knocked the Jew down and sent his .38 flying. Cody extended the weapon in his right hand, downward at a forty-five degree angle, fired a third shot into Kaplan’s body and then, leaning forward, a fourth into his head, and then a fifth shot into the quivering gut just for the hell of it. He could hear Jack Flash firing again and again, and then he saw the Englishman running out of the lot for his getaway vehicle. A woman was screaming hysterically.

“Good job! Now back in the car!” rapped out Farmer Brown, leaning out of the window with his AK at the ready. Cody jumped for the open right rear door. He was halfway in when he looked over and saw Bobby Bells leaning back and pulling the left rear door shut; Jack Flash had left it open. Bells got the door closed, but his foot slipped on the accelerator and the car jerked forward about a foot, just enough to cause Cody to lose his footing. He fell out of the door and hit the asphalt, rolling, not hurt, but he lost hold of the Makarov. He saw the pistol skitter over beside one of the parked cars. He leaped for it, stooped, and grabbed the gun with his right hand. He looked up and not four feet in front of him he saw the girl in black crouching between two parked cars. The light from the poles was dim, but bright enough. He looked right into her face.

And knew her. Just as he saw that she knew him and she flinched in recognition. Emily. Emily what’s-her-name, from Mr. Boland’s chemistry class at Hillside High School.

Cody didn’t stop, he didn’t think, he just acted. He clubbed the pistol and swung it at her head, but she jerked aside and it crashed into her collarbone. “Ow!” she screamed in outrage. “Shit!” With his left hand he grabbed her beneath her pea coat by the neck of her shirt or blouse she had on underneath, along with a handful of hair, and before the surprised girl could react he dragged her out from between the parked cars and hurled her headlong into the back of the Cadillac, and jumped in after her.

“What the fuck?” yelled Bobby Bells. “What are you doing, moron?”

“I know her!” shouted Cody in reply. “She knows me! Go!” Bells didn’t stop to argue at a crime scene, but floored the accelerator and they peeled out into the street, then down Broadway.

The girl was not going gentle into that good night. Cody heard a dry click and ducked just in time to avoid getting a long and wicked-looking switchblade poked through his eye. He threw himself on the girl, pinned her stabbing arm against the seat with his knee, grabbed her hair and jerked back her head, and jammed the muzzle of the Makarov under her chin. "What's your name?" he demanded. "And you'd better not say Emily, because it's the last word you'll ever say! If you know what I want to hear, you'd better say it now! What's your name?"

She stared up at him in murderous rage, but she had sense enough not to argue with a gun barrel beneath her chin. "Nightshade!" she spat. "I'm Nightshade!"

"Beautiful!" sighed Farmer Brown in disgust.

Cody pulled away the pistol, the implications of what he had done suddenly dawning on him. "Well...all right, then," he said lamely. But the girl wasn't having any. At least she didn't try to stab him again, but as soon as Cody got off her and sat up, she punched him full force in the jaw with her fist, then leaned back against the door and lashed out at him with a kick like a mule. "You stupid fuck!" she screamed at him as she attacked him.

"Dammit, quit it!" he yelled, pummeling her back.

"Knock it off!" shouted DiBella, his eyes scanning the traffic looking for any pursing police or FATPO.

"She hit me!" cried Cody in outrage.

"Well, you hit me first with that gun, you son of a bitch!" snarled the girl, still punching at him.

"Don't make me stop this car and come back there!" shouted Bobby Bells. "I said knock it off, both of you!" He took out his cell phone and made a quick call. "Yeah, it's me. You guys OK? Yeah, tell Jack Flash good job. We took out both the targets but after you guys booked we picked up a bit of a problem. No, I want to get out of the city first. Toad Hall, one hour. Stay off the bridges." He put up his phone.

"You Bobby Bells?" asked Nightshade.

"Yeah, I'm Bobby Bells," growled the lieutenant as he turned left on Yesler Way. "The guy up front with me is Farmer Brown, and your escort for the evening back there is Volunteer Mud."

"Would you mind explaining to me what the hell is going on?" the girl asked. "I use correct channels, I ask you politely not to shoot me, and you kidnap me instead? Oh, shit, I left my bag back there! Including my damned driver's license! Now I'm going to have cops and Fatties showing up at my house!"

"Tell them we kidnapped you to torture you for information or something," suggested Cody.

"Hey, genius, that might work! I've got the bruises to prove it, thanks to you!" said Nightshade waspishly.

"Cody, what the hell did you think you were doing?" demanded Bells.

"This, uh, comrade knows me and I know her. We go to school together, or went, before I graduated," explained Cody desperately. "Her name's Emily Pastras, and she was my lab partner for a while in chemistry. I saw her at the tickle, I saw she recognized me and I just reacted. That's all. I didn't think, I just acted."

"You didn't think, all right," snapped Nightshade. "Lieutenant, you think you can get me into a crew with one of the brigades, or better yet a Flying Column? Because I can tell you right now, my usefulness to the Third Section is over, thanks to this clown!"

"I thought you'd blow my cover!" protested Cody.

"So you blew mine instead?" shouted Nightshade. "Truly brill, dumb-ass!"

"All right, both of you shut up and cool off while we un-ass this area," snarled Bells. "We're going to an E & E point on the East Side and we'll sort it out there. Give you both a chance to cool off, and me, too. Keep quiet and let me think." The girl huffed over onto her side of the car and stared truculently out of the window. Cody could see her thin face in profile now. She had a big nose and not much chin, and her hair seemed to have been dyed black whereas he recalled it as a mousy brown. Cody tried to remember what he knew about her from their brief association in chemistry class. There wasn't much buzz on her that he'd picked up in the corridors. She hadn't run with any clique he could recall. Her official teenaged social category was "Ghoulie skank," a girl who listened to necrophilia bands and allegedly performed Satanic rituals in graveyards at night. She was generally believed to be a feminist and/or lesbian, but this was pretty much routinely said about any girl who had no known steady and who didn't take on the football team under the bleachers after practice, in which case she would have been officially promoted to sports slut.

She had struck him as a highly intelligent girl who like so many young people was wasting her time and her mind on stupid pop culture fads, teenaged angst, and resentment against the pretty girls and good-looking preppy guys who ran the social scene at the school. The sort you later heard had OD'ed on drugs or died in some pointless auto accident, and were neither surprised nor overly bothered. During lab she'd made one or two mildly slighting remarks about Kelly Shipman and her clique with reference to cheerleaders in general, although they were only about a four on a viciousness scale of one to ten, so he had ignored it and written it off as an ugly duckling's jealousy of a swan. Cody could not recall hearing her utter a single racial or political comment, which of course one would expect from a Third Section operative under cover. After all, he didn't exactly jump up on the tables in the lunch room and make speeches himself. Beyond that their conversation had been strictly chemical, and she hadn't made much impression. She'd kept herself to herself. Cody realized with a start that this was a female version of the way he himself was probably perceived; Hillside High had very early pigeonholed him into the nerd/science geek category, not realizing one reason he hung around the chem lab was to procure such items as potassium chlorate and mercury fulminate for bomb detonators, as well as other technical items. Cody wondered if the girl had been dipping into the potassium chlorate jar and doing a little after-hours experimentation like he had.

Bells decided to risk taking Interstate Five as far south as Tukwila, a neighborhood where his old factory had been and which he knew intimately, from which he eased eastwards through Renton, back onto 405 and up towards Newcastle. After a time he spoke. "Okay, so Comrade Nightshade recognized you, only if you'd done what you were supposed to, we wouldn't know whether she was Comrade Nightshade or not. That's a legitimate concern, but the proper procedure would have been to just tell me once you got back into the car, and we would have pulled you out of that summer school and maybe reassigned you to another team if we figured it was necessary.

Volunteers get recognized all the time, kid. There are some little towns out in Idaho and Oregon where everybody knows who's in the NVA and they wave at us on the street. Why the hell did you drag her into the car with us? If she had been a civilian, that would make three of us she could ID, and you know, I'm a little bit more important than you are. I got half a mill on me and all you got is the standard DT."

"Nightshade's got a hundred grand on her," said Emily with a sniff in Cody's direction. It was a dangerous distinction, a point of pride and honor among Volunteers to rack up more than the basic Domestic Terrorist bounty of \$50,000 on one's head. There had been problems with bounty hunters in the past, although few lived to collect.

"So she recognized you," Bells continued. "What did you think we were going to do? Whack her out and dump her in the lake just for being there? We don't kill people just for the hell of it, Cody. I told you that when you came to me about that Newman asshole."

"You wanted to clip Mitch Newman?" asked Emily, sitting up, looking at Cody with sudden interest. "Dumb-ass though you are, I'm impressed. Count me in on that tickle for sure. That guy is a world class jerk with happy hands. Let me tell you, you either got to be super desperate or a real horn dog to try and put your hand down my bra. He's a kike, you know. He's gotta be. I swear he actually slobbered when he tried to cop his feel."

"Yeah, what did you do?" asked Farmer Brown, amused.

"Bit the shit out of him and told him I'd file a complaint if he didn't back off. Newman's got a whole file on him up at the office, but they don't do anything because he's a rat for Fattie."

"Are you sure about that?" said Bells, pricking up his ears. "I told Cody we couldn't do nothing unless he could prove Newman was actively aiding the enemy."

"Mmmm...well, maybe he's not actually on their pad, but there were some kids at school who got burned to the Hatecrime Hotline and they all seem to have crossed Mr. Newman," replied Nightshade. "A couple of girls he hit on that I know about. He threatened to drop a dime on me if I told, so it was kind of a Mexican standoff, but he left me alone after that. You see why I couldn't risk him calling me in, since I really am a Volunteer, so I didn't push it."

"Even a blind pig sometimes finds an acorn," agree Farmer Brown.

"If you can get me a little more on that, miss, then maybe Cody can get his wish," said DiBella.

"I'm in his drama class for summer school, so maybe we should wait until after it's over," said Cody. "No need to draw attention to myself."

"Speaking of drawing attention to yourself, I'm still waiting to hear your explanation as to just why you abducted this young lady?"

"It all happened so fast, I knew I'd been made, so I just felt I had to do something!" said Cody defensively. Actually, now that he thought about it, he did know why he had done it. He had realized in a flash that if his cover was blown he would never see Kelly Shipman again.

"Why didn't you just shoot her?" asked Bells directly.

"You said not to shoot any women," said Cody.

"So I did. Well, lucky for both of you, you remembered your orders at least that far." Bells was silent for a bit. "Okay, kid, I'm giving you a C plus on this one. You kept your cool, except for your one bird-brained fuck-up you followed your operational orders, you dropped your target and accomplished your mission. Even when you decided to start making it up as you went along, at least you didn't do anything irreparable"

"So blowing my cover isn't irreparable?" demanded Nightshade.

"No, it's not," Bells told her in an irritated voice. "Irreparable is if he'd really panicked when he recognized you and put a bullet in your head. And your cover might not be blown. The Feds probably would have figured out you was at the hit and questioned you anyway. Look, you ain't in my crew, I don't know who you report to at Third Section, and I know you have to do what he tells you and not me, but I got two suggestions. First off, if you think it's too risky to try and get back under, if you were serious about wanting to go on the bounce and come in with us or another East Side crew, let me know and I'll set it up. But it's possible you can explain away this kidnapping thing. There's enough waltzing Matilda going on all around the town so that this time tomorrow the Feds will have a couple more tickles to worry about, and your case might get lost in the shuffle before anybody has time to take a closer look at your story. I'm not going to ask you how good an actress you are, since you must be damned good to do what you do. Can you go to the cops and tell them all about how some bad-ass Aryans murdered your boyfriend and then dragged you into the car and took you off someplace and threatened to do all kinds of horrible things, and then sent you back with a message to the rock and roll community that this Rock Against Racism shit is not fucking on, and the next long-haired dope-smoking bozo who so much as plunks an anti-racist note gets his axe jammed up his ass?"

"I think I can manage," said Nightshade dryly.

"Suppose they don't buy it?" asked Cody.

"Then she gets to go to prison, get tortured for real, and probably die with a needle in her arm because a you made a stupid mistake," said Bells coldly. There was silence for a while in the car. "Your call, miss. You know best what you do and how far you can push the envelope."

"I'll give it a shot," said Nightshade. "It will look funny if I disappear completely, and besides, my mom would worry. My Threesecond control is out of town at the moment. I've been reporting to Lieutenant Dortmunder directly. There's some big deal that came down from the Army Council a few days ago, and they're having all kinds of cloak and dagger meetings here, there, and everywhere. Drop me off someplace near a phone, I'll call the cops, and tell them all about how I was abducted by the Blond Beasts of Belsen and personally flogged by Deadly Nightshade, She-Wolf of the SS."

"Bravissima," said Bells. "I'm going to introduce you to the rest of the guys from A Company who were with us tonight and give you a couple of cell numbers, so you can get help fast if you need it. I know that's a lot of people to know what you look like, but if you need to reach out or we have to send anybody to pull you out of something, they'll need to know who you are." He pulled off the freeway and

into Coal Creek Park, and slid the Cadillac into one of the picnic areas, lights off. The Cherokee was already there, its occupants off in the darkness covering the Cadillac. Bells got out, lit a cigar, and said aloud, "It's okay." Brown, Cody, and Nightshade got out as well, and the remaining three members of the team emerged from the shadows.

"I say, you chaps seem to have acquired a souvenir of our evening's divertissement," said Jumping Jack Flash. "Miss Nightshade, I presume?"

"Who the fuck are you, 007?" asked Nightshade.

"He is the scapegrace son and heir of the sixth Duke of Frumpingham, who has renounced his title and his fortune to cast his lot with the fighters for freedom," said Cody. "Comrade Nightshade, may I present Jumping Jack Flash? He's a gas, gas, gas."

"Xyklon B, of course," said the Englishman, with a courtly bow. "Enchanted. And it's actually the seventh duke, old chap."

"And these are the Corsican Brothers?" the girl inquired politely.

"This is Thumper and Eddie," said Cody, receiving answering grunts.

"There was a bit of a fuck-up," explained Bobby Bells. "Actually, there was a lot of a fuck-up, and she ended up coming along for the ride. If she can't talk her way out of it with the cops and the Fatties, it may be a very long ride indeed. I want you all to tag her in your minds. We owe this lady, and if she ever needs help from us she gets it. Got it?"

"Her lissome form is forever engraved in my memory," said Jack Flash.

"Can it, Lord Haw-Haw!" replied Nightshade.

"Actually, Lord Haw-Haw was an Irish gentleman named William Joyce, who was murdered by the Jews for the crime of having a conscience," replied Jack Flash coolly.

"Yeah, but whaddya gonna do?" said Bells. "They don't teach American kids nothing in school. Cody, you and Farmer go back in the Cherokee with these other guys. The cops may have a hostage alert out, and if anybody did see a vehicle leaving the scene it was the Caddy. I'm going to drop her off and then stash it. Ed, I'll give you a call and tell you where to pick me up." He turned to Emily. "Now you two, I don't want any bad blood between Volunteers over this. This is a war, accidents happen, things don't always go according to plan, sometimes you gotta improvise, and sometimes you improvise wrong. Cody, no two ways about it, what you did tonight was just plain dumb. You compromised a major intelligence asset and you've put a comrade's life seriously at risk. It ain't over yet. This could still go really bad and you may end up walking around for the rest of your life with whatever she gets on your tab, which is about the worst thing that can happen to a soldier. Nightshade, I don't have to tell you, shit happens. He thought he was doing the right thing, even if it wasn't, and he kept his head enough to hit you with that Makarov instead of shoot you with it on reflex. Plus let's not lose sight of the fact that we did accomplish our mission and we're not carrying away any dead bodies of our own. On the whole, I'm inclined to chalk this up in the all's well that ends well column, assuming you don't end up in the electric chair with some nigger bitch from the FBI taping the contacts to your knockers."

"Thanks for the visual, Lieutenant," said Nightshade in a sour voice.

"That could still happen, and you don't have to show some kind Xena Warrior Princess macho, or femmo, or whatever. NVA boys and girls don't stand on the burning deck, they jump off and swim away and live to fight another day. There's no man here who will think any the less of you if you E & E now. Are you sure you want to try and go back in?"

"I'm sure," said Nightshade calmly.

"OK, then. Come on, I know someplace I can drop you."

Cody stepped forward. "Look, Em—Nightshade, for whatever difference it makes, I screwed up, and I'm sorry, and I hope to God you don't get hurt over this."

"Yeah, well, you're still a dumb-ass, but thanks for not shooting me," replied Nightshade reluctantly.

"That's the spirit," said Farmer Brown. "You two can just consider this your first date."

It turned out that the girl was a better actress than anyone in Mr. Newman's summer school course. Cody got a call on his cell phone the next morning before he even started for school. It was Kelly Shipman, awed and excited. "You know that girl Emily from Mr. Boland's chem class?" she chattered into the phone. "You were her lab partner, remember?"

"Uh, yeah, I remember her kind of," said Cody, his heart lurching. What had gone wrong? "She's a junior, right?"

"Yeah. Well, guess what?" said Kelly, bubbling with schadenfreude. "She was dating this older guy from Concussion, the band, although God knows how she hooked up with him since she's such a skinny skank and she wears all that Ghoul Girl makeup. She's probably just a groupie. Anyway, last night up on Capitol Hill the spuckies murdered her boyfriend and some other guy right in front her eyes, shot them down on the street! Then they kidnapped Emily and beat her up, and tortured her, they were going to kill her too, but she escaped! It's all over the news! The police put computer composites of the goots on TV! The one who pistol-whipped Emily was this gigantic blond dude with a beard and all kinds of prison tattoos! They're all ex-convicts and psycho killers, you know!"

"So I've heard," said Cody.

II.

"In a colonial war, it's never the generals who surrender. It's the accountants." – Red Morehouse

One morning about a week after the shootings on Capitol Hill, Cody Brock got an unnerving start. He was sitting in his seat in the auditorium at Hillside, waiting for drama class to begin, and none other than Emily Pastras flopped into the seat beside him, sticking her feet up onto the back of the seat in front and slouching down. She was dressed in cut-off jeans which displayed a pair of thin, muscular legs, her feet were encased in battered Nike running shoes which looked about ten years old, and she wore a dark knit sleeveless top. Under her arm she carried a binder notebook which seemed to have nothing in it beyond a few dividers and a few sheets of paper. Cody saw that she was no longer wearing her Ghoul Girl makeup and her hair was no longer Morticia Addams black but back to its original brown, pulled into an untidy pony tail. Her face unfortunately didn't improve in the light of day. Her jaw was still receding, her eyes muddy, her skin was a bit pasty, and her nose was lumpy, not to mention a case of mild acne. A more unlikely Mata Hari couldn't be

imagined. “Uh, hello,” he said. He could hear the whispers and feel the heads turning in their direction. Emily’s abduction experience at the hands of the Northwest Volunteer Army was of course common knowledge, and by now the incident had been embellished by teenaged gossips with all manner of wild tales involving rape, torture, and black magic. She was drawing attention.

“Relax,” she said. “I am now a tabloid cartoon character. I am Teen Beauty Brutally Bugged by Burly Blond Beasts in a secret Nazi bunker, and I only barely escaped being sold to space aliens as a sex slave by the NVA, in exchange for a death ray. Everyone agrees that I had a horrible and soul-rending experience, I am a pitiful little victim, and everyone wants to be my friend and give me a big hug, and then hear all the juicy details so they can call all their friends and talk about me. If anything, your being seen with me is good camouflage. After all, I would hardly be sitting down next to my heartless and cruel abductor, now would I?”

Cody twisted a non-existent, lengthy black moustache. “Ya ha ha! Give me the deed to your father’s ranch, little girl, or I shall tie you to the railroad tracks forthwith! But seriously, folks, to what do I owe the pleasure? What are you doing here? I didn’t know you were a drama queen—wait, actually I did.”

“Hey, Emily, I heard about what happened!” said one of the girls in the class, sliding over to them in the row behind. “I am so upset and so glad you got out of it okay. It must have been terrifying!”

“Thanks, Betsy,” said Emily. “Look, I know everybody’s curious, so I’ll tell you guys all about it at lunch so I don’t have to be constantly repeating it over and over again. There’s not much you didn’t hear on TV, anyway. It was just a really shitty night.” She gave a slight sniff and a small, barely perceptible tremble. She used a voice that was at once shaky and slightly irritable, exactly right for a bitchy girl who knew perfectly well that all the cool girls considered her to be a skank, but who had just witnessed two murders, had narrowly escaped death herself, who was trying to pass it off as no big deal when everyone really knew it was, and yet who was unable to resist getting some brief attention from the cool girls as a kind of freak. It was perfect, in character, and convincing.

“Sure, I understand,” said Betsy, patting her shoulder sympathetically before moving back to her seat with the promise of lunchtime revelations for her friends.

“You’re good,” said Cody quietly.

“I have to be,” she said. “Joe wouldn’t have done anything to me. If he’d known he probably would have puked in fear and begged me to call it off. But Jake was a mean bastard, and sneaky. If he’d even suspected, he would have got me off somewhere alone and capped me, and collected the hundred grand for himself.”

“I don’t know,” said Cody. “You’re pretty quick with that blade. You ever use it?” She looked at him. “Sorry,” he said. She was right; it was none of his business, personally or NVA-wise. Nor was it any of his business what she had done to get close to Krajewski and Kaplan and convince them she was a Concussion groupie. Even a relatively new kid on the block like Cody knew better than to ask that. He reflected with amazement that this skinny and homely girl next to him, one class behind him and so about a year younger, was in fact an agent of the NVA’s dreaded Third Section and had quite possibly killed more men than his own measly single kosher corpse. “How did it go with the cops and FBI?” he asked. “I mean, obviously they bought it, or you wouldn’t be here. But did they give you a hard time?”

“I told them you were asking me all kinds of questions about Chris Brannigar, the Homeland Security agent we met that night. They figure you were really after him more than the other two,” she told him. “They believed that because Brannigar’s paranoid anyway. He left the Strawberry early because he didn’t want to go home after nightfall, if you can believe that. Big badass Fed, and he’s scared of the dark. Then when I showed them my scars that pretty much clinched it, and they believed me.”

“I didn’t hit you that hard!” protested Cody in a whisper.

She held up her right arm and Cody saw a livid red circular burn mark, and she surreptitiously lifted her blouse and showed another on her stomach. “There’s a couple more in places I can’t show you in public. I borrowed a cigar from Bobby Bells and did them on myself before I called the cops from the convenient store.”

“Oh Jesus!” whispered Cody, conscience-stricken. “You didn’t have to go that far!”

“Yes, comrade,” she returned irritably, “As a matter of fact I did have to go that far. The Feebs are vile, but they aren’t stupid and they’re not naïve. They wouldn’t have bought some poor little victimized girly act without proof, and it had to be the real McCoy. Yeah, it hurt like hell, but it was worth it. Those electrical thingies the FBI puts on you in the chair for their little intimate interrogations hurt a hell of a lot more.”

Cody sighed. “Look, I’ve told you I screwed up and I’m sorry. I don’t know what more I can do. Anyway, why are you here, in this class?”

“I’m going to be learning to express myself through the dramatic arts,” she told him. “My mom is always either at church getting saved for the four hundredth time, or else she’s down at a motel on the interstate screwing truck drivers, but she did kind of notice when the police brought me home at dawn with burn scars where I had been kidnapped and tortured by terrorists, and so she’s taking one of her intermittent spurts of interest in what happens to me. She insisted I get back into school so I’ll stay out of trouble and quit running around with rock and roll singers, yadda yadda yadda. That and I gotta quit the Ghoul scene and start going to church again, all her usual crap.”

“We all have our cross to bear,” Cody punned.

“Very funny,” she said. “You should come to some of her Young Life meetings. They’re a real laugh a minute. A bunch of us sit around drinking wine and talking about Jesus. Christ turned water to wine at the wedding of Cana, hence that’s Scripturally okay.”

“Saint Paul said to take a little wine for your health,” Cody reminded her.

“Then we’re a really healthy bunch of believers,” she snorted.

He looked around; they were somewhat apart from the rest of the kids, waiting for class to begin, but still they might be overheard. He lowered his voice. “Look, I meant why are you sitting here next to me? Not that I don’t find you fascinating, but is it really a good idea for either of us?”

“A couple of reasons,” she said. “I want your help with some things. First off, you owe me for that little screwup the other night, and I

want you to be my boyfriend for a while.”

“Uh...” said Cody, caught off guard. “Really?”

“No, not really!” she hissed. “Jeez, I’m not that desperate! Don’t worry, you can still make all the goo-goo eyes at Kelly Shipman you want and I won’t be the jealous type. I didn’t mean here at school. This is business. In a way it’s kind of worked out well that we met as Volunteers, even if it was through you being a dumb-ass, because I’ve got something coming up for the Section and I don’t want to go into it alone. You’d be ideal. You’re under cover already, we go to the same school and we’ve already officially met one another in Boland’s class, so it will be believable when we show up together. I already mentioned this to Bobby Bells the other night, before he dropped me off, and he said once I cleared it with my Section control it was okay with him. You can ask him.”

“I will. What’s the assignment?” asked Cody.

“Shh!” she said. Mitch Newman was striding across the stage and dropped down to the floor, standing in front of them to begin the class. “Good morning, kids,” he said, his voice unusually resonant and solemn. “Before we start, I want us to welcome a new student who’s joining us a bit late. Most of you know Emily Pastras, or if you don’t know her from other classes, then I don’t need to remind anyone that Emily was in the news recently, when she was unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and like so many other innocent victims, she was caught up in the tragic and terrible racially motivated and hateful violence which has been going on in this part of the country for far too long. Emily was lucky enough to survive her close encounter with evil without death or injury, for which I know all of us are thankful. Unfortunately, two of her friends were not so lucky. I was never a really big Concussion fan myself. I admit that at this time of life my musical tastes run to the older classics like Streisand and Harry Chapin. But it wasn’t always so. Like a lot of kids of my generation in Seattle, I grew up on Country Joe’s music, Primal Scream and Funkaholic CDs and so on. It saddens me and angers me to the depth of my soul that these filthy fascist bastards have deprived me and thousands like me of that part of our youth. Don’t worry, Emily, I know you’re trying to put this horror behind you, and this will be the last time I refer to it. I hope you’ll be able to really get into our class and our production and let our friendship and the world of theater be a part of your recovery.”

“Thanks, Mr. Newman,” said Emily in a small voice.

“In this class, it’s Mitch,” he told her warmly. “I would like all of the members of our group to stand for a moment of silence now, in memory of Country Joe Krajewski and his lifelong friend Jacob Kaplan, who were murdered in the night by the forces of darkness that seek to deprive us of all that is good and human.” The young people all dutifully stood and bowed their heads, and Emily sniffled again. Cody was surprised to see she was actually crying.

After they sat down again, Newman began briskly. “Right. Today I want to cast the one-acts and get the scripts distributed, then we’ll be breaking up into groups for the first read-throughs.”

“Maybe you can get to be the Holocaust victim doing her little impressionistic dance in front of the oven at Auschwitz,” whispered Cody.

“Oh, crap! He’s not making us do that shit, is he?” hissed back Emily in disgust. “I swear he’s a kike!”

“You really are good. How do you do that? Cry on cue, I mean?”

“I was thinking of someone else,” she whispered back. “The only boy who ever liked me. The one that son of a bitch Newman turned into the Hatecrime Hotline, because he made a nigger joke. That’s the second thing I want you to help me with. We’re going to get the evidence Bobby Bells needs to okay the hit, and then we’ll kill him.”

Cody gave her a wry smile. “A couple of high school kids, plotting to murder one of their teachers. God, what a great age we live in!”

“Yeah,” she replied with a giggle. “Ain’t it just?”

Once again, that afternoon before class broke up; Cody got a call on his cell and heard DiBella’s voice. “Caesar’s Palace,” he said briefly. “Bring your new girlfriend.” Caesar’s Palace was an apartment in Redmond that A Company used as a safe house; they had changed locations after the Eclectic Strawberry tickle as a standard precaution.

“She’s not my girlfriend,” said Cody, a little bit nettled. “She hits, and I do mean hits.”

“Yeah, well, get both your skinny asses in here.” Cody found Emily in her rehearsal group.

“Can I give a ride home?” he asked. He lowered his voice. “Bobby wants both of us at the house.”

“Yeah, sure,” she said. “I had to pretend to be a robot and a duck-billed platypus to show I had acting ability. How the hell does Newman or that bitch Suzanne know how a duck-billed platypus acts?” They walked out to the school parking lot and got into Cody’s Nissan. “Okay, I’m wearing my Nightshade hat now,” she commanded.

“Doesn’t quit fit in the daylight, without the Ghoul makeup,” said Cody critically.

“If the lieutenant wants to talk to us about that first thing I mentioned this morning, it will fit even less.” She would say no more. As he drove towards Redmond Cody debated whether or not to ask Emily about the crack she’d made regarding his goo-goo eyes directed at Kelly Shipman. He wondered if he was that transparent. Instead he asked,

“You got any ideas on how to get the goods on Newman?”

Nightshade nodded. “The Hatecrime Hotline people aren’t dumb. They know we’re watching and they try to hide their money trail. They know that checks can be traced. In their early days, Threesecc was able to identify some of their informers that way, the rats got a visit, and word got out. Now they pay their blood money online, direct into a PayMate e-bank account that they set up for the informer. When someone calls the Hatecrime Hotline, they speak to a Homeland Security agent. The agent assigns the caller a PIN number. Then there’s two ways they can go. If it’s a once-off thing, the caller rats out whoever he wants to rat out as an evil racist, and hangs up. He waits a week or so. If the call pans out, and DHS busts somebody for saying nigger or having a copy of a banned book or whatever, and pays the reward, then the caller goes to the post office or any one of fifty other places around town and gets one of those shitty little cardboard cards with a magnetic strip the FBI and DHS have set out in those little dispensers. They go to an ATM, insert the card, key in the PIN number they were given, and bingo, there’s their rat money. They draw on it, five hundred dollars per day or whatever that bank’s machine limit is, until the money is gone and they find somebody else to rat out. Threesecc has some good computer hackers and of course we can get into bank records, but even if we can locate and identify those Hatecrime Hotline transactions, there’s no way to

tell who's actually drawing on the money, so that way is pretty much a dead end."

"You said there was a second method of payment?" asked Cody keenly. As he spoke he was performing all his standard checks in his mirrors, scanning the surrounding traffic to make sure they weren't being followed.

"Yeah, the second method is the one generally used by professional free-lance bounty hunters who have discovered you can make a small fortune doing this shit," said Nightshade in disgust. "The DHS has a Hatecrime Hotline website, where you can actually run a kind of internet business in human lives. That PIN number they give you gives you access to the site. You log in with your PIN number the first time, then you choose a username and password, and you've got your own little internet office where you can type and save long rat-outs, keep a file on each victim, get feedback from your DHS or FBI handler, and above all keep track of all that lovely bounty money. You can actually run a numbered e-bank account and do the same withdrawal number with the little disposable ATM cards from the post office, or you can transfer money to other bank accounts, or you can get certified checks sent to any name and address you want. Some of these creeps have made hundreds of thousands of dollars acting as informants against the white population of the Northwest in general, because they almost never correctly identify any actual Volunteers. But they do have a chilling effect on the people who might support us if they could stand up and say what's in their minds."

"It's the Federal government who practices the real terrorism, by making people afraid to say what they really feel," agreed Cody.

"And these rats are completely off the board," she went on. "They're not FBI agents or cops, they're not Federal employees as such, the Feds don't even know who they are. Zero accountability, total deniability. It's kind of like a medieval witch hunt. I never heard of anyone who successfully talked their way out of a Hatecrime Hotline rat-out without at least having to go and be denazified."

"Beautiful!" snarled Cody.

"Oh, they don't have it all their way," said Nightshade with a smile. "Not by a long shot. Threesec has gummed up the works pretty good. It's simple. We started calling and logging in, and denouncing race-mixers, liberals, leftists, Jews, cops, and politicians as NVA Volunteers and racists. It didn't stop the rat machine completely, but it slowed down considerably, since the Feds have to sit down and sort out our disinformation from the real rat-outs. Plus in the normal course of things, they get a lot of people calling in and denouncing their personal enemies, spurned lovers, landlords, bosses, teachers and people who just piss them off. But our main concern is to see if we can prove Mitch Newman has been ratting out kids at Hillside so we can put him on the spot marked X."

"And you think you have a way to do that?" asked Cody. "I still don't see how, unless we can hack in to the system and see if he's been dumb enough to do a direct transfer of the bounty money into his own bank account."

"If Newman has been using the website, yeah, I think we can," she said. "You ever hear of Doctor Doom?"

"Yeah, sure, he's in our brigade," said Cody. "Science geek kid, a year or so older than me. I met him a couple of times, and I've carried and placed some his ordnance. Blows up real good!"

"Yeah, well, he's also a super-duper computer brain, and he's worked up a program that he thinks we can use to crack into the Hatecrime Hotline website," she explained.

"Mmm, okay, but even if we get in, according to what you told me, all we'd get would be usernames and passwords of the informers," replied Cody.

"Yeah, but DD thinks he's spotted a weak link they didn't think of," said Nightshade. "Something they intended as a security measure against hackers, ironically. You took computer science class, didn't you? You know what an IP address is?"

"Sure," said Cody. "Any time a computer is logged into the internet it has an IP address, either the same one all the time, which is called a static IP, or a different one that's assigned by the internet service provider, a dynamic IP. The Feds don't demand a static IP address to get into their rat site, do they? That would be pretty dumb, almost like putting up a neon arrow pointing right to the informer's computer!"

"Well, obviously, the Feds understood their informers wouldn't always be logging in from the same computer every time, but they also knew that we would set up our own black ops cyber-rats and we would occasionally be able to get hold of a rat's username and password, through persuasion or otherwise. Officially, Homeland Security doesn't demand an informant's real name, but they want some way to try and keep track of who's using their system so that if something heavy happens online they can at least try to trace whoever did it. When you log into the Hatecrime Hotline website, their site software is good enough to ping through any telnetting or firewalls or dummy IPS you may have set up, and read the original IP address of the source computer, the one the informer is actually using. That IP address is logged on the Federal server each time, and can be looked at by an account manager or administrator. Okay, here's where I lose track of the technology, but what this program of Doctor Doom's does is, once you can get into the informer's account, it logs you on as an administrator, with admin privileges to the account. You can read the IP address of the source computers for all the times the account address has been accessed."

"That still wouldn't help if the rat is smart and he uses a public computer, or even his own with a dynamically assigned IP every time," said Cody, fascinated. "And how do we get into the account in the first place without Newman's username or password?"

"Okay, here's where it gets really techie," she said eagerly. "I suppose you know that under the Patriot Act, the Feds no longer allow any real erasure of computer files, and every single keystroke is now recorded in various hidden files all over the hard drive, mostly in the index.dat file with Microsoft operating systems, a special hidden sub-registry in Linux, etcetera. Nothing anyone does on a PC ever really disappears. It always leaves a record so nosy secret police can grab your hard drive and see what evil thoughts someone has been thinking."

"Right," said Cody.

"That means that everything on a computer's drive can be recovered if you know how, and Doc Doom knows how," the girl went on with a sly smile. "I'm willing to bet that Mr. Hose Nose Newman is a lazy-ass who used the computer in his office at school to do some of his ratting. A computer which is on the school's T1 line, with a static IP address. If we can get onto his school computer, and it's been used to access the Hatecrime Hotline site, this program of Doc's can actually use this admin override I told you about and read what's called a shadow, and replicate the last log-in to that site. So we may not be able to come up with anything with Newman's actual name

on it, but we can fish out his username and password, examine his account, and by the fact that we got in, we will be able to demonstrate that his IP address is on the government server. Unless the Tooth Fairy has been sneaking into his office and using his computer to snitch on people, that should convince Bobby Bells to let us whack the bastard.”

“It should indeed,” said Cody, pulling into the apartment complex’s parking lot.

Inside the apartment, they found Bobby Bells and Lieutenant Joe Dortmund from the brigade command waiting for them. Dortmund got down to business. “I’m glad you two comrades have become known to one another, even if it was due to an operational accident,” he said. “Volunteer Brock, Nightshade suggested your participation in this project because you would provide a credible companion and cover for her in a situation wherein a couple might function more effectively than a single female, or male. I trust you have no problem in assisting her in some intelligence gathering work?”

“No, sir,” replied Cody. “I’d like to take on such an assignment.”

“Good,” he said gravely. “The first thing you need to know is that there is something big coming down the pike. Very major indeed. I can’t tell you what it is, but it means that we’re going to have to really start pulling in some major intelligence about the activities of anti-Party and anti-independence groups and elements here in the Northwest that up until now we’ve only considered to be marginal. This is also a good opportunity for us to extract Nightshade from her current area of operation. The police and the Feds seem to have bought her explanation of the events of the other evening, but others in the rock scene up on Capitol Hill may not be so trusting. I’ve already spoken with Nightshade about this new mission, and now I’ll bring you up to speed, Cody. But before I got any further, I need to ask you about something. Normally this is not a question one asks another comrade in the NVA, but I need to ascertain what your religious views are.”

“I’m a National Socialist, sir,” said Cody. “I know that’s not a religion, but I think Commander Rockwell said it best of all. The atheist and the religious person are both fools. The religious man says ‘I have searched the whole universe over, and out of all that creation, this is the one true God,’ while the atheist says ‘I have searched the entire cosmos over and there is no God.’ It’s something our human minds are simply too small to encompass, and for any human being to claim he knows the truth of the matter is as arrogant as an amoeba claiming to understand quantum physics. I don’t know if that’s the exact quote, but you get the idea.”

“Good. I also understand you’re attending some kind of acting class at the school, which is even better, because you’ll need to do a bit of acting,” Dortmund told him. “Here’s the thing. Emily’s mother belongs to one of the more fundamentalist synods of the Assembly of God, one that tends towards Pentecostalism.”

“Uh, I’m not familiar with the difference between churches, sir,” said Cody.

“We use real wine instead of grape juice for communion, which is definitely a draw for Mom, but we also jump and shout and fall down on the floor, we yell hadda badda booga wooga bee bah boo, and we pretend it’s a language,” said Emily. “That’s called glossolalia. We lay on hands and cast out devils as well, which my mom tried to do to me when I started into Ghoulish Girl.”

“Uh, do you handle snakes?” asked Cody warily.

Nightshade smiled. “That’s called taking up the serpent. It never quite took outside the South. No, no snakes, and no drinking cyanide either. No makeup or deodorant either, unfortunately. Those are worldly vanities.”

“Of more concern to us is that the Assembly of God theology is Judæo-Christian, as opposed to Christian,” said Dortmund. “They teach that the Jews are God’s Chosen People and that the state of Israel is the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. This is no longer a religious doctrine we’re speaking of, but a political one.”

“The essence of true Zionism,” said Cody with a nod. “Which is the essence of Judaism itself. Zionism is not just exclusively to do with Palestine, but is based on the alleged supernatural nature of the Jews themselves. The idea is that the Jewish people have a special relationship with God, and have a divine mission through that relationship to create a Brotherhood of Man, as they call it. Some also refer to it as the Pax Judaica. Needless to say, this makes the Jews superior to all others and therefore grants them moral dominion over all of the peoples of the earth and top dog slot in said Brotherhood of Man. Yes, sir, I am familiar with it. More familiar than I would wish.”

“I can imagine,” said Dortmund with a commiserating nod. Emily looked at him oddly. Good, he thought in smug amusement. Let her wonder about me for a change. “We have become increasingly concerned over the past year or so at the growing level of Federal influence and manipulation in some of the fundamentalist Judeo-Christian churches,” Dortmund went on. “There has always been a very heavy pro-Zionist bias within the evangelical movement, although it’s of comparatively recent date, only in the past fifty years or so. It is a complete corruption of true Christian doctrine, of course, turning personal salvation through Christ into a political movement. Christian Zionism as we know it started with a book called *The Late, Great Planet Earth* by a man named Hal Lindsey, around the year 1970 or so, if I’m not mistaken, and now it’s grown to a worldwide cult numbering millions of people. A lot of this has to do with certain key televangelists from the 1970s onward who were more or less taken onto the Jewish payroll in various ways, in addition to what they could fleece out of the faithful by selling prayer cloths and Words of Knowledge and timeshares. The Christian Right was always the main supporter of the Bush family and formed the grass roots base for this endless, insane war against the Muslim world.” Cody thought of Kelly’s brother Jason in Saudi Arabia, and all the others he had known who had been shipped out to Saudi or Iraq or Afghanistan, some never to return.

“They also promoted race-mixing for a long time, bringing all kinds of gooks and Filipinos and whatnot into America,” Cody added. “Yes, although the NVA has been able to choke off the mudflow and drive many of the muds these people imported out of the Homeland since the war started,” agreed Dortmund. “The result is that the evangelical churches here in the Northwest are almost all white now. We’ve given them as easy a ride as we could, because it is absolutely essential that the Party and the NVA not be perceived to be waging some kind of war against Christianity. We’ve confined ourselves to identifying and eliminating a few of the more obnoxious evangelical ministers and television personalities, and so far that seems to have done the trick. These people are no threat without their preachers to tell them what to do and what to think. But that situation may be changing. We have noticed an increase over the past year or so in what seems to be infiltration of many evangelical churches here in the Northwest by loyalist, pro-Zionist elements,

in many cases FATPOs and military personnel who suddenly start attending local churches, at some risk to themselves, even though we try to avoid hitting them in any context where it might appear that we're targeting the churches, for the reasons I've mentioned. The result is they've kind of snuck up on us. Almost every Pentecostal, Assembly of God, and other fundamentalist congregation in the Northwest now has a group of pro-government effectives in key positions. They have been doing this quietly, including identifying and arresting anyone else in the congregation who appears to have leanings towards Christian Identity or any racially aware, Biblically sound Christian belief. It's pretty obvious that this is deliberate."

"Mmm, those churches were pretty much solid government supporters already, though, weren't they?" asked Cody. "Why would they be shoring up their own base like that?"

"Well, it's possible this may have something to do with that major development I mentioned was coming down the pike," said Dortmund. "We really don't know, and we need to find out. There are rumors that some of these American agents in the churches are conducting little sidebar prayer meetings with more fanatical people in their congregations, especially men with military experience. Our intelligence analysts think they may be trying to use religious right people to build a kind of black FATPO, either an anti-party intelligence network or even some kind of Christian death squad type of group. Kill a Nazi for Christ, that kind of thing. We need to know what the hell's going on, and we need to know fast. We want you two to start going to Emily's church and get close to some people we'll point out to you. Since the news media has made a big deal about you being kidnapped and allegedly abused by the NVA, Comrade Nightshade, that can be your hook. Your ordeal at the hands of the hated fascists has turned you back to the Lord, so forth and so on."

"I can show them my cigar burns like they were stigmata," giggled Emily.

"I still think that was a bit over the top," said Bells, glaring over his own cigar.

"Mmm, yes, but effective," said Dortmund. "What would be more explicable than having undergone such a brutal experience, you should repent of your Ghoulish ways and find Jesus again?"

"Oh, yeah, they're really big on returning us lost sheep to the fold," said Emily with a bitter laugh. "That will work, all right."

"And you want me along as backup?" asked Cody.

"Yes, if you can convince them you're washed in the Blood of the Lamb and accordingly you just love Jews and Israel to death, you might be approached to join this inner circle of avenging angels or whatever they think they're doing," said Dortmund.

"And like I told you, I'll need a visible boyfriend," said Emily. "Somebody to keep the Bible-punching horn dogs off me at all the church activities. I don't know if you've ever been to a full gospel church, Cody, but the men are the worst latches you've ever seen, married or single."

"Uh, okay," said Cody. "Don't any of them actually practice what their religion preaches?"

"Not that I've ever noticed," said Emily flatly. "Even as ugly as I am, if I show up on my own I'm going to have guys in cheap suits and blow-dried pompadours hanging all over me, especially since I've already got a reputation as a real Jezebel thanks to Mom's testifying about me and my wicked ways all the time, during my Ghoulish phase. I need to be able to circulate among the women and pick up all their bitchy gossip, not to mention giving them a chance to gossip about me when I'm not around. You're going to have to get in with the men and hear what they have to say. It will be dangerous, comrade. You have to understand, these people honest to God believe that the NVA are agents of the devil on earth, and if they even suspect that we are Volunteers or that we so much as think any politically incorrect thoughts, they will scream for the FBI and Homeland Security in a heartbeat. If they don't try to burn us at the stake themselves."

"I'm in," the boy said simply.

"I told him ya would be," grunted Bobby Bells.

"Now, Lieutenant, there's something else Cody and I want to talk to you about," said Nightshade. Quickly she went over the Mitch Newman situation with him.

"You know anything about this guy, Bob?" asked Dortmund.

"Cody told me about him. He seems to be an asshole, but I ain't seen any proof yet he's a kike or a rat," said Bells. "I told them both already, bring me some kind of proof he's ratting people out to the Hatecrime Hotline, and Mister Drama Teacher exits stage left."

"All right. Do this computer thing if you can, because I want to see if it works myself, and we need to test this new software DD has invented. But remember, Newman is a very secondary assignment," Dortmund told them. "Don't get caught, and don't compromise this other job. Got it?"

"Thank you, sir," said Cody. "When do we start on the church thing?"

"There's a Bible study class tonight," said Emily.

"Uh, I don't have a suit," said Cody with a frown.

"A white shirt and tie will do," she said, "And I'll get you a Bible. My mom has about fifty of them lying around the house."

"We'll get you a suit by Sunday," said Bells. "Try not to roll around in it too much. I don't wanna have to pay for the dry cleaning."

"Hallelujah, brother!" said Cody.

* * *

On the sun-dappled morning of July Fourth, as the rest of America was celebrating the traditional Independence Day of the old, long-vanished republic, Frank Barrow met with representatives of the NVA Army Council around a smoking barbecue pit to plan a new independence day for a new nation. The outdoor conference was held in Riverside Park in Centralia, Washington, just off Harrison Avenue to the east of Interstate Five. This part of the Northwest was probably as close to safe territory for the rebels as it was possible to find, unless they went high into the Sawtooth or the Olympic peninsula. Between here and Portland lay the powerfully nationalist Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and to the northwest extended Grays Harbor County, a huge expanse of territory where the American occupation forces had been ambushed and run in circles so often that it had become known as Bandit Country. Lewis County especially was now for all practical purposes a no-go zone where the FATPO did not dare to stir out of their barracks except in overwhelming force.

The rebels met at one of the covered picnic areas in the park. The group consisted perhaps thirty adult men and women, and a number of children who had been brought along as camouflage, mixed in along with other legitimate local picnickers from the town. Hidden in picnic baskets, purses, in vehicles, and on their persons were enough guns and explosives to take on a regiment of FATPOs if necessary. Teams of armed Volunteers patrolled the surrounding streets on foot and in vehicles to give warning of any attack, but there was not a sign of a single Federal soldier. Even so, Barrow was uneasy about the kids running and playing and screaming, but he knew it was a necessary ruse. "I don't like placing white children at risk any more than you do, but we have no choice," Red Morehouse had told him. "Any informer or Federal recon sees a picnic with no kids, they're going to know something's up. Don't worry, we've got our people crawling all over this part of town. If anything comes down the women Volunteers have been given special E & E instructions to get the children out of harm's way. But that shouldn't happen. Down here a squirrel can't move in these trees without the Volunteers knowing about it."

Now a small group of men stood around a barbecue grill that had been set up at a slight distance from the tables, turning sizzling hot dogs and pieces of chicken and sipping soft drinks from cans while they spoke in low tones. They were casually dressed, but all of the men wore long shirts to cover the pistols in their belts. Besides Barrow there was Colonel Patrick Brennan, who was the NVA departmental commander for the state of Washington, Red Morehouse, Lieutenant Joe Dortmund and Major Jeff Anderson from the Army Council. Beside them stood a huge hulking man with rippling muscles and a wide coal-black beard that covered the front of his T-shirt. He had a face like a Harlan County coal seam, with burning green eyes and a seemingly permanent scowl. The big man wearing a slouch hat with a feather in it. This was Commandant John Corbett Morgan of the Port Townsend Flying Column, the largest and most efficient single combat unit in the NVA, with the possible exception of O. C. Oglevy's fearsome and legendary Hayden Lake column. Oglevy had not been invited, owing to some questions regarding his sanity.

"Damned if it doesn't look like they're serious about it," conceded Anderson reluctantly. "I got confirmation just before I left. They released the first prisoners from Auburn last night, and Carter Wingfield picked them up in Millersylvania Park this morning. Not only that, but the men he took with him got to be the first to show off our new uniforms, such as they are. We've got that Irishman up in Seattle and he's pressing full speed ahead. Apparently the Feds want to get this show on the road, and soon."

"Where?" asked Barrow. "Where will the conference be held?"

"At first they was talking about Geneva, or Jamaica, or Camp David, but we tole 'em to hell with that," rumbled Morgan. "We gone have it right here in the Homeland." His speech was still redolent with the twang of the Kentucky mountains where he had been born. "And they didn't argue for five months about the venue and the shape of the table and how many bathroom breaks each delegation got, and all that crap?" asked Barrow in surprise.

"Nope. Looks like they really do mean it," repeated Anderson, shaking his head in disbelief. "God, I wonder what the hell they're up to? Why are they doing this?"

"They're doin' it because we whupped their asses," said Morgan, spitting a wad of tobacco on the grass.

"I wish I could believe that," said Anderson worriedly. "I'm sorry, I just don't trust anything the Federal government of the United States does or says. In the past century the power structure in America has reached a state of almost pure corruption. These people always have the most sinister of ulterior motives for everything they do. Their minds are as twisted as corkscrews, and that's how they think. It's a lifelong habit with them."

"All right, then where in the Homeland will the conference be convened?" asked Barrow.

"We're proposing to hold it down in Longview," said Morehouse. "We thought about this a lot. We don't want it in the middle of a big urban area where our people could be surrounded, but we don't want to have it so far out in the boondocks that you have to be Daniel Boone to find the conference site, either. We want this done out in the open, in plain view as much as possible. Transparency is our friend here, while secrecy serves the enemy. We've never made any secret about what we want, or what we're fighting for, and we're going to stand up and demand it now. We want the whole world watching, looking over our shoulder. We wanted something that was close in enough to a populated area so that we can conduct this jamboree in some kind of civilized surroundings, with such amenities as indoor plumbing for our guests from the world diplomatic community, and bars for the news media, who won't appreciate any kind of dry environment. That sounds petty, but we're going to have to try every little thing to cater to people we've been killing and terrorizing. So they get to drink, even if we can't. We need to be able to get the media in close enough to us to make sure the Feds don't control total access to outside communications, so we can make our case and let the rest of the world know what's going on. None of this embedded crap for the reporters: we're making it clear that free and uncensored media access is an iron-clad precondition, although in view of who controls the media I'm not sure how much good that will do us. Longview is close enough to Portland to make them feel comfortable, yet close enough to our own bandit country around here so that there's at least some chance we can E & E if things go bad."

"Hell, down here we can just break for the woods and the first house we come to will most likely be sympathizers," commented Morgan, taking a slug of Mountain Dew. "The local Party did a real slap-up job before 10/22 down here."

"They're apparently sufficiently serious so they want to start the conference by the end of this month," said Anderson. "July 30th or 31st."

"I haven't heard any public announcements yet," said Barrow. "It could be the Feds haven't gotten the message about this telling the whole world thing. Don't they want to keep the negotiations secret, at least in the early phases?"

"No, although they did ask that they be allowed to make the public announcement, which we conceded," said Brennan. "That's letting them put their own public relations slant on it right from the start, true, but it's their party. A lot of this is going to involve our giving in on minor face-saving bumph, even while we hold out for the substance. The trick is going to be making sure we can tell the difference."

"Might as well let them break the story, since no one would believe us if we called a press conference and asserted that we were negotiating independence from the United States," agreed Anderson. "There will be a nationwide televised statement from the White House within a few days, as soon as we let them know through the UN guy that we agree and we're ready to set a time and a place."

"Chelsea herself is going to make the statement?" demanded Morgan.

“Looks like it,” replied Morehouse with a nod. “Of course, it’s pretty much an open secret that her mom still runs the country, insofar as anyone runs it any more.”

“Tell me about it. That little girl has got no damned business being president of anything bigger than a PTA,” said Morgan. “She seems to be a sweet kid, leastways she don’t fuck everything with a pulse like her daddy did, but she’s dumb as a bag of hammers.”

“I wonder if she knows that one of our heaviest hitters is her half-brother?” asked Anderson with a chuckle.

“That Italian kid who was with Murdock’s column?” asked Morgan. “Matt Redmond mentioned him a couple of times. Yeah, I heard about him. I understand there’s quite a story there.”

“Yes, Lieutenant Vitale,” said Barrow. “He’s Jock Graham’s chief head-knocker over in Two Brigade. I’ve met him a couple of times. And you’re right, it’s a hell of a story. Chelsea Clinton isn’t actually going to be present at the negotiations with the American delegation, is she?”

“No, apparently it’s going to be headed up on their side by Walter Stanhope, the Secretary of State,” said Anderson. “That’s another suspiciously favorable omen from our point of view. The Secretary of State, not the Attorney General or Director of Homeland Security. It shows that they’re treating the Northwest as a political problem now, instead of a criminal one.”

“But Chelsea will be making the public television announcement?” asked Barrow again. “Where, exactly, does she fit into all this? I mean, after all, technically she is President of the United States. You’d think at some point she’d be involved in giving away three or four of the states.”

“That’s what puzzles me most about this whole thing,” Anderson continued. “Who the hell’s idea was this conference anyway, and why? It’s one of the world’s biggest open secrets that Chelsea Clinton is a figurehead president with no will of her own. There’s a rumor that one day Chelsea was sitting in the Oval Office, the window was open, a leaf blew in and landed on her desk, and she signed it. Whatever crap she gets up on television and reads off the teleprompter, you know damned well that the Wicked Witch of the West made up for her. But why the hell is Hillary Clinton agreeing to do what no American president since Lincoln has agreed to do, divide up the American pie? Breaking up the country is hardly what anyone with dreams of imperial glory wants to go down in history as her legacy. Okay, John C., maybe you’re right. Maybe we’ve beaten the swine worse than we realize and the old bat has decided to cut their losses before the whole show collapses.”

“Mmm...you know, if that is the case, we might actually be able to get a better deal if we just kept on fighting and let the damned American empire collapse,” said Brennan, rubbing his chin thoughtfully as he sipped his Diet Pepsi. “Then grab everything we can out of the rubble.”

“Thar’s those amongst the command structure as say we should do just that very thang,” growled Morgan. “I ain’t so sure myself it ain’t the way to go.”

“I’ve had enough, John,” said Barrow quietly. “Until this peace possibility came up I didn’t realize just how much I’d had enough. I’d pretty much resigned myself to the fact that I wasn’t going to make it, that sooner or later they’d get me and I’d end up bleeding my life out on a sidewalk or buried alive in Florence or someplace like it. If there’s a chance I can have another future, I want to take it. If we can talk our way into the Republic of three states and maybe a bit of Montana and California thrown in, I’m good with it. I’m looking forward to popping the top on a beer again and seeing if I really am a drunk, or if it was just being half a man that made me that way, as petty and personal as that sounds. Once we’ve won and I’m free in my own country, I’ve got no more excuses.”

Morehouse spoke up. “That’s one of the many problems we’re going to face, the extremists on both sides who don’t want to stop fighting. God knows what we’re going to do with the wild-eyes like Oglevy. But if we can get the Republic now, without any more bloodshed and building up any more bad blood and bad karma, for Christ’s sake, we need to grab it!”

“Do you think it’s possible?” asked Barrow.

Morehouse nodded. “I think it could be possible, yes. I used to tell my kids in our little unofficial after-school classes that in a colonial war, it’s never the generals who surrender. It’s the accountants. They finally go to the occupying government and tell them that the colony is simply awash with red ink, it isn’t going to get any better, and it’s time to leave. Maybe that’s what is happening. The United States of America, the fount of all the money in the world, has finally been bled dry. If that is the case, if the people in power understand that if they don’t cut the Northwest loose then there is a chance they may lose it all, not to us but to the forces of the very chaos they have been creating for the past century—if they have sense enough to understand all that, then yes, it may well be possible for us to pull this off.”

“So if enlightened self-interest is the criterion, why the hell has the United States never pulled out of the Middle East?” asked Brennan. “It was obvious after the first year in Iraq that civilizing the native chappies at the point of a gun simply wasn’t going to work.”

“An interesting point,” agreed Morehouse. “Apparently the forbidden I word trumps common sense and enlightened self-interest where the United States government is concerned. When push comes to shove, it could be that Israel’s survival really does take priority over America’s.”

“Okay, how can Third Brigade help?” asked Barrow, getting to the point. “Uh, don’t get me wrong, gentlemen, I’m flattered to be invited to a high-level meeting such as this, but I have to say I’m puzzled by the absence of the other Seattle brigade commanders, and I’m still uncertain in my own mind why I’m here. You want us to provide some men for security for the negotiators?”

They all looked at him. “You can do a lot more than that for us, Frank,” Morehouse told him frankly. “The reason you’re here is that we have a special personal assignment that we want you to carry out. You’ll be turning command of your brigade over to Lieutenant Dortmund—by the way, Joe, you’re a Commandant now. Frank, you’re a general.”

“The NVA doesn’t have generals,” said Barrow, half unbelieving.

“We do now,” said Brennan. “I’m one, or so I’m told.”

“We’ll get you a pair of stars for your collar or something,” said Morehouse. “We’ll even provide you with a sharp-looking uniform to pin them on. Frank, we want you to go to Longview. We want you to head up the Northwest Republic provisional government’s negotiating team.”

“What?” exclaimed Barrow in astonishment. “Have you lost your—Jesus, why me? What the hell to do I know about diplomacy and politics?”

“What the hell do any of us know? So learn, and fast. This is a new field for all of us,” said Morehouse. “We need two things in the men we send to Longview, tongues and brains.”

“Sure, I’ve got the tongue for it,” said Brennan. “I actually kissed the Blarney Stone, the real one at Blarney Castle down in Cork. The one ye have to hang over the edge of the castle wall and damned near break your neck to reach. That probably indicates I don’t qualify in the brains department.”

Morehouse continued, “Frank, you have one of the best reputations in the NVA for tactical skill and intelligence and long-range planning. Statecraft isn’t too far a leap, and since no one else on our side has any experience in it, we have to play it by ear. We’re going to need men sitting around that table in Longview speaking for our new country who can think fast on their feet.”

“And where are you going to be?” demanded Barrow. “You know damned well you ought to be the one leading our side, Red.”

“I am going to be in contact, but not in reach, their reach. I am going to put this bluntly, Frank. This is the future of our country and our race we’re talking about here. We must have our best thinkers and talkers at this conference, but on the other hand those are the very people that we can’t risk losing. We still have to consider the possibility, maybe even the probability, that this whole peace conference thing is just some kind of Borgia-like ploy on the enemy’s part to lure our best people out into the open so they can be killed or captured. God knows nothing else has worked for them. They’re quite capable of that kind of treachery, and they may be getting desperate enough to try something like that. We can’t allow it to happen, but on the other hand we can’t just send a gaggle of expendable mediocrities to the conference to bring our new nation into being. We have to strike a balance. Please don’t be insulted when I say this, Frank, but what we’re going to do is send in our best second-stringers while our first string starts taking care of business. The real business of creating a new nation in North America, while you guys down in Longview are shucking and jiving and buying us time.”

“Don’t worry, ah’m second-strang too, it looks like,” said Morgan, grinning in his beard. “I’ll be in there with you.”

“John will be there as the hammer. He will represent to the enemy a credible threat of muscle,” said Brennan. “Expect him to be doing a lot of threatening and pounding on the table.”

“I assume that you guys on the first string will be available for consultation?” asked Barrow.

Morehouse nodded. “To some extent, yes, but part of the problem is that we ourselves have insisted that whoever both sides send to the conference shall have full plenipotentiary power, which means the authority to negotiate a deal then and there, sign it, and have it binding on our respective governments. We had to insist on that, because otherwise they would draw this business out forever and a day, by constantly running back to Washington D. C. for consultations, and blaming their own higher-ups for the lack of progress. It will become like those idiotic talks at Panmunjon which went on for fifty years after the end of the Korean War. We have the momentum now, and we don’t want false hope and endless niggling over a conference table to take the wind out of our sails. One of their ulterior motives for calling these talks may be simply to give themselves a breather. We’re not going to let them have that. Besides all these other considerations, we also need you there for balance on the team.”

“Uh, balance?” asked Barrow. “What kind of balance?”

“Tell me, Frank, what are your religious views?” asked Morehouse bluntly.

“Uh, not sure I have any,” replied Barrow, taken aback. “I’m not Christian Identity or anything like that. Neither do I climb up on the roof during thunderstorms and bang two garbage can lids together calling on Odin to strike me with lightning and make me invincible.”

“You’re NS, right?”

“Mmm, more or less. I’m not sure if Heinrich Himmler would have invited me to his castle retreat for the mystical SS rituals, but I suppose you could say I’m a Rockwell man,” said Barrow. “The books I carry with me from place to place are White Power and This Time The World, if that helps pigeon-hole me. But why is it necessary to slap a label on me or any comrade at all? We’re all Volunteers and we’re fighting for a country, a Homeland for all white people the world over.”

“That kind of thinking is why we need you at the head of the team, Frank,” replied Morehouse somberly. “I agree, we shouldn’t be pigeon-holing our comrades or slapping labels on them, but the problem is that we’ve been slapping labels on ourselves for a long time. You came into the NVA after 10/22, right?”

“That’s right,” replied Barrow.

Morehouse nodded. “Then you weren’t with the Party during the years before the war, and you weren’t part of the deranged zoo that was the so-called white resistance movement in all the years before that. Our forty years of wandering in the wilderness, if you’ll forgive the Biblical allusion, only in our case it was over sixty years, depending on when you want to date the beginning of the Northwest Migration movement from. That’s another reason we urgently need a newer man like you in charge of this crucial mission. You weren’t ever in the old movement, and you haven’t picked up the bad habits and the baggage that people with pre-war movement backgrounds all seem to lug around with them. We’ve been able to subsume our internal differences since 10/22. We had to, because failure to do so meant death and prison. Much to everybody’s surprise, at the eleventh hour and the fifty-ninth minute and the last damned second, we were finally able to get our act together. When you’re sitting in a car in the rain waiting to kill somebody, or hiding in a safe house, or lying in an ambush out on the interstate waiting for a Federal convoy, then you have to be able to rely on your comrades completely. We were able to achieve that, and that’s why we’re now at the point where independence and white freedom is now in our grasp. But we could still blow it if we allow some of these stupid pre-Northwest Migration issues to re-surface. First and foremost among those issues is religion.”

“There’s something else,” said Brennan. “We’ve reason to believe that the Feds have finally gotten the message and they’re going to be playing the religion card in a last-ditch attempt to split the rebellion and turn the whole thing into a Christian crusade against evil Nazi devil-worshippers. We are getting reports that they’re trying to create some kind of Christian vigilante group or death squad from the fundamentalist Judæo-Christian churches here in the Northwest, a kind of black ops thing they can use against us and against the new government of the Republic in the event that any kind of settlement looks imminent.”

“I told you about those two kids I sent in to suss out that one bunch of holy rollers in Bellevue, to see what was up with that, if anything,” Dortmund reminded him.

Barrow sighed. “I’m starting to get it. Jesus Christ, if you’ll pardon the expression! I had hoped that somehow we could avoid that particular corpse bobbing to the surface.”

“I think we all wish it would just go away,” said Anderson gloomily. “For years the Old Man practically did handstands to keep the whole issue completely out of the Northwest Migration, and now we have to somehow find a way to keep the lid on at this most crucial juncture in the Northwest enterprise. We must keep it away from these negotiations!”

“I’m from Northern Ireland,” said Brennan somberly. “I can tell you, gentlemen, what a religious divide can do to an Aryan community. I can also tell you what happens when a revolutionary movement is divided among itself at this crucial juncture. In 1921 Michael Collins was painted into a corner, with the result being that the Irish War of Independence was followed by another year of civil war over the Treaty that left more bitterness than the battle against the British did, and which split Ireland in two forever. We can’t allow it to happen here.”

Morehouse took it up again. “Look, Frank, I’ll give you a rundown. To make a long story short, like all armies, most of the NVA’s rank and file Volunteers originally got into the Northwest movement for their own individual motivations, mostly having to do with personal revenge for wrongs done to themselves and their loved ones by the government or by the assorted non-white minorities that the government turned loose on America. That’s just human nature. But a lot of them did previously possess certain ideological motivations, or else they have acquired them over the past five years. Like every other political and social movement in history, Northwest Migration isn’t a monolith. There are factions and tendencies and ideological divisions within our ranks. Diversity, if you’ll pardon my using the term. Now, that doesn’t mean that we can’t build our own nation out of all kinds of diverse trends and elements, so long as there is a basic common ground of nationhood and racial welfare at the core of it all. Francisco Franco created such a revolutionary movement and such a nation in Spain, and it lasted for two generations before it was corrupted.”

“Franco didn’t have a religious problem,” said Barrow.

“Actually, he did, a bit, although not like ours. Look, we all know that here in the Pacific Northwest, we are fighting for a Homeland for all Aryan peoples the world over, but it wasn’t always like that. Since the very beginning, when it was just the Old Man sitting all alone in a flophouse in Olympia with a battered personal computer, raving into cyberspace, there has been constant pressure for him personally and for the Northwest Movement collectively to come down on one side or the other of the religious divide. He always avoided it and stood up for a home for all our people with maximum personal liberty of the kind which can only be achieved in a monoracial state. He always stood for a movement and a community based on blood, not on faith.”

“He would do,” said Barrow. “The Old Man is a National Socialist. That’s what National Socialism means, the concept of one Aryan racial nation transcending all the artificial boundaries that the Jews have set up to divide us on lines of state or religion or politics.”

“Yes, so am I. But that viewpoint has not always been a majority within the Party,” said Morehouse in a worried voice. “In fact, although there’s no way to tell since we don’t do opinion polls, it may not be in the majority now. Allow me to grossly oversimplify this down to a first grade level. There are three main ideological currents or tendencies within the white separatist movement in the Northwest. The first of these are the Christian fundamentalists of various kinds, primarily but not exclusively the various Christian Identity sects, with a fair number of fundamentalist Mormons thrown in, especially in Idaho. I think it’s fair to say that there is a significant minority in the ranks of the Party and the Northwest Volunteer Army, including the upper echelons and the officer corps, who expect the coming Northwest Republic to be a kind of high-tech Puritan New England, complete with blue laws, religious indoctrination in schools, witch-burnings, scarlet letters, and lengthy sermons by cramped and crabby divines, with maybe a little polygamy thrown in depending on which brand of CI you follow. Then on the opposite end of the spectrum, there are the anti-Christians of various kinds. Some are merely violent atheists whose main gripe against Christianity seems to be that their parents made them get up early on Sunday morning, dress up in scratchy uncomfortable clothes and tight hard shoes, and go to church instead of watching cartoons or playing Nintendo. But there are also people who genuinely hold to different religious faiths, Odinists and a few Wiccans, self-proclaimed Druids, you get the idea. They want everybody to dress up in bear skins and horned helmets and dance around bonfires on the solstice drinking mead from cow horns and goblets and whatnot, plus a little polygamy as well.”

“Yeah, I’ve known some of these neo-pagan types,” agreed Barrow. “Uh, Red, let’s be honest. These comrades aren’t bad people and some of them are sincere. I don’t question that. But I actually happen to know a little history. Those so-called religions in their present-day form aren’t the original deal from thousands of years ago, no matter what their proponents claim. Other than a few interesting local legends and customs scattered around Europe, all the old pagans died out centuries ago. In most cases we don’t really even know what they believed.”

“Sure there’s a few bona fide old survivals, like the Wren Boys going from house to house on St. Stephen’s day in Ireland,” put in Brennan. “They play musical instruments and dance around the house three times, and ask for money to bury the wren. But it’s empty mummery. There’s no oral or folklore connection with the past, it’s just something ye do every day after Christmas. It was obviously once some kind of pagan ritual, but no one in Ireland has any idea any more what it originally meant. Probably something horrible altogether having to do with grisly human sacrifice or some such. Nowadays the Wren Boys just collect the money and take it to the nearest pub.”

“Most of the so-called pagan religions our people now practice are very modern inventions, less than a century old,” continued Barrow, nodding his head. “So-called Wicca has nothing to do with medieval European witchcraft or what went on in Salem in 1692. It was invented by a guy named Gerald Gardner after the Second World War. Asatru is basically a collection of old Norse myths and sagas, which are legitimate but were never intended to be organized into a formal religion. Like I said, they’re not bad comrades, but to what degree do you think these people actually believe all that Odin and Earth Mother stuff?”

“The important thing with most anti-Christians is not the degree to which they believe in whatever cult or theology they have chosen to try to replace Christianity,” explained Morehouse. “The important consideration for our purposes is the degree to which they hate

Christianity. Just as we have comrades who are like Cromwell's Fifth Monarchy Men, and believe they've been fighting for the past five years to build the New Jerusalem and establish the reign of King Jesus on earth, we have among us certain fanatics who consider that they have been fighting for the past five years not against the Jews, but to overthrow the Christian religion. You know, the type of people who used to go around before the war passing out literature calling Jesus Christ a dead Jew on a stick."

"Like you said, I wasn't really involved in the Movement before the war," said Barrow.

"I was," said Joe Dortmunder in a sour voice. "I remember some of that anti-Christian literature that some of our people used to pass out before. I never understood why. What the hell did they hope to accomplish? In what way was any of that stuff relevant to Jug-Ears shipping every job in sight to the Third World while he ran wild slaughtering brown people in Iraq? There just never seemed to me to be any reason to get all hot and bothered about a problem which is basically insoluble. I mean, okay, you can argue all you want about religion in church or in a bar, but for God's sake, no pun intended, how can you expect to win people over to a new political movement when you start out by insulting their religion? I mean, gimme a break!"

"This is one reason that we want you to head the delegation, Frank," said Morehouse. "Getting back your own orientation, there's that third tendency in our movement I mentioned. The National Socialists, some of whom are Christian, some not, and some of whom simply don't give a damn, but who have already made a personal commitment to a doctrine in which blood trumps faith. You're a Rockwellian American National Socialist, which frankly in my view is the most sensible thing to be, but that's something which I would probably not say in public or even in private in a meeting of the Army Council, for fear of giving offense. Well, as bizarre as it would have seemed to Rockwell and to Adolf Hitler himself, National Socialism has actually become something of a force for moderation and balance within the white racial resistance movement. We believe the best way to keep the Christians and the anti-Christians from rending one another's entrails during this crucially sensitive time is to use the Nazis as a kind of fulcrum or balance to keep the two extremes in equipoise. You will have at least one person on your delegation who is known to represent both views."

"Who?" asked Barrow keenly. "Anybody I know? If I'm going to try this, Red, I don't need to be fighting on two fronts, the enemy in front of me and the kooks on my own team behind me yelling about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin!"

"They won't be kooks," Anderson assured him. "They will be sharp minds and dedicated political soldiers like you, and the only thing their religious views will have to do with their presence is an unspoken signal to the rest of the Northwest movement that we acknowledge the contribution of all of our Volunteers, and we will not be excluding anyone from the bargaining table. The Republic will be inclusive, although frankly there are some who aren't going to like that message. As to your delegation to this conference, if there's anyone you feel uncomfortable with, you get a veto."

Morehouse chuckled. "Don't worry, Frank, we understand this is too damned important. No kooks need apply. Most likely there will be Major John McCausland from the Sawtooth Flying Column, who is not only a damned fine officer and guerrilla fighter, but a well known Identity pastor and something of a theologian. Before the war he was holding his own as a Biblical scholar at Gonzaga University in Spokane, before the government decided his Scriptural interpretations constituted hatecrime and arrested him. He was one of the Walla Walla escapees, and he followed Winston Wayne to Coeur d'Alene and the 10/22 rising, the First Republic and then on into the Sawtooth. From the non-Christian bag, we're looking at Captain Robert Gair from the Portland Special Operations Unit. He's third generation Odinist. He's also one of the bravest and smartest guys we have in the NVA, in my view, although truth to tell, we're all pretty special. We haven't been able to contact him yet. He's doing the resurrection shuffle at the moment, since the late governor of Oregon had his little mishap a couple of weeks ago."

"Okay, moving right along here, who else will I have with me?" asked Barrow with a sigh. "Me, John C. here to pound on the table and act the heavy..."

"It ain't no act," growled Morgan. "I really do want to keep on killing those bastards just for the sheer hell of it!"

"McCausland, Gair, who else? How big is this delegation going to be, anyway?" asked Barrow.

"About twenty people," said Anderson. "Six to eight accredited delegates, each delegate to have an aide to serve as a gopher, plus a few extras like a press secretary, a security officer, so forth and so on. You can pick anyone you like, except Joe here who like I said earlier is being promoted to field command of the Third Brigade, but I strongly suggest that you leave your best combat teams and field commanders."

"I can't see Sammy Feet or Bobby Bells being much use at a shindig like this," agreed Barrow.

"Mixed into the delegation will be some of the Third Section's better operatives, to try and keep you fully up to speed on everything, including a couple of techie types who will hopefully be able to detect and circumvent the inevitable Federal attempts at electronic surveillance. You will be the delegation's chairperson, and you will report on a daily basis to the Army Council on your progress, and receive our instructions. That's the official version; in real life we simply have to assume that despite the best we can do, your communication with the Council will be bugged in some way by the Feds. Therefore, one of the delegates or if possible a Third Section op we can slip into the proceedings somehow will also be in communication with command, and in a pinch his or her directives will override anything you get over the official channel, which we may have to massage for our Federal listeners. If he or she is also bugged or intercepted, then we're screwed. Don't ask me who it is, because we don't know yet. Third Section is working on it."

"When do these festivities start?" asked Barrow.

"It will be within a couple of weeks after the announcement by the President of the cessation of hostilities and the beginning of negotiations," said Morehouse. "We suggested July Fourth as an appropriate date for Chelsea to address the nation, but for some reason the Feds failed to see the humor. Actually, we can use some time to get ready ourselves."

"Okay," said Barrow with a sigh, still stunned by the whole thing. He waved his hands in the air abstractedly. "Guys, what the hell am I supposed to do once I get in there with the Feds sitting across the table staring at me? Do I pull a rabbit out of a hat? How do I play it? Let John C. pound on the table and yell at them to get the hell out? Read them passages from White Power? What exactly is the basis for the talks? How do we define victory here?"

"Mmm...I'd say you start off by letting them do most of the talking," said Morehouse, chewing his thumb. By now the chicken and hot

dogs and burgers were ready, and several of the women came over and began piling up paper plates and buns. The men moved off under a tree with their plates. "Try to figure out just where they're coming from. Remember, this whole damned thing could still turn out to be a gull. Treat their delegation like a used car salesman who's trying to sell you a very dubious vehicle. From what I know of Walter Stanhope and what I see of him on TV, he will be quite a silver-tongued salesman for whatever deal it is they're pitching. I assume they have some kind of deal in mind, or else they wouldn't have agreed to talk."

"Now, here is the second major problem you're going to face, Frank," said Brennan. "We haven't actually gotten a look yet at what they're going to try and sell us, but it's as certain as God made wee green apples that something less than straight independence will be offered, and these people will bend heaven and earth to try to get you to agree to some kind of gerrymandered, condominium set-up that falls short of an actual sovereign nation for white people. A return to pre-statehood territorial status, the creation of some kind of big white Puerto Rico, a Northwest legislature that doesn't really have any power, some blethers like that. They're going to want to keep control of the Homeland's foreign relations, they're going to want to keep military bases here, they're going to want to appoint some kind of viceroy from D. C. with veto power over our government, they're going to want to make us fly that bloody red, white and blue Masonic dishrag in our sky, they're going to want some kind of oath of allegiance to the feckin' Jewnited States, on and on and on. Above all, they're going to want to sneak the mud people back in somehow, and the bloody kikes as well. From their viewpoint, us pale-skinned peasantry can't possibly be allowed to have a country all our own without the wee Jewboy over there in the corner to listen and make faces and slip a few things into his pocket now and then. Frank, you must resist this, no matter what blandishments are offered, no matter what threats are made! Remember what happened in Ireland in 1921! You must not try to come back with anything short of the Republic, the whole Republic, and nothing but the Republic!"

"It would not only cause a civil war between the NVA as effectively as religion may do if it's allowed to get out of hand, but it would be a betrayal of the whole purpose of what we're doing, and it wouldn't work anyway," said Morehouse. "Some people might advocate that we accept some kind of half a loaf as a springboard for something better in the future, but history proves that doesn't work with ZOG. With liberal democracy, you start at a certain level of moral and decent existence and then everything decays from there, kind of like radioactive half life. The United States started at an exalted level in 1783 and it decayed from that point on. Anywhere there are Jews, things only go downhill. The only hope that our people have for any kind of continued existence is the absolute removal of the Jew and everything the Jew has created from our lives, our consciousnesses, our hearts and our souls. We're like the wolves, the buffalo, the damned spotted owls. We're an endangered species. White people have to have their own safe habitat, clean and uncontaminated, if we are raise our young, build up our numbers and thrive once again."

"A nature reserve for white people," chuckled Anderson.

"Pardon me if I give us all a quick history lesson, gentlemen, but it's germane," said Morehouse in an urgent and intense voice. "You know why we speak English today, Frank? You know why England became the great mercantile and vibrant colonizing nation it did? Because in the year 1290, King Edward the First expelled the Jews from England, and they weren't allowed back until 1652 when Oliver Cromwell financed his revolution with money borrowed from the Jews of Holland, and in lieu of repayment he opened the door once again to the plague. That was the longest time period free of Jews that any nation in the modern world has ever enjoyed. This meant that during the crucial period of England's national development, from the medieval through the Renaissance, the Elizabethan era and on into the modern age, the British people were allowed to grow strong and wise and healthy, straight upward and outward, without suffering from a massive national tapeworm like the rest of Europe. That's why the English were always one jump ahead of everybody else who tried to settle here. We have create that kind of healthy and vigorous home where we must raise many, many children. That's what you have to bring back from Longview, Frank. You have to bring back a hundred million white children who aren't even born yet."

* * *

At Hillside High the drama class's one act plays were progressing well, largely due to the fact that they had almost no script, and required nothing but subjective "artistic" interpretation of various roles and emotions, so there were no lines to learn, almost no sets to build, and no real way to tell a good performance from a bad one. Everything was subjective.

Cody managed to avoid being called upon to act, and so he didn't have to go on stage and bark like a dog, or sing a homosexual love song to the god Apollo, or be Chief Seattle and proclaim his grief over the loss of his people's hunting grounds to the evil white man. He landed the job of lighting manager, and all he had to do was stay up in the catwalk during the plays and raise and lower the lights on cue, plus handle a few spots and special effects. On her part, Emily managed to evade the interpretative Holocaust ballet solo, but she ended up lumbered with the duckbill platypus. Even Kelly Shipman, who got to be the goddess Hecate and the suffragette Susan B. Anthony with a long declamation on male oppression of women, wasn't too pleased with the situation.

"Talent has to be disciplined and shaped," she grumbled one day when she and Cody managed to catch lunch together without the ever-present Craig, Molly, and the rest of her cool person entourage. "If these people want to learn to act, they have to learn to perform under pressure. That means things like having schedules and lines to memorize, and to take direction. One thing I learned down in Hollywood doing Cheerleader Love, is that even on a piece of grade B crap like that, making a movie is incredibly hard work. On weekdays we got our wakeup calls at the condos at five in the morning, and we had to be showered and dressed and outside waiting for the minibus to take us to the studio by six, to beat the traffic. We had breakfast in one of the cafeterias and then it was onto the set, or out onto location at the local high school, and sometimes we didn't get back to the condos until nine or ten at night. If Mitch wants these kids to become serious actors then he needs to make them work. We need to be doing real plays that require real effort, not messing around with this so-called avant-garde crap."

Cody thought it opportune to drop in one of his very rare political hints. "Have you noticed that avant-garde generally means Jewish?" he said casually. "Like all these totally gratuitous Holocaust references that slide in and out of the plays we're doing. It's like drama has some eternal obligation to keep on fighting a war that ended in 1945. But I can understand why Mitch would be attracted to that kind of theater."

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” agreed Kelly. “I heard Mitch is secretly Jewish too, but he doesn’t dare let on because he’s scared the spuckies will kill him. After what happened to Emily Pastras, can you blame him? How’s she holding up, by the way?” she asked slyly. “I notice you seem to be giving her a lot of rides home after class, and the little birdies tell me she’s actually got you going to church with her now.”

“I think that incident over in the city last month where she got snatched off the street really rattled her and she’s going back to basics,” said Cody. “She’s not into Ghoul anymore, anyway. The church thing is mostly for her mom’s sake, to settle her down. I can understand why she’s worried, though. It was a pretty close call.”

“So how about you?” Kelly asked curiously. “Have you been saved yet, or born again, or whatever?”

“I’m not really that religious, but some of the people at her church are interesting,” said Cody carefully and noncommittally. High school was a cauldron of gossip, of course, but he was a little disturbed that his outside activities were common knowledge. He tried to change the subject, but Kelly would have none of it.

“So what’s up with you two?” she asked merrily. “No offense to Emily, if you like her that’s cool, but I think you can do a lot better.”

“I thought that once myself,” he replied calmly and simply, looking directly at her. That did it; she flushed and immediately got back into the subject of the one-acts. Well, so much for that, Cody thought with an inward sigh. As if I didn’t know.

In the course of things, Cody and Nightshade did end up hanging out quite a bit together. He found his new girl comrade intelligent and down to earth, if not exactly a barrel of laughs. They both did odd jobs for A Company after school, and most nights they got dressed up and went to church. Cody now sported a short haircut, and he had a blue serge suit which he wore on Sundays as well as a collection of pastel shirts and ties and dark slacks for weekday Bible studies, youth groups, and services. Complete with a little American flag pin for his lapel, of course. Emily’s church attire was equally neat and plain, always a skirt and flat shoes, light short-sleeved blouses, with her hair worn long and straight. It would have been difficult to recognize the Ghoul Girl from the parking lot that night on Capitol Hill. They both appeared at the Bellevue Assembly of God’s Full Gospel Tabernacle with highlighted Bibles and ring notebooks under their arms to take copious notes on various Scriptural points, and matching small crucifixes on chains around their necks. Cody made it clear to everyone in the congregation, right from the first, that he was utterly outraged by the terrible thing which had been done to his beloved Emily by the wicked Nazis, and that he thought this was just the right time for the two of them to come together in Christ now that she’d been scared straight and renounced her demonic heresies. The two of them together came across as modest, respectful, and eager to help the older members out around the church. Cody found he had a good enough singing voice to be invited to join the choir.

It was a good observation post. He didn’t just sing in the choir, he made it a point to cultivate the acquaintance of certain suspect individuals in the congregation. The head honcho was Pastor Leonard Sheldon, a typical blow-dried polyester preacher with a slick manner and too much aftershave. Sheldon was married to a bouffant-haired woman with a perpetual lobotomy Jesus-grin whose name Cody could never remember, by whom he had a genuinely cute brood of young children. “Sheldon is more of a leech even than most,” Emily had told him in a briefing before they went to their first service together. “He’s one of the reasons I quit going to church, in fact. He will assume that this time around I’m more or less dragging you along to keep his hands off me, and my guess is he’ll accept that as the explanation for your presence, and turn his attention elsewhere. After all, there are a lot more female fish in his little pond. Now, politics. One thing you need to understand about any evangelical church is there are always two factions, one pro-pastor and one anti-pastor, and each of those factions is in turn divided into male and female sections. Because of my past experience with him, Sheldon will expect me to gravitate to the female anti-pastor faction, i.e. the women he’s made passes at, and those who are pissed off because he hasn’t. In fact, he’ll think it odd if I don’t. That means you need to get with the male pro-pastor faction, which is in any case most likely to be where you’ll find any hinky pro-ZOG activity that may be moving in the shade. That’s one of the reasons I need you in on this with me. Ever since I shot him down, I don’t think Sheldon would ask me to join any little underground Zionist sewing circle, if there is such a thing going on. Plus there’s the fact that fundies aren’t exactly big on valiant women warriors such as myself. Good church ladies are supposed to stay home and bake cookies. Evangelicals still think war is supposed to be an all-boys’ club.” So did Cody, but he didn’t insult Nightshade by voicing his opinion. He could understand the difference between the perfect world and the real one. She continued, “I’m your introduction into the church, but you’ll have to worm your way into the inner circle on your own. It will take a couple of services for me to catch up and get my bearings again, and then I’ll steer you where you need to go.”

“This preacher very big on the pro-Jew and pro-Israel thing?” asked Cody.

Emily nodded. “He was back when my mom first started dragging me to services, although he’s toned the praise Israel and love-thy-nigger crap down a lot, since a few other preachers around Seattle got tarred and feathered and worked over with bats. Some of the congregation members in these evangelical sects are true believers in the Jew thing, but very few of the preachers. For one thing, they actually have some personal familiarity with the Jewish religion and personal contact with Jews in a way that the congregation members don’t. It’s kind of hard to maintain that the kikes are God’s Chosen when you know their own Talmud justifies murder, pedophilia, and every kind of deception so long as it’s directed against non-Jews. That’s one reason you’ll notice that Pentecostals and whatnot don’t refer to the Old Testament all that much, except in the form of very watered-down Bible stories for the kids in Sunday school. Too many embarrassing incidents of swinish behavior on the part of the Chosen Ones to explain away, things like Elijah sacking the bears on the children who made fun of his bald head, and Absalom going into his daddy’s concubines in the big rooftop orgy, and Joshua praying to God to stop the sun in its tracks so he could go on killing.”

“Our own CI people claim that the Israelites were white,” Cody pointed out.

“For all I know, they might have been,” said Emily with a shrug. “I assume you know enough history to know that today’s Jews aren’t the Jews of the Bible. That much about CI is certainly correct. Look, Cody, this isn’t real Christianity. This evangelical horse hockey is to real Christianity what McDonalds’ is to food. It’s composed of artificial ingredients and theological grease, it’s wrapped up in pretty paper and cardboard, and then they market the hell out of it and stick little toys in with the fries. And nobody knows it better than these evangelical preachers. They’re usually a pretty cynical lot. I doubt if one out of ten of them actually believes any of it. It’s a matter of which side of their bread is buttered. They’ve found a way to make money hand over fist that beats the hell out of working, they’ve

gotten a taste of the good life, the money and the prestige and the adoring females in the congregation, and they know they can't enjoy it from a wheelchair. That's why most of them have shut the hell up about Israel and end times and that bird-brained rapture shit, and the 144,000 Jews running down into a hole in the ground when JEEEE-ZUS comes back and puts his big toe on the Mount of Olives, yadda yadda yadda. They zipped their lips about it when it became hazardous to their health. The prospect of a midnight meeting with a guy like Bobby Bells has got most of them singing I Saw The Light."

"Okay," said Cody. "Look, curiosity question. Do you mind if I ask exactly what it is this preacher did to you?"

"What, you don't believe a guy would hit on me?" she said archly.

"No, I mean, it's just..."

"Cody, don't worry about it!" she laughed. "I find it hard to believe myself. I know I'm ugly as a monkey's butt, believe me. Sheldon is just one of these compulsive womanizers who doesn't care what a girl looks like as long as he gets to rack her up on his scoreboard. For some reason the evangelical ministry attracts a lot of those, as opposed to the more mainstream churches, whose ministries attract faggots. Sheldon's rap with his female parishioners is as old as the hills. I think every false prophet from Rasputin to Jimmy Swaggart must have used it. Here, I'll give you a rundown. God's greatest sacrament is the forgiveness of man's sins, right? I mean, that's why we worship Him, right? So He won't throw us into an ocean of burning fire when we die?"

"Uh, I guess so," said Cody. "I can think of a few better reasons for worshipping God than naked fear, though."

"Yeah, so can I, but remember now, I'm telling you the official fundamentalist version."

"I never actually got into all this religion stuff," he admitted.

"Well, you need to know the patter so you can blend in," she said reasonably. "Now, men and women are all imperfect and sinners, by nature, right?"

"Are we?" asked Cody. "I mean, I know about the doctrine of Original Sin, but it always struck me as kind of stupid. How can a baby be born sinful?"

"It's a very handy doctrine, because otherwise it would cut way down on the number of sinners who need forgiveness, and that would accordingly cut down on the number of preachers needed to save souls and pass the collection plate," she said dryly.

"Yeah, but assuming there is a God sitting out there somewhere with a set of rules, and assuming those rules are more or less what we've been told what they are, sin is still something you have to choose to do. You can't be held responsible for breaking a rule if you don't know it's against the rules, right?" protested Cody.

"Lord, my man, don't ever say anything like that in Bible study!" chortled Nightshade. "They'll stone you and chase you down the driveway with pitchforks and torches! You're committing a sin right there, applying reason and logic to God's mysteries. You don't need reason, boy, you need faith! Remember, with these people, faith is everything and man's mind is nothing. According to them, all man's accomplishments are nothing. Good works are nothing. Just gotta have faith in JEEEE-ZUS and you're in like Flint. And faith means believing whatever some dumb-ass preacher tells you to believe. How else could anyone talk themselves into believing the Jews are God's Chosen People? Now listen up. Okay, in theory, your baptism washes away the Original Sin, but of course since we're all sinners by nature, we just keep piling it on and we are in constant need of forgiveness and redemption. Now, if God's mercy is the ultimate prize, then you want as much of it as you can get. The bigger the sin, the more of that good stuff you get. Who wants just a little speck or so of divine forgiveness for cheating on your taxes or kicking your dog? If you want to be forgiven big, you have to sin big. Right? No, quit laughing, I am not making this up! Therefore little sister, why not come and sin with a holy man of God like me instead of some impure rock and roll bass player, so you can partake of God's infinite grace? This guy Sheldon could literally quote chapter and verse as to why I was supposed to make like Monica Lewinsky and give him a blow job under his desk while he works on his sermon. He said the presence of the sin of carnality inspired him to fight it all the more and I would therefore be committing a blessed act by polishing his knob while he immersed himself in the Word. Swear to God!"

"Huh?" said Cody. "Jeez, the last time I heard language like that it was from the hookers when I was living down Pioneer Square!"

"So I'm a hooker now?" she asked.

"No, dammit, that's not what I meant!" he said in exasperation. He was still stuttering for the words when he saw she was laughing at him.

"You know, I really like meeting a guy my own age who is honest to God embarrassed by the term blow job!" Nightshade told him. "It's a refreshing change after those dumb-ass jocks and geeks at Hillside who still seem to be nothing but dirty little ten year-olds, and those trashed-out scum rockers up on Capitol Hill. With that air of outraged innocence you will make a great church member! And if it makes you feel any better, no, I did not accept the man of God's invitation to witness for Christ with my mouth. Yeah, those were his words. Evangelical inside joke. I told him...well, never mind, what I told him would probably shock your tender and gentlemanly ears even more. That was over a year ago. He'll probably be surprised to see me back."

"Uh...", said Cody, shaking his head. "One thing. If I'm supposed to be your boyfriend now, do I let on that I know about all this holy knob job or whatever...?"

"No, if you want to get on the inside with these people, you need to act—well, not so much dumb as a little naïve and a little lost. The kind of person who wants to be led. The pastor will be glad to accommodate you. But Sheldon will probably start fishing around trying to find out if you and I getting it on. Find some casual way to let him know we're not. If he thinks you're getting some from me where he couldn't, he'll get jealous and start back-stabbing you, and he won't let you into whatever little club him and the Zoggies are getting together."

But there was a man in the congregation who had been identified to Cody by Lieutenant Dortmunder as being of more interest to the NVA than the church's pastor. This was United States Army Captain Jesse Regenthal. Regenthal was a powerfully built, buzz-cut Alabamian with a little plastic Jesus on the dashboard of his armored private SUV, who had begun attending the Tabernacle several months previously, and the Third Section very much wanted to know why, given the risks now entailed in an American military officer showing his face anywhere outside the protection of a base. There were a lot of men like Regenthal who were now attending evangelical

and Pentecostal churches throughout western Washington, and it wasn't religious devotion. There were chapels and church services on post.

After a couple of visits to the Assembly of God, Regenthal wasn't hard for Cody to get close to, with a few Biblical questions in study group, and a little feigned hero-worship as he listened to the officer's bragging war stories. To hear him tell it, Regenthal was a lean, mean, OD green, Ay-rab-killin', Natsie-stompin' machine. "Gawd, guns, and guts was what made Amurrica!" he would solemnly proclaim. By special and dramatic permission from the pastor, Regenthal carried a Glock 9-millimeter automatic conspicuously in a belt holster when he attending worship services. "I normally wouldn't dream of bringing a weapon into the Lord's house," Regenthal told Cody solemnly, "But in these times a righteous man has to worry about being attacked by Satan's powers and minions at any time. I can tell you, there's a lot of them cowardly Natsie bastards hiding under rocks around here that would sure enough like to put this good old Amurrican country boy six feet under!"

"I can see why, sir!" replied Cody with an awestruck, slack-jawed grin that would have done credit to any one of the Brady Bunch.

Yeah, and you're looking at one, you swaggering ape! Maybe I can make you my notch number two! he thought.

As part of his newfound piety Cody also met Emily's mother, and in fact more often than not they attended church as a trio, which gave them even more plausible cover. Janet Pastras was absolutely enthralled with him. "I'm so glad she's found a nice Christian boy like you, all polite and clean-cut, after she almost went to the devil, when she was running around with that Satanic rock and roll man" said Mrs. Pastras, hugging him, the odor of a fine Chardonnay mixing with her perfume. "I always tried to raise my little girl up to know the Lord and walk in his ways, but she keeps running around. And look what happened! I tell you, Cody, I have nightmares about my little girl in the hands of those beasts on that terrible night! Satan's emissaries on earth!" She shivered.

"Well, ma'am, I think maybe getting captured by the Jerry Rebs might have scared Emily straight," Cody told her. "I understand that the one that kidnapped her was a real monster, Conan the Barbarian with machine-gun belts across his chest!" Behind her mother's back, Emily stuck out her tongue at him.

Cody was surprised to find that Emily lived in a suburban mansion in Bellevue which was at least as luxurious as the Shipman home, albeit rather disorderly and seldom vacuumed since the Pastras' last Nicaraguan maid had fled in fear of the NVA. One day when they were driving to a prayer breakfast without Emily's mother, who was still in bed with a hangover, Cody mentioned this. "Yeah, my Dad used to have the biggest Ford dealership on the west coast once," said Emily. "He was making truckloads of money but he always wanted more, and to be honest, Daddy didn't have much sense. He got involved in all kinds of stuff with the Russian mob, here in Seattle and up in Vancouver, smuggling drugs and computer parts, working welfare and Medicaid scams, and God knows what else. One day when I was ten years old he just disappeared. They dug him up out of a cranberry bog about a year later. Mom still can't deal with it. She has convinced herself that he was on some kind of secret government mission or something and every now and then she'll make some remark about him being martyred for Christ. He was a pretty cool guy, although even when I was little I knew he was a crook. But he left us well provided for, plenty of insurance and all kinds of real estate and bank accounts all over town. Plus every now and then Mom or I will find a pile of hundred dollar bills in some little hole in the wall in this house, or up in the skylight someplace. It's kind of like a long Easter Egg hunt."

"Uh, the Russian mob aren't really Russian, at least not most of them," Cody told her.

"Yeah, I know," said Emily.

"Looks like we both lost our fathers to the kikes."

"Oh, how so?" she asked. They pulled up into the church parking lot and Cody turned off the ignition and sighed.

"Well, if we're going to be working together, I suppose you have a right to know who I am and what the hell I'm doing here. Bells and Farmer Brown know, and I assume Brigade does as well. I have kind of quirky past, even for a Volunteer. Better you hear it from me than from somebody else. To start off with, I'm an It Takes A Village kid."

"Oh, Jesus!" gasped Emily. "I'm sorry, Cody, I didn't know. You don't have to..."

"No, no, it's not anything I'm ashamed of," he told her. "I have been told that a lot of children in my position always blame themselves and have feelings of guilt, but that's stupid. It's not like it was my fault or anything. I know who to blame, believe me. When I was eight years old and we were living down in Centralia, my Dad was attacked by a nigger and he defended himself."

"Oops!" said Emily with a wry face.

"He defended himself successfully," continued Cody.

"Double oops," said Emily.

"Yeah. Okay, he was drunk, but he wouldn't let himself be murdered like a good little honky, so he's still in Walla Walla. One of the reasons I joined the NVA is so some day I can go in with all my comrades and bust him out, or at least get him out when we win. And then maybe even find my sister, wherever they sent her. I was eight at the time, like I said, and that was young enough so I could bring a pretty high price with the adoption bond, as they called it. Normally I would have been sold to some family of really rich yuppies and would have grown up with the best of everything, which is one of the excuses they keep coming up with when they try and tell people how It Takes A Village isn't really so bad for us poor little white trash kids who get auctioned off to these upper crud assholes. But in my case I really hit the jackpot, in the sarcastic sense. My bond was taken up by a big Jew lawyer in San Francisco named Larry Sapirstein and his shiksa trophy wife, Gina. Larry had two daughters by his first marriage, his Jew wife, another lawyer named Jennifer who was always hanging around and meddling in the family like some kind of yenta character in a TV sitcom, but there was no son. He wanted a son and so did Gina, but neither wanted to go to all the trouble of having their own. Mess up Gina's svelte figure, you know."

"A liberal, a lawyer, and a Jew?" said Emily. "That's a real triple threat."

"Yeah, tell me about it."

"Why the hell did a Jewish family want to adopt a Gentile kid?" asked Emily. "Jews are the biggest racists around when it comes to their own form of racial purity."

"I know. They even have an old word for it in Ladino, which is one of their little private languages, the Sephardic equivalent of Yiddish.

They call it *limpezia de sangre*, which means purity of blood. That term comes from medieval Spain, when Ferdinand and Isabella finally got tired of their bullshit and gave them the boot. A lot of Jews converted to Catholicism on the surface, but they stayed Jewish in secret and only intermarried among each others' families, thus maintaining the purity of their Jewish blood. I got to learn all this in yeshiva school, believe or not. They're quite proud of themselves."

"Little blue beanie on your head and all?" she asked.

"You got it. As well as getting properly circumcised in the shul on Sabbath, by a mohel, who is a rabbi who specializes in cutting pieces of little boys' dicks off. That was one of the things that Larry specified when he was shopping for a manchild. No hospital circumcisions. Really great thing to happen to a guy when he's eight years old, eh? Have some bearded freak cut your dick off, or part of it anyway, in public, in front of a minyan of ten other men and the rest of the damned congregation. But to answer your question, as to why the Sapirsteins wanted me specifically? Besides my not being circumcised? Well, for another thing, Gina thought I was cute, kind of like a puppy."

"How much is that doggie in the window?"

"Something like that. As to why Larry wanted me? Pure arrogance. My dad had gone to prison for hatecrime, and Larry got this idea that getting a so-called white supremacist's kid and turning him into an Orthodox Jew, and of course a good liberal to boot, would be a real ego and power trip. Kind of the ultimate denazification course. Revenge for Auschwitz and all that crap. Put the evil racist in prison for the rest of his life, and turn his son into one of the Chosen Ones, complete with a knitted blue kipa. He always referred to his adopting me as a *mitzvah*, a righteous act in the religious sense. When I understood that he meant it, that he really thought what had been done to my family was a good thing and pleasing to God, I think that was when I started to understand the terrible evil that is abroad in the world, dressed in clothes like people. So I got to spend my adolescence in the company of Jews, with the result that I intend to spend the rest of my life killing them. You can have no idea what a vileness they are, until you've seen them up close like I have. When you have seen them that close, you understand why all down through history, eventually every nation among whom they ever lived has so frantically tried to expel them, to eradicate them."

"Oh, crikey!" said Emily. "And I thought I had a case of the ass for 'em! Do I even dare ask what your home life was like?"

Cody sighed. "You mean did they beat me or anything like that? No, no physical abuse, unless you count that godawful bris." He decided not to mention his stepsisters' visits to his room in the night for their little private play sessions. That was something Cody had pretty much decided never to mention aloud to anyone, unless he were ever to get the opportunity just before he blew Karen and Leah's brains out. "We were rich even by Jewish standards. I never lacked for anything material, money or toys or computers. I had my own credit card at age ten. We traveled a lot. I'm probably one of the few Northwest Volunteers who has actually been to Israel, which I mostly remember as gaudy hotels with bad food, and Jews screaming at one another everywhere. Israel is a kind of open-air madhouse, with a lot of auto accidents on the roadside all the time. And beatings. You always see cops and soldiers beating Arabs, stopping them, throwing them against walls, kicking them down on the sidewalk, that kind of stuff. It's ironic they call us haters. In Israel there is this poisonous atmosphere of hate and violence and madness that just seems to hang in the air like the dust. You choke on it. It's what you get when you jam a lot of Jews together in a small space.

"Okay, I was young, and maybe if the Sapirsteins had played it right I might eventually have forgotten about the fact that they were cannibals who had stolen me through the destruction of my own family. But they just wouldn't let it go. It was a really weird power trip and Larry and the girls were hooked on it. They couldn't get enough of humiliating me and my race. A lot of it was what you would expect, of course. I got dragged to the San Francisco Holocaust museum at least once a month the whole time I lived with them. I got to know the ushers and the janitors by their first names. Most of the time Larry tried to be this big all-wise father figure, when he wasn't devising all kinds of weird little psycho head games to mess with my mind. I was his project in life. I was a kind of toy robot or machine he was building, and he was constantly tinkering. He was just determined he was going to mold me into some kind of corporate Henry Kissinger rabbi super-freak philosopher statesman who would elevate Israel above the nations or something.

"He used to take me into his study after dinner and sit me down and go into these long monologues about ethics and history and Torah and true humanism and Kabbalah and the Brotherhood of Man and the Symbolic Snake of Judaism and on and on and on. It was the most boring, arrogant, enraging bullshit you have ever heard in your life. Are you familiar with the psychiatric term *paranoid schizophrenia*? Decayed personality, delusions of persecution, fascination with excrement, so forth and so on? Well, the Jews have made a whole religion out of a mental illness. With that plus what I got in yeshiva I could probably pass as a rabbi and argue Talmud, which I've already had passed up to Third Section. I may end up getting sent to New York for Operation Applesmash. It was—God, I don't know how to describe it. It was just hellish. Sometimes I used to get the idea that Jews aren't really people, they're reptiles of some kind. It was like I was living in a crocodile pit or a serpentarium, with things always slithering just out of my line of sight. They just feel different from normal people. The Christian Identity people in the NVA I've met tell me they are of Satanic creation. I don't know about Satan, but I can believe they are made on some kind of different blueprint than white people. God, those so-called ethics sessions of Larry's! I felt like I was drowning, but I couldn't just pretend to listen, I had to ask questions and sit at his feet and pretend to absorb it all like a sponge. Knowing I was looking at the man who was benefiting from my father's agony, the man who had taken me but thrown my sister back in the bargain bin. Gina wasn't really so bad, she was just completely materialistic and a bubblehead. She liked me and she was nice to me. But Karen and Leah, and that whole crowd I was forced into? Larry might have considered me to be his project, but none of the rest of them were buying it. Oh, no. I always knew that adopted or not, I was not one of them and if things ever went bad they would turn on me in a heartbeat. I was a shaygets and I was never allowed to forget it."

"A what?" asked Emily, fascinated.

"A shaygets. It's the male version of *shiksa*. Look, I can't really tell you what it was like, and we'd better get inside. Pastor Len might get the idea we're out here canoodling or something."

"Wait, what happened?" asked Emily.

"Well, I found a way to escape, kind of," said Cody. "You might say it was my first tickle. I started going to the library a lot, but I

couldn't check out any really subversive books, because I was a kid and the library had a policy of sending the parents a list of all the books their children checked out, so they could make sure their progeny weren't turning into evil Nazis, or Satanists, or Tridentine Catholics, or falling into some other unapproved thought. When I was thirteen and old enough to check out books from the adult section, I rented a private mail box from a chink who didn't care how old I was so long as my money was good. I waited until there was a trainee librarian behind the main desk, I applied for a new card, and I listed a phony parent at the mailbox, so then I had two cards. That way I could check out what I really wanted to read. Every week I'd dump my school books in my locker, go to the library, check out some politically correct books on my official card and my own choices for the week on my bootleg card. I'd come home with an armful of things like *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, biographies of Martin Luther King, stories about Indians, and of course all kinds of Jew stuff by Saul Bellow and Philip Roth and so on, you get the idea. In my book bag, which they'd think were the school books I'd left in my locker, I had the stuff I really wanted to read, anything I could find about white people and white history.

"Mostly older stuff, of course. I remember I read once in the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* a simple sentence: 'If it is not right, do not do it. If it is not true, do not say it.' I contrasted that with all the so-called ethics in the Talmud and yeshiva and Larry's evening rants, and I knew that was all the moral law I'd ever need. And it didn't come from any goddamned Jew rabbi with a beard and a kipa. It came from a man of my own race. I suddenly understood that the rest of the human race doesn't need the Jews to lord it over us and tell us right from wrong. We know, and we know a hell of a lot better than they do. Then when I was sixteen, and something made me know I was ready, I went to a used bookstore where I knew the guy behind the counter, and for a hundred dollars I bought an illegal, under-the-counter copy of *Mein Kampf*.

"And that was it. I finished the Führer's book, went to an ATM and maxed out my cash limit on my card so I'd have some traveling money, then went back to the Sapirsteins' for the last time. Larry was sitting in the kitchen having a nosh. He said hello or something, and I told him 'Today I am man,' which in case your Judaic lore isn't what it might be, is what I'd said in shul for my bar mitzva. It was time, time for me to be a man. I went to the drawer and pulled out a carving knife, walked up to him and said 'Jared Brock says hello, Jewboy,' and stabbed him in the gut. He ran through the house screaming in Yiddish, with the knife sticking out of his belly. I walked out, I got away, and after many perilous and swashbuckling adventures, here I am about to go in there with you and tell those yeggs in there all about how I've been washed in the blood. So I have. Just not the blood they mean."

Emily giggled. "You know you're not supposed to say anything when you hit," she reminded him.

"Yeah, I know. The no conversation rule. Bells explained that to me. I think that was why Larry was able to react a bit and dodge my thrust, because I took time to run my mouth and warn him. If I'd kept quiet and just done what I had to do, I might have made my bones two years ago instead of the other night."

"That was your first?" she asked.

"Yep," he admitted. There was no point in denying it, since she was hanging with Bobby's crew now and she could find out.

"You did very well," she complimented him.

"Well, thank yuh, ma'am!" he said in a bad John Wayne imitation. "Now I think we need to get in there and start getting filled with the Spirit."

She got out of the car, then leaned back in. "And to save you asking, no, I haven't actually done the deed yet, just set a few of 'em up like that night."

"Does it bother you?" he asked her.

She stopped smiling. "One day I'll tell you my story. Then you won't have to ask."

III.

"In my capacity as commander in chief of the armed forces, effective immediately, I hereby direct all American military units and law enforcement agencies in the Pacific Northwest to halt operations and observe a full ceasefire." - President Chelsea Clinton
The air conditioner was on again in the upper room of Mrs. Sweetzer's shambling boarding house, and this time it was needed. This July was turning out to be a genuinely hot month in Seattle, in every sense of the word.

The men who were meeting there today were the Political Bureau's working committee in charge of assembling and briefing the rebel delegation to the Longview conference. The living room of the small, cheap furnished apartment was crowded, with several of the participants seated on the formica kitchen table which had been moved in. In addition to Frank Barrow, Jeff Anderson, Pat Brennan, Red Morehouse, Joe Dortmunder and Corby Morgan there was Colonel Carter Wingfield from the newly formed Special Service, Colonel Daniel "Dangerous Dan" McGrew who had taken over the Third Section from the late Matt Redmond, as well as Fred Schuster and Andrei Stavrovich Stepanov of the Political Bureau itself. "Okay, comrades, first order of business," said Jeff Anderson. "We've gotten a list of who the ZOG delegation to the conference will be. I have to admit, they've put together a high-powered team. The chair of the American delegates will be Walter Stanhope, the Secretary of State, just like we'd heard. Sitting at his right hand and looking over his shoulder will be the Secretary of Homeland Security, Howard Weintraub, who will presumably be there as the official Jewish evil eminence."

"So we decided to allow Jews at the conference table?" asked Barrow. "I heard there was some debate about that in the Army Council." "True," said Stepanov. His English was excellent and only slightly accented. "The Army Council was against it, basically on the moral grounds that we need to be shooting Jews, not talking to them. The Political Bureau felt having someone like Weintraub at the talks might actually speed things up. There is no point in conducting a conference with the Jewish issue hanging over everything like a fog. Best to bring it right down onto the table. The enemy has stated that they want Weintraub there, and we have decided not to oppose it. It would only cause further delays."

"I doubt they would have allowed this to be a goyim only affair," said Brennan. "You know the hebes. They can't abide the idea that the Gentiles are talking about 'em behind their backs."

"The opposition wasn't just ideological," Morehouse told them. "Some of the Council members felt that if we could achieve an Aryan-

only conference to discuss an Aryan-only future for at least one segment of our race, it would be a historic achievement, a turning point. I could see their reasoning, but was it really practical? Even as attenuated as the Jewish world power is compared to, say, fifty years ago, it's still very much a reality, and it's inherently intertwined with the real-world capitalist power structure. The Jews and the corporate bigwigs in the smoke-filled boardrooms who actually run this godawful cluster-fuck of a society are going to have to sign off on any deal we make anyway, so it's not as if there's any way we could keep them out of the process. It's time the funny little man came out from behind the curtain, and we all get a good look at Oz the Great and Powerful. In a way this will in fact be something of a historic occasion in more ways than one, the first diplomatic and political assembly brought together to resolve a specific issue wherein the Jews are acknowledged as a power in their own right, and to which they have sent their own representative."

"I'm surprised any Jew would even agree to sit at the same table with us, after they've spent the past hundred years demonizing and dehumanizing anyone and everything even mildly to the right of center," said Barrow.

"Until the neo-conservatives came along, and they decided that a bogus right-wing ideology better served their needs," pointed out Stepanov. "We naturally tend to think of Jews in our own terms, as left-wing and liberal, or as neo-conservative rightists. But in fact they have no world view at all other than their own survival and domination, which is the basis of their entire religion. There is an old rabbinical saying that the first question to be asked about everything is: 'Is it good for the Jews?'"

"They never had any reason to sit down with us before," said Morgan. "We weren't shooting 'em. Thar's something about a gun pointed at a guy's head that kinder gets his attention."

"Oh, Mr. Weintraub will definitely be a spoiler," said Anderson. "He's the neo-con's neo-con. His public comments and speeches make old Jug-Ears himself look sane and moderate by comparison. The red, white, and blue must wave over every Middle Eastern oil field in the name of democracy and civilization. We must be ready at the drop of a hat to slaughter a million Muslims or a million white people in Idaho if it's necessary to save one Jewish life in Tel Aviv, and he's made clear in the relatively short time he's been in office that he doesn't mind getting his hands bloody. We know that as deputy director of DHS he was personally involved in that horror they inflicted on Cathy Frost."

"Then he belongs on Third Section's to do list, not at a goddamned conference table!" snapped Morgan angrily.

"If the talks break bad, I'll let you kill him, John. Who else?" asked Barrow.

Anderson looked at his notes. "The American military will be represented by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff, Air Force Major General Charles Brubaker, aka Bomber Brubaker. His military strategic and tactical sense consists of dropping as much explosives as possible on as many people as possible to make sure you get the right ones. Brubaker has impeccable neo-con credentials, of course. He personally ordered the carpet-bombing raids on Mecca and Medina, thus outraging every Muslim in the world and leading to the Thousand Generations of Jihad fatwa from the assembled Muslim imams of the world. He also authorized and defended the gang-rape of Muslim women in American interrogation facilities to soften up male relatives believed to have information. They wanted to send Willis Peasley as well, the director of FATPO, who is a retired Army general, but we did put our foot down with regards to niggers. This conference is strictly seg. Human beings only."

"And they went for that?" asked Barrow.

"The official story is now that Peasley himself refused to come because he won't negotiate with racist terrorists, and he is supposed to be on the verge of resigning. Interesting, if true," commented Morehouse. "It may indicate fissures in the government over the negotiations and what direction they should take, but it also may be a convenient fiction to get around the stumbling block of our refusal to negotiate with monkoids at Longview. There are no other known blacks or major Hispanic players in their proposed delegation, and that's also an interesting development. When it comes to the crunch and serious American interests are involved, de cullud folk seem to have been relegated to the back of the bus again. Stanhope and Vice President Fairfax will be taking a lot of flak from the NAACP and Black Congressional Caucus for not having any nappy heads at the table. They're apparently willing to take that heat rather than delay the proceedings, which I find fascinating."

"In essence, what they're doing here is throwing a hundred years of so-called equality out the window and tacitly admitting it was hogwash all along! I'm still astounded they are willing to do that. What the hell are they up to?" muttered Anderson, his brow furrowed.

"Who else?" asked Barrow.

"You boys will be additionally honored with the presence of Senator Jeanette Galinsky from California, another Jew," said Anderson.

"Also the presumed official feminist delegate."

"Uh, are we going to be talking about feminism?" asked Barrow, his eyebrows raised. "Why, for God's sake? What the hell does that have to do with ending the war?"

"God knows," said Anderson with a shrug. "My guess is that Galinsky is there as a sop to the PC and pervert left. Maybe she's going to try to delay and confuse things by demanding that we don't force women in the Northwest Republic to wear veils."

"I seen Senator Galinsky on TV," said Carter Wingfield, a South Carolinian who looked like a middle-aged, evil Elvis. "She oughta be made to put on a veil before she comes to the table. God damn, somebody whopped that woman with the ugly stick!"

"It is more likely that she will be there as the personal representative of Hillary Clinton," said Stepanov. "She and Mrs. Clinton are very close, politically and personally."

"I think she holds the Wicked Witch's watching brief on the proceedings, and will be reporting to her personally," agreed Morehouse.

"Carpet munchers," said McGrew laconically.

"They are reputed to have had a lesbian relationship in the past, yes," said Morehouse fastidiously. "They seem to be more political allies now than anything else. It will be interesting to see just what contribution Senator Galinsky does make. She will speak with her mistress's voice, so we need to listen. Remember, Hillary still runs the country, or runs the presidency anyway, through her daughter."

"Hillary herself isn't coming?" asked Barrow.

"Not that we know of, no," said Anderson. "Of course, her health is bad, and she's getting a little long in the tooth. Living proof that only the good die young, I suppose. But her absence from the conference is another one of those portents that leaves itself open to a

variety of interpretations. They may not be as united as it seems when it comes to this peace conference.”

“One thing,” said McGrew. “Threesec has some people on Capitol Hill, of course, and we’ve gotten some intercepts, e-mails and memos between Hillary Clinton, the Galinsky woman, and Howard Weintraub, as well as some others in what appears to be a tight little lefty-Jew clique within the government. Those three especially have been getting quite chummy over the past few months. In these memos and e-mails they’re speaking Yiddish, and they’ve been overheard speaking Yiddish in conversations in the Capitol cafeteria, in the corridors, etcetera. Apparently the Wicked Witch of the West is quite fluent. They’re using it as a kind of code between themselves. They’ve even made a running joke about it with the other members of Congress, their staff and government bureaucrats. They call themselves the Shtick-Talkers, which is a takeoff on the Wind-Talkers, those Navajo Indian radio operators the Marines used in the South Pacific during World War Two. They claim none of us evil Nazi-type dudes would ever be able to listen in on them. What I can foresee happening is that during the conference all kinds of enemy jaw-jacking is going to be going on behind our backs in a language which isn’t exactly an Aryan forté. Right now Threesec has access to Volunteers or assets who speak over sixty languages, including Asian and African languages if necessary, since we have veterans who were in Indonesia or the Philippines or Somalia. But no actual Yiddish speakers, for obvious reasons. We do however have a number of Germans, including Comrade Schuster here who can at least make a stab at deciphering it. We need to stick a couple of our real Jerry Rebs in with you guys, General Barrow.”

“God, I’d rather face a FATPO SWAT team,” said Schuster in disgust. “Yiddish is based on a very degenerate form of medieval Low German, true, but it’s full of Polish and Russian and Hebrew words as well as its own slang, they have thrown away any kind of proper grammar or syntax so it’s just mush, plus there are a number of Yiddish dialects depending on what godforsaken shtetl in Russia or Poland the individual Jew’s ancestors came from. All of it filtered through a hundred years on the Lower East Side. I understand there’s now even an officially recognized Hollywood dialect. To an educated German-speaker it reads like the writing of an illiterate moron, and it sounds like the babbling of a drunken baby. I’ll be willing to go and take a stab at it, but…”

“We need you to take over as Political Officer for the German division we will be forming when we make the jump to NDF, Fred,” said Brennan. “We’ve got our first three hundred men ear-marked and we’ll be getting them together in a couple of weeks, probably in the Medford district. We’ve even gotten hold of some old-style Stahlhelm helmets for them.”

“Frank, we’ve got a Yiddish speaker in Three Brigade,” spoke up Dortmund.

“We do?” asked Barrow in surprise. “Who?”

“Volunteer Brock. You know, that kid I told you about who was raised by Jews in Frisco?”

“Raised by Jews, Commandant?” asked Brennan suspiciously. “How the hell did that happen?”

“It Takes A Village,” replied Dortmund. “Some kike lawyer was high bidder on the kid when he was eight.”

“Ah, jayz, the poor bastard!” hissed Brennan.

“We checked him out when he first came in, and he’s legit,” Dortmund. “He’s from here originally. They sent his father to Walla Walla and made off with his sister to God knows where. When he finally hit the road he tried to slaughter his Yiddishe papa kosher-style with a butcher knife. There’s a hatecrime and attempted murder warrant out on him down in California.”

“How’d we get him?” inquired Barrow.

“He was one of Father Andy’s kids.”

Brennan kissed his right thumb and crossed himself. “I knew Father Andy, may his soul rest in peace. If this lad passed muster with Andrew, then sure he’s true blue.”

“And he speaks Yiddish?” asked McGrew.

“He says he does.”

“We’ll need him in the delegation,” decided McGrew. “We’ll make him an aide de camp or something so he hangs around in the background listening.”

“Uh, there’s a problem with that,” said Dortmund. “He’s under right now. I sent him and your lady, the lovely Nightshade, into that Assembly of God church over in Bellevue to latch onto that paratroop Captain Regenthal and see what he’s up to. I understand that’s a priority.”

“It is,” said McGrew. “We need to watch our backs and make sure we don’t end up getting caught with our pants down by some tub-thumping vigilante force who think they’ve got to kill a Nazi for Christ. Have they come up with anything?”

Dortmund shook his head. “Not yet, but they’ve only been in there a week or so. They need time.”

“Okay, that’s a minor detail,” decided Barrow. “Don’t shut him down yet. We’ll wait and see how this shapes up and if we still think it’s a good idea we can extract him just before we go to Longview.”

“And I want Nightshade back ASAP,” said McGrew. “I have something else I need to get her onto. Let’s say another month on this church gig, then we’ll have to go at it from another angle.”

“Noted,” said Barrow. “Any more info on the American negotiators?”

Stepanov spoke. “Brubaker, Weintraub, and Stanhope will form a kind of troika, as we used to say back in the old country, but they will of course be accompanied by their own entourage of experts, aides, flunkies, spin doctors, and general nomenklatura flotsam.”

“Does anyone spot the one interesting aspect of that team?” asked Morehouse. “Every one of those men holds a position in the United States government where the Northwest Volunteer Army has assassinated his immediate predecessor in office.”

“Maybe that’s one of the reasons why they’ve finally agreed to negotiate,” said Barrow. “Applesmash and Pigkill made the point good and proper. These bastards in the United States power structure are starting to understand that they personally are no longer immune from facing the consequences of their actions. It’s one thing to cut ten thousand white jobs and hire ten thousand Mexicans, or order some defenseless little country bombed into rubble by cowards who hide in the sky, or pass a law that pays for murdering a million babies with tax dollars, when you can let yourself off with a bit of genteel brooding by the fire in the study over a snifter of brandy and a good cigar. It’s another thing to commit acts of tyranny when you understand that tomorrow morning you may step out your front door and a bullet will splatter your brains all over the wall. Why do you think there’s such a shortage of FBI agents these days, so short that

they had to bring in special thugs from FATPO? The FBI never minded getting a little blood all over their Gucci shoes, until it was their blood. Then all of a sudden most of their agents seem to have discovered an urgent need for a career change. I think we've always underestimated just what personal, physical cowards the people who run the United States are. America gave them this wonderful, luxurious good life in exchange for their moral blindness and their collusion in the insane imperial dreams of the neo-cons. These people enjoy the hell out of that good life, they've gotten soft as butter, and they have no intention whatsoever of sacrificing their own lives so that they can't enjoy all those American goodies any more. The problem with the old Movement always boiled down to the fact that the white man was a coward, too. As bad as things were for us, life was just too sweet. We had our color televisions and our air conditioners and our refrigerators full of beer, and so for generations we refused to do the only thing we knew would actually change things and give our children a better world. Now we have found our courage. Our hearts are whole again, while those of our enemies are hollow and empty. And now we have finally forced them to the table."

"Now tell me you ain't a politician?" said Wingfield with a laugh.

"Yeah, Frank. You can make an off the cuff speech like that, and you still think you're not up for these negotiations?" said Morgan with a low chuckle. "I'm looking forward to hearing you speechify at those sons of bitches all day long."

"What does our negotiating position look like, going in?" Barrow wanted to know. "Do we have any idea yet what they're going to be throwing at me?"

Anderson nodded. "We do have a few sources, so yes, we're starting to get a vague outline. We're running into several problems, primary among them being prisoner release. They're starting to get hinky on that. As you know, back when they first approached us last month, we kicked off this whole episode by demanding good faith prisoner releases, starting with the Old Man. They turned us down flat on him, which was hardly unexpected, and we have been told from Florence that he understands and he's willing to wait. He honestly doesn't care what happens to him so long as we can secure the existence of our people and a future for white children. The Feds have so far released about three hundred Volunteers and other white political prisoners, but they are balking at giving us not just the Old Man back, but a number of other key prisoners and some of the more sensitive individuals like Cathy Frost."

"I'm amazed they let Cathy live at all," said Barrow. "You would think they would have made her disappear long ago."

Morehouse nodded. "I'm surprised as well. She does have a case pending before the U.N. and the World Court in the Hague, and it finally looks like the international legal community has screwed up the guts to take on the United States on the issue of torture. At least the torture of good-looking white women as opposed to dark-skinned Muslims, whom the Americans have tortured all they wanted to since the days of Abu Ghraib. Plus our girls at the women's detention block were able to smuggle those horrible pictures out of Pullman and get them to the European media. She's become something of a celebrity, and I guess they figure it would be a little embarrassing if she vanished or ended up dead in her cell."

"We need to get her out of their hands," said Barrow decisively. "Truce or not, she's always going to be in danger as long as they've got her. She's too potentially embarrassing. That's going to be the first demand I lay on 'em. If can get her away from those animals and nothing else, I'll consider this conference a success."

"What they've done is they've worked out a series of incremental releases of our people by list, with some curves they keep throwing us like deportation of officers or so-called key terrorists to foreign countries, etc. so they don't come back Home and re-join the NVA," said Morehouse. "It's supposed to be what they refer to as performance-based, which means that once the ceasefire goes into effect, the longer we go without killing anybody, the more prisoners they release. We give in on their demand A, they release prisoner list A, we give 'em demand B, they release prisoner list B, you get the idea. The Old Man is supposed to be the ultimate prize, the last one released once an agreement is signed. They apparently want to keep him completely the hell out of the whole negotiating process, while we of course will need to demand immediate and unmonitored access, telephone conferencing with him, etcetera. So that's something else you can look forward to a lot of haggling on."

"Okay, but I don't want to get the conference bogged down into a big argument over nit-picking details on prisoner release," said Barrow. "Or nit-picking details over anything. That's one way the Americans will try to draw the business out forever, beating one topic to death for weeks and months and then on to another one. We need to keep our eyes on the prize here and not let them drag us off into a hundred and one endless digressions. We are there for one reason and one reason only, to get the United States government the hell out of our country. Let's get that done and the details will resolve themselves."

"I hear the sound of some realpolitik," said Schuster with a smile. "That is good."

"I told you you'd get the hang of this quick, Frank," said Morehouse with a chuckle. "Yes, that's what they'll do. Delay, delay, delay."

"And while they're delaying we'll be moving on the ground," said Wingfield. "That's why the SS has been formed. We will be forming action groups and identifying key targets throughout the Homeland, facilities we need, factories, warehouses of supplies we need, banks, medical facilities, administrative and political centers, you name it. We will be taking advantage of the truce to come out in the open and take over, take out, or help ourselves as need be. While you're down in Longview talking, the Party will be acting. A lot of your job, General, will be to explain away and smooth over some of the actions we'll be carrying out. We'll try to keep the shooting to a minimum, but we have no intention of simply sitting on our thumbs while you guys bat the breeze. As far as the Army Council is concerned, the establishment of the Northwest Republic begins right now."

"How long do you want the negotiations to last?" asked Barrow.

"Between one month and two," said Morehouse. "Frankly, there will be so many truce violations that it will be difficult for either side to keep up the pretense of civility too much longer than that. Now, there's an old diplomatic trick to moving forward negotiations when one or both sides really wants a resolution and you're not just talking to hear your heads roar. You appoint two or three serious subcommittees with members from both sides, working groups to resolve specific issues with the understanding that the main conference will back whatever those working groups decide. You'll notice I said two or three subcommittees, not ten or twenty. You pick the stickiest, most serious and legitimate side issues, things like prisoner release and borders that really do have to be resolved, and you delegate authority to people in your team to get their heads together with appointees from the other side and solve them, but you

yourself don't get involved. You and your main colleagues keep those five across the table pinned to their seats, and while your team mates are thrashing out the details in the subcommittees, you keep the pressure on for the main points."

"And those are?" queried Barrow.

"Three," said Anderson. "Well, two, if you want to consider prisoner release a subcommittee issue. First and most important, we want the complete withdrawal of all American armed forces and administrative personnel from territory designated for the future Northwest Republic, with a few exceptions we'll list for you, people like postal workers and forest rangers and people we will need to run the new country. Secondly, we want the formal cession of authority and recognition of our independence, with a timetable for all of the above. Pin them down on that! None of this performance-based shit on the main point of withdrawal. The treaty we want will consist of a piece of paper which recognizes the Northwest American Republic as an independent nation and sets a firm date measurable in weeks, not months, for the removal of every American hand with a gun in it. That's all we want from them, all their gun-toters gone and their recognition of the Homeland as real live country. They are going to move heaven and earth to get you off track. You mustn't let them." "Northwest American Republic?" questioned McGrew. "Why not Northwest Aryan Republic?"

"Because then for years to come we'd have to stop and explain to people what we mean by Aryan, which will be hard since we seem to be somewhat unsure of that ourselves," said Morehouse with a sigh. "One thing we learned early on, back when we were building the Party before the war broke out, is to keep everything as simple as possible. We want a name for our country that states who we are without having to go off into a long digression into nineteenth-century racial theory. However, Dan, if you object, you and anyone else will have a chance to say so and put it to a vote. Immediately after the American withdrawal we will convene some kind of parliament or constituent assembly and all of these things will eventually be ratified either by that assembly or in a nationwide plebiscite. Nothing is written in stone. But right now, we don't worry about that. We take it one step at a time, and the purpose of this step is to get ZOG the hell out of here!"

"Okay, now let's get into the nub of it," said Barrow. "Where do we draw the line, literally? What territory are we asking for?"

"It's like that used car deal we mentioned at the picnic. We start with a talk-down position," said Morehouse. "We ask for more than we expect to get, listen to their screams of outrage, and over time we reluctantly let them talk us down to what we really will accept, kicking and scratching all the way. We start out by asking for the entire states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Wyoming, and all of California north of Highway 299. Say from Redding on north. I'd love to bring Mount Shasta into our country."

"In other words, roughly the part of the country where there has been at least some NVA activity. There has also been armed resistance as well as certain parts of Alberta and British Columbia. I know that's what we'll claim, but they're not going to give us all that,"

Barrow told them flatly.

"No. Like I said, it's our talk-down position. We let ourselves be whittled down."

"Whittled down to what?" pressed Barrow. "What exactly is the bare minimum we'll settle for?"

"What we will eventually accept is the three core Homeland states of Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, along with a good chunk of western Montana. This is where the majority of the NVA units have fought the revolution, but nothing less, Frank," warned Brennan.

"Any bits and pieces of Wyoming and California you can wrench away from them will be great, but we get those three states plus Montana from Missoula on west, or we go back to war."

"What about Alaska and western Canada?" Barrow demanded.

Red Morehouse sighed. "Alaska is a problem, and Canada more so," he said.

"Here is where it starts to get really nasty," said Brennan grimly.

"Realpolitik is often a very ugly thing, General Barrow," commented Schuster.

"You're telling me that we're going to stab our Canadian comrades in the back?" snapped Barrow in some disgust.

"It's not that simple, Frank," replied Morehouse quietly. "You know that ever since the first days of the Northwest Migration movement we've always wanted to take at least parts of British Columbia and Alberta with us into the Republic. B. C. especially. That part of our land is simply too beautiful to leave to the wogs. But the Canadian situation has always been eccentric, at times running parallel with what's been going on in the United States, but often developing a life of its own. Canadian politics and Canadian demographics and Canadian conditions are different from ours. The Canadian security forces were never as numerous and as powerful as the American ones, and Canada is a mighty big place, with the result that we have even been able to establish some secure cross-border field hospitals and refuge facilities in B. C. In addition to which we have small but very brave and very effective active service units in Vancouver and Victoria and some other places up there, who have actually been able to reduce the Chinese and Indian subcontinental population of that area by several million and bring down rents and property values to the point where white people can actually live there again. They're some of our best."

"So what's the problem?"

Stepanov took it up. "There won't be any Canadian delegation at Longview. The Canadian government absolutely refuses to participate in any peace talks or to discuss any possibility of independence for western Canada. They always did, even back in the late twentieth century when western Canada had its own non-racial independence movement. You would think that since the Northwest American Republic is going to be on their borders, that the Ottawa régime would at least want to be involved in these negotiations. But they won't even send an observer. We have asked, both through the Irish intermediaries and the Americans as well, and we have been repeatedly told by both the American government and also by the international arbitrators that the Canadian government refuses to have anything to do with any of this, there will be no Canadian representative at the peace talks, and Canada will not honor any provisions of whatever agreement we reach as it affects their territory."

"They haven't been hit anywhere near as hard as the Americans," said Wingfield. "Maybe we should have been blowing things up and killing politicians and media people in Ottawa and Toronto as well as in New York and Washington D. C."

"Well, you know, that's hardly surprising," said Barrow. "Historically the Canadian government has always been the most pro-Zionist régime outside of Israel itself. Their hatecrime laws were always the worst. Worse even than Britain and Germany, in some ways. The

Old Man's books were banned there as early as the 1990s, and they had laws against even private possession of white dissident literature twenty years before the United States brought them in. Those suck-ass shabazz goyim in Ottawa even used to issue Canadian passports to Mossad agents as a matter of routine."

"Plus there is a significant element of Jews and American liberals up there who couldn't wear Jug-Ears and the neo-cons fled to Canada after the 2004 elections, and by now they constitute a kind of intelligentsia for the Canadian ruling élite, who were never exactly brilliant," put in Schuster. "I suspect this may be that philo-Semitic liberal ruling élite's way of cocking a snook at their hapless neo-con cousins south of the border who have been so badly shredded by the rebellion that they now have to undergo the humiliation of negotiating with us evil fascists."

Morehouse nodded. "Yes, but this isn't just theoretical. This is going to be a real problem. We have a number of very fine Canadian comrades who have given their lives for the Republic, and who are going to be angry and devastated if we don't bring at least parts of British Columbia and Alberta into our new Homeland. They will feel terribly betrayed by the NVA, and they will have reason to be. But they have to understand that we are trying to create a legal and recognized new sovereign nation here, and for that to happen the Canadian government has to recognize us. We can't just strike a deal with the United States and then say 'Oh, by the by, we're grabbing X square miles of Canada as well.'"

"Suppose our Canadian comrades decide that two can play the game of not recognizing the Longview result, and they refuse to lay down their arms when we tell them to?" demanded Dortmund. "I wouldn't blame them if they did. Is the new government of the Republic going to back them up if they decide to keep on fighting? Or pull the rug out from under them so we can get our own piece of the pie?" Morehouse spread his hands helplessly. "Gentlemen, what can I tell you? This is one of those volatile variables that you must deal with at the conference and later on the government of the Republic will have to deal with, and I just plain can't predict what approach we'll take. I agree, it stinks to high heaven. But we can't afford to throw away this chance to create a Homeland for all our people, including those Canadians who can accept the verdict and move down here. We will be asking white people from all across the world to come here, after all. That's about the best I can give you now. Maybe we can somehow figure out some way to force the Canadians to the table. But we must keep our eyes on the prize and take it if we can."

"I'll tell you what we can do," said Barrow. "You make sure we go in there with a list of every Canadian racial and political prisoner, NVA or otherwise, being held by Ottawa and we make it just plain goddamned non-negotiable that Canadian prisoners are to be released and handed over to the Republic, and if the Canucks don't want to send anyone then we will turn the screws on the American delegation to make it happen. No differentiation between Canadian and American POWS. That much at least we can do. Dammit, Red, if we're going to stab our own people up north in the back then we need to at least do that much for them! Not leave them sitting in those hellholes like Kingston!"

"Agreed," said Morehouse. "And I see no need absolutely to give up hope. You will know that the Army Council and the Political Bureau have already decided it simply isn't viable to demand that the Canadians be dragged in and forced to part with territory. It could bring the whole deal to a halt. But the American delegation won't know that. So we need for you to emphasize Canada as much as possible, even though in the final analysis we will allow ourselves to be talked out of it, if that's the only way to establish the Republic." "Another damned face-saver for ZOG, at the expense of thousands of white Canadian NVA comrades and millions of white Canadians?" demanded Barrow angrily.

"I don't like it any more than you do, Frank, but it has to be this way," said Morehouse. "Trying to force Canada into the pot is simply too risky. It could be a deal-breaker. The same thing with Alaska. Most of our Alaskan comrades ended up coming down here to fight with active service units in the main Homeland states. There simply hasn't been that much NVA activity in Alaska and there wasn't all that much Party activity before 10/22 either. What there was up there got mixed in with that kosher conservative Alaska Independence Party crap. We just don't have a strong enough base in the population to demand that Alaska be included in the Republic, that's just the way it's worked out, and the chance that the United States government is going to give us the largest remaining oil reserves in North America is non-existent. My own view is to go ahead and concede Alaska at the first opportunity. They'll appreciate your not wasting everybody's time. Maybe you can work some kind of trade-off. We won't mention Alaska in return for the release of Canadian prisoners, something of that nature."

"Realpolitik," said Schuster again.

"Realpolitik sucks," grunted Barrow.

"It does indeed," said Morehouse. "Welcome to the majors, rookies."

* * *

A few afternoons after the holiday, Mitch Newman had scheduled dress rehearsals for the three one-act plays that the Hillside High drama class was to perform on Friday night. "Before we rehearse the plays themselves, I want to go over the costumes for each presentation," he announced. That left Cody up in the catwalks above the auditorium with nothing much to do for a while, as Mitch and his assistant director Suzanne examined and made suggestions on each character's outfit, among the first being Emily in her platypus get-up, which Cody had to say looked frankly ridiculous. A few minutes later Cody saw her at the end of the catwalk, wearing shorts and a T-shirt and minus the duckbill rig, beckoning to him. He went over to her. "Come on!" she said excitedly. "I've got those hacking programs from Doc Doom! This costume mess will keep Mitch busy for at least twenty minutes, more if he can find some excuse to lay his hands on Kelly. His office will be unlocked, and we can crack into his computer!" Cody followed her out into an upstairs corridor, down the back stairs and into the lower floor where the staff offices were, and within a minute they were inside Mitch Newman's cinderblock cubbyhole. The lights were off, and the teacher's computer with the plasma screen glowed on his desk.

"What if somebody walks in on us?" asked Cody.

"You're supposed to be my boyfriend, right? So we came in here to snog," she said. "Here, you sit down at the desk, and if I suddenly fall down into your lap and jam my tongue down your throat, you'll know the door's opening behind you."

"Yeah, well, if that happens don't get pissed off if I stick my hand under your bra," said Cody. "Have to make it realistic, you know."

“Why would I wear a bra?” she asked. “Nothing to put in one. Okay, we have to get to the Hatecrime Hotline website first.”

“Which means we have to log on,” said Cody. He jiggled the mouse. “Okay, I’ve got the log-in screen.” Emily opened the computer’s CD drive tray and inserted an unmarked disc which she took from her shoulder bag. “Now how does this work?” Suddenly the screen changed color and little creatures appeared, dancing and doing handsprings around the school system’s log-in screen. “What the hell are those? Leprechauns?” demanded Cody.

“I think they’re supposed to be gremlins,” said Emily. “Look, I’m glad DD is on our side, but I think he flew away on his own broom a long time ago. Okay, this first disc is a password cracker. This is a school system computer, so we know that the username will be _HYPERLINK "mailto:mnewman@kingschools.edu" __mnewman@kingschools.edu_.” Cody typed it in. “That’s standard for all school system employee computers. It’s the password that’s the problem. We start with the vowels. We’ll have to do each letter twice, because the school’s passwords are case sensitive. In the password field, type the letter A, all caps.” Cody did so. A gremlin ran out onto the log-in screen, dropped its tiny pink trousers and mooned him, but nothing else happened. “Okay, no capital As. Now type in a small a.” He did so. There suddenly appeared eleven blanks in the password field. Of these the ninth and the last blank were filled in with the letter small a. “Okay, now a small e,” she directed him. That also brought up two letters, so now they had _e_e__a_a. “Small i,” said Emily. This time the gremlin moon came with a fart.

“I get it,” said Cody, typing in o and u, which produced two obscene acts by the dancing gremlins. “Now the consonants?”

“Yup,” she said. “I’ll watch the door.”

“I’m snog-ready,” Cody assured her. He didn’t get a hit until h. “Wait a minute, I think I know what it is.” He typed in a y, an r, and then completed the password. The school’s website came up. “That’s it. It’s yetzer_hara,” said Cody with a grim nod.

“Yessir what? What the hell is that, and how did you know what it was?” asked Emily in surprise.

“The broadening advantages of a yeshiva education,” replied Cody. “Yetzer hara. It’s Hebrew. It means the evil impulse in man that motivates him to sin, which is ironically appropriate in this situation, don’t you think? Our Mr. Newman is a Jew, alright, and that scratching sound you hear coming from the cosmos is the sound of his death warrant being signed. Would a Hebrew password be enough for the lieutenant, do you think?”

“Now we’re in, let’s finish the job,” she said. “Besides, I want to know what the inside of that Hatecrime website looks like. We might find other information in there that Threesec can use. Go to _HYPERLINK "http://www.stopthehate.gov" __www.stopthehate.gov_.” Cody did so. The website came up, a streaming American flag in the background over a moving banner proclaiming “Update - Millions of Dollars in New Rewards for Domestic Terrorists! Bounties Have Never Been Higher! Serve Your Country And Assure Your Financial Future Today! Confidentiality Guaranteed!” Cody clicked on the Member Services button and a log-in screen came up.

“Okay, now what?” he asked. “The password cracker again? We don’t have a username, though.”

“No, this one is a little more complicated,” said Nightshade, removing the first CD and inserting a second into the drive. The little dancing gremlins vanished. “I’m not a hundred per cent on the technology, like I told you before, but what it does is it impersonates an admin log-on, identifies the static IP of this computer, pings the website, discovers its Universal Resource Locator address, and if there have been any previous log-ins from this IP address to that URL it replicates the last log-in. If this computer has never before been used to log into this site, then it will tell us. That still doesn’t mean that Newman...” A username “Macho Man” suddenly appeared on the screen, as well as a password.

“Houston, we have a rat,” said Cody.

“What the hell is that password?” asked Emily, mystified. “More Hebrew?”

“Affirmative. Godel hador. It means a mighty avenger of the Jewish people like the holy Rabbi Loeb of Prague who created the Yossele the Golem, a monster zombie of clay, and used it to kill all the Gentiles the rabbi didn’t like.”

“Hit enter,” said Emily. He did. A screen flashed up that said Welcome, Macho Man, and Thank You For Defending America’s Freedom. “We’re in.” She studied it. “Hey, he’s got files on individual people. Looks like our teach has been a busy little rodent. Christ, looks like he’s turned in almost fifty people in the past few years! That’s a nice chunk of change. I wonder how many of them were actually guilty of anything beyond telling a nigger joke? Or even guilty of that?”

“You see your friend in there?” asked Cody gently.

“Yes,” she said bitterly. “There he is. Ricky Jenkins. I knew him since the fifth grade. He came up to me on the playground and gave me his apple from his lunch. All very cute and adorable in an After School Channel kind of way.”

“What happened? Is he in Walla Walla, or Auburn?” asked Cody.

“He never made it past his first night in King County jail,” said Emily bleakly. “The multicultural shower scene.”

“I’m sorry, comrade.”

“Thanks. Well, on the upside, Newman doesn’t seem to have interested himself in either of us. I don’t see our names. I guess he isn’t as good at spotting evil Nazi racists as he thinks he is. Don’t take time to read it all now, just bring up some files and run a print on them,” urged Emily. “We got what we came for, now we need to get the hell out of Dodge. Then print out his money page, so we can prove he’s been paid for his informing. There won’t be any problems with getting the CO’s go-ahead, especially since now we know his username and password and we can access his account from any properly shielded computer and let him take a good long look at his leisure. Hey, there’s a familiar name.” She pointed to a file and Cody’s heart almost froze in horror. The file said Kelly Shipman.

“I’m going to kill him,” Cody choked out as he opened the file and hit print. “Whether or not Bells gives the okay. I’m going to kill him.”

* * *

The two of them made it back into the auditorium and up onto the catwalk without anyone noticing their absence, and Cody handled the lights and special effects for the dress rehearsals of the three one-act plays, including Emily’s Dance of the Duckbill with soliloquy, for which she once again donned her ridiculous costume. Cody even earned a passing congratulatory comment on his skills from Mitch Newman at the wrap-up. As soon as he could, Cody gave Farmer Brown a call on one of his cell phones. “Hey, Dad,” he said. “I think

me and that funny house plant you know about need a visit to Uncle Bob. We got something to show him.”

“Yeah, well, both of you need come straight home after school,” said Farmer Brown. “Uncle Bob and some of his friends have another chore for you.”

“Another rock and roll lullabye?” asked Cody eagerly.

“No,” said Brown. “You’re both about to begin your modeling career.”

“Huh?”

“When you get here.”

“Okay,” said Cody. He told Emily, “Come on. We’re about to begin our modeling careers.”

“Our what?” she asked.

“Don’t ask.”

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t know,” said Cody. The two of them left the auditorium and headed for the parking lot in the press of the other kids. In one of life’s tragic ironies, Cody Brock was so intent on what he was going to say to his commanding officer to convince Bells to let them take care of the Mitch Newman situation, that he missed the very thing he so feared. He didn’t notice it when Mitch called out as the kids were leaving, “Kelly, once you get changed, could you stop by my office for a few minutes? There’s something I want to talk to you about.”

“Sure, Mitch,” Kelly called back. Mmm, she thought to herself, here it comes, I bet.

Kelly wasn’t stupid. She knew that this summer school was the last chance Newman would have to take a crack at her, and she had resigned herself to receiving and deflecting at least one serious pass from her teacher before the summer school ended. Why not, after all? Over the past four years most of her other male teachers and several of the female ones as well had tried, although Kelly had duly and unobtrusively taken note of the fact that almost all of the minority and lesbian teachers who had been at Hillside when she entered it in ninth grade were gone by the time she graduated, something that she correctly attributed to their fear of the NVA. Routine sexual harassment was nothing new for her. Newman had made it clear he was attracted to her, including his hands-on instruction during South Pacific, but so far it hadn’t reached the stage of anything really annoying. If it came down, she’d just have to handle it. Not the first time, and it certainly wouldn’t be the last. “What did you want to see me about, Mitch?” asked Kelly, sweeping into the room a few minutes later. Today she was wearing a pale cream silk sleeveless blouse, a brown leather skirt and sandals that drove Newman bonkers, since he had a definite fetish for dainty white female feet. Newman was sitting at his desk, his computer on, and he was printing a file off of the Hatecrime Hotline website. In fact, it was the very same file that Cody and Emily had surreptitiously printed a couple of hours before. Kelly’s file.

“Kelly,” said Newman gravely, “Are you aware that some of the remarks you have made in class and around school have not only crossed the line into unacceptable and overt racism, but in some cases might be construed as being sympathetic to hatecrime and domestic terrorism?”

“Huh?” asked Kelly, caught off guard and for a moment not comprehending. “What are you saying?”

“I’m saying you’re a filthy little Nazi bitch,” said Newman calmly.

“What?” cried Kelly, suddenly feeling the walls falling in on her. Newman handed her the file from the Hatecrime Hotline. She saw that he had noted down twelve separate incidents, with dates and meticulous documentation. These included inappropriate humor, social exclusion of minorities (there hadn’t been room enough for Cindy Nakamura at the cool girls’ table one day in the cafeteria) and several alleged statements on her part sympathetic to the goals and activities of the Northwest Volunteer Army. Some of the charges were more or less correct, albeit taken completely out of context. Others of them Mitch had simply made up out of whole cloth. She was so stunned she didn’t realize until it was too late that Mitch had slipped behind her and locked the office door. She looked up at him. “This is all lies, and you know it!” she shouted. “No one will believe you!”

“How many sluts down through the ages have uttered those words, I wonder?” said Newman, his eyes beginning to roll and twitch. “In today’s world I think you will be amazed what Federal law enforcement will believe. The fact is, Kelly, that I have in the past made myself sufficiently useful to our government in fighting racism and domestic terrorism that I can pretty much do whatever the hell I want.”

“So I made a few casual comments about things on TV. So what?” cried the girl in increasing desperation. “This is supposed to be a free country, isn’t it?”

“You can tell it to the judge,” sneered Newman. “Quite literally, before she sends you to Nevada to get your brain cleansed of all your Nazi filth. No contract at the studio for you if that happens, little girl. You’ll end up fifty years old and working in the checkout line at Safeway. If you’re lucky. Or maybe not. It doesn’t have to happen, Kelly. That file can stay locked in my hard drive. You know what I want, and I don’t want much, just a little light summer’s dalliance. You give it up, now and any other time I want it between now and the end of the course, that file disappears, and you go on to stardom. You stick your little nose in the air and look down at me, and I move that mouse up an inch, I hit send, and that sound you will hear will be the lovely and talented Kelly Shipman being flushed down the toilet of life.”

“You let me out of here now!” she shouted at him. “If you don’t I’ll scream, and while I’m screaming I’ll rip your balls off with my bare hands, you ugly, dirty little kike!”

Mitch Newman went berserk. His face suddenly transformed into that of a snarling werewolf, and he hurled himself on her. Kelly was young, she was strong, she was an athlete, and she was brave. She should have had a chance. She didn’t. Newman’s rage was incandescent and his hairy small musky body was as strong and as crushing as that of an ape. He got her down on the floor, sitting on top of her, and grabbed a pair of scissors off the desk. “Save your face, Kelly!” he cackled. “Save your face, little Nazi bitch Nazi bitch yellow-haired Nazi bitch! Save your pretty blue eyes! Save your face and give it up to Yehudi, little Nazi shiksa bitch!” The obvious insanity in his raving gibberish terrified the girl more than any mere physical assault could have done. Given some time to prepare

herself, given any kind of a break, she might have pulled herself together and made a quick plan, but the sheer suddenness and horrific violence of it completely shattered her.

“All right!” she sobbed hysterically. “All right! Just please don’t hurt my face! Please don’t hurt my eyes!”

From then on, there was only horror.

* * *

After their usual tortuous journey in the Nissan, doubling up and down the streets and making sure they weren’t being followed, Cody and Nightshade arrived at the safe house which A Company was using that week. This one was a sumptuous Tudor mansion in Medina leased to a fictitious third party by an NVA op in a real estate management company. Cody and Emily immediately asked to see Bobby Bells, and between them made out a clear and forceful case for termination of Mitch Newman. The material they had printed off from Newman’s computer was convincing, especially when they were able to log back into Newman’s Hatecrime Hotline from a laptop, using the information they had gained from Doctor Doom’s hacking programs, and show DiBella personally what they were talking about. “What’s the story on this Kelly Shipman girl?” asked Bells, reading over the file that Cody had printed out. “In here, Newman’s got her allegedly telling him nigger jokes, making pro comments on NVA tickles that she saw in the media, including that one where we had our little contretemps with Nightshade here, and saying that white people need a country of their own. Number one, why hasn’t he turned her in? Number two, why haven’t we approached her?”

“I don’t think those entries in that file are accurate, sir,” said Cody crisply. “I know Kelly Shipman personally, and she hasn’t made any racial statements in my hearing. So far as I can tell she’s non-political in her thinking and completely focused on her acting career. She thinks the NVA are terrorists, pretty much believes what she sees on TV, etcetera. She calls us spuckies, which should tell you where she’s coming from.”

“Kelly is Hillside High’s resident movie star,” said Emily. “She acted in some T & A cheerleader movie down in Hollywood last spring and got in the news, and so now she’s queen bee around school, or was until she graduated. Cody’s mashed on her.”

Cody ignored her. “This man has a history of sexual harassment against white girl students, Bobby, and if rumor is true, a few Asian girls as well. It seems a solid bet that he uses threats of denunciation through the government’s Hatecrime Hotline program to force his targeted victims to submit. Whether he’s a racial Jew or not, and I think the Hebrew passwords are dead giveaways, he’s been turning people in to the Feds. The fact that he’s been informing on the wrong people and apparently doing it for personal gain rather than loyalty to ZOG doesn’t matter. He’s still an informer, and that put him in our sights. It’s pretty well known around school that the Hatecrime Hotline is a witch hunt, and that once you’re accused of racism there’s no defense and no escape without all kind of lawyers, money, denazification, public humiliation and a permanently blighted future. I’m not surprised that they give in. These comments of hers may be complete fabrications, or they may be distortions of casual remarks Kelly may have made in an unguarded moment over the past year or so. She graduated from Hillside this year like me, and she’s in our drama class, but in September she’s going to college down in Los Angeles, so this will be Newman’s last chance to have at her. My guess is that sometime soon he’s going to threaten her with that file he’s building, which at the very least can ruin her career and end any chance she ever has of being an actress, and demand that she give him sex in exchange for his silence as to her alleged racial and political indiscretions. Comrade Nightshade’s flippant tone notwithstanding, I do know her, she’s a good person even though she’s not racial, and she doesn’t deserve to have something like that happen to her. I’d like to move on this before it does.”

Bells nodded. “All right. You’ve got my okay. Your Mr. Newman just made the hit parade. Tell you what, I’ll let you guys set it up. Be good experience for both of you. But do not just go out and plug this hebe on your own like cowboys. Even a little pissant job like this guy can go bad wrong, real quick. You keep me in the loop, and before you move I want to go over your whole plan, step by step. If I think you need backup or a driver, I’ll assign someone. But you’re gonna have to hold off for the moment. For one thing, you guys are still supposed to be checking out the goings on at that holy roller tabernacle and bird-dogging that Army captain and that sleazy preacher, finding out what they’re up to. I don’t want you doing anything that might send you on the bounce and screw that up. Brigade and Third Section both want that at the top of your list. But beyond even that, right now there’s other fish to fry. Something’s coming down, and soon. It may impact on our whole scene here. Priority or not, you may have to skip church tonight and call in sick tomorrow if we still need you here.”

“Nothing going on until choir practice tomorrow. What’s up, Lieutenant?” asked Cody.

“I ain’t sure myself,” said Bells. “I don’t know if you two heard a news broadcast today, or whether you were too busy down there dancing around like ducks for this rat bastard kike, when you weren’t hacking his computer, but President Clinton’s coming on TV in a little while and she’s going to make some big announcement about the Northwest.”

“We’ve won!” said Cody immediately.

“Don’t say that! We don’t know that for sure,” warned Bells. “The Bushes are mean, and sometimes they’re dumb as a box of rocks, too, which ain’t a good combination, but those Clintons got a few screws loose and Bill was a drug addict. There ain’t no telling what those upazzi will do. For all I know Chelsea could be announcing that she’s tripling the rewards for all our heads, or gay marriage is now mandatory and we all got to find homo life partners to buttfuck, or she’s going to deport every white inhabitant of the Northwest to camps in Nevada like they’ve already done with some of those little towns out in the sticks. I mean it, guys, keep your lips zipped and don’t get your hopes up. But I’ll tell you this much: we’re on alert. All of us. The whole fucking Northwest Volunteer Army, Homeland-wide. Just got the word this morning. We are all to stand to with our best weapons and field gear and get ready for come what may. After a bit I want you two to go out to the garage and Eddie Hagen will issue you both with rifles and some magazines, and a web belt with some necessary things that we’ve put together. Nightshade, have you been cleared on the AK-74?”

“Uh, no sir,” said Emily. “I can learn fast, though.”

“M-16?” asked Bells.

“Yes, sir, I got a course on that weapon from my Third Section control.”

“Uh, I should mention that after what happened, I reached out, and I already I know your control is Luke Skywalker, so you can say his

name around me. We'll give you a Sixteen. Remind me when we've got the time, and me or Eddie will go over the Seventy-Four with you. We'll most likely end up using the Kalashnikov as our basic infantry weapon, since they're not only damned fine guns, they're as cheap and plentiful as lollipops thanks to our new friend in the Kremlin, Premier Komarovsky."

"Yes, sir."

"For another thing, there's been some changes at the top in our command roster," continued Bells. "We're getting a visit here later on tonight from the Brigade Commandant, that is the new one, Joe Dortmund, whom you've met. The old Commandant, Frank Barrow, is coming along as well, only he's some kind of general now. Oh, and I'm a captain, by the way. Apparently we're going to be bringing some new guys into the brigade and expanding our companies. Besides that, once the officers get here, we got something for you two to do while we wait around for Chelsea to come on the tube."

"Farmer said something about modeling?" asked Cody curiously.

"Yeah," said Bells. "You two get to try on your new NVA uniforms. Apparently we're all gonna get 'em, although not for a while, but we get a sneak peek tonight. Including the latest summer ensemble for the well-dressed female Volunteer, so we finally get to see Comrade Nightshade wearing a dress."

"She wears a dress to church," said Cody. "The experience is overrated, I assure you. Ow!" he yelped as Emily karate-chopped him in the gut.

When they were in the garage later on, Cody to receive his AK-74 and Nightshade her M-16, along with magazines and cleaning kits and the web belt, he asked her, "You want to be the one to do the job on Newman when the time comes? He'd be a great target to make your bones on."

"Nah, you can do it," she said carelessly. "I'll be the honey trap, and he should go for it since he already tried once with me and struck out. Don't worry, Cody, I'm quite capable of killing someone personally, especially a Jew who has made it clear that he views me as nothing more than a piece of meat he can handle at will. But I think it will do you more moral good, plus it will give you notch number two and add to your rep with the guys around here. Plus mine for being a slinky femme fatale, and I do mean fatale."

"What do you mean, do me more moral good?" asked Cody in puzzlement.

"Oh, call it better karma, a word which would make Pastor Len scream in horror if he heard me use it. Your reason for killing the son of a bitch is better."

"Huh?" asked Cody stiffly. "I don't know what you mean. Newman is a Jew, and no one needs a reason for killing a Jew. They're like rats or pigeons. They spread disease. It's a social hygiene thing. Newman has to go because he is an enemy of my race and my nation, and because he is a sexual predator who victimizes and humiliates my racial sisters."

"Sure, we can take all that as read, and it's true enough as far as it goes," said Nightshade. "But you darn well know we've both got personal reasons. This isn't the Mafia, you know, even if Captain DiBella is Italian. It doesn't have to be just business. We're allowed to get personal. I want that Jew dead just to avenge a personal insult. You want him dead to protect someone you love." She turned and pointedly walked out of the garage and back to the house, her rifle slung over shoulder, before Cody could say anything, which on quick reflection he decided was a good idea. Kelly was something he saw no point in discussing, with Emily or anyone else. Yet he wondered if he were really that obvious. If Emily could see it, surely Kelly herself at least guessed?

A group of senior NVA officers duly showed up at the safe house later that evening, including not only the newly made General Barrow and Joe Dortmund, but Red Morehouse and all their attendant bodyguards. They arrived with several suitcases from which they drew items of apparel. "Volunteer Brock, there's something I need to discuss with you," Barrow told him. "But we'll wait until after the President has made her speech. Depending on what she has to say, there may not be any need for your special services, even at this late date."

Before Cody could ask what special services he could possibly provide, Morehouse spoke up. "In the meantime, we would like you and Comrade Nightshade to be the first to model these, beings as you're typical young Volunteers of the kind we like to think of as our standard, so we can get an idea of what they look like, and also General Barrow gets to try on his officer's kit, which he will soon be wearing on a formal occasion."

"Ah, what occasion is that, sir?" asked Cody.

"Mmmm...just to make sure, ask me again in..." Morehouse looked at his watch. "Half an hour. Those doodoo birds in D.C. may turn out to have been playing us all along. I'll believe it when I hear it. Actually, let's not even mess around with the fashion show just yet. It's almost time. Captain DiBella, I assume that in an upscale dwelling like this you have a television with cable news?"

"Fifty-inch plasma satellite rig, sir, down in the rec room."

"Gather everyone in, except one sentry," commanded Barrow. "We have a bit of history in the making here, and I want everybody to see it." Cody was glad neither he nor Nightshade was chosen for guard duty. DiBella turned on the tube and flipped the remote a bit. There were the usual shopping channels, Gilligan's Island re-runs, old movies and assorted politically correct programs of various kinds, but every news channel and all the networks were carrying coverage of an imminent Presidential address to the nation. Bells settled on CNN. The first thing they saw was the ebony face of Paulus Ingram, a well-known network talking head.

"We're still waiting for the hookup from the Oval Office to begin," said the toothsome negro with the three hundred dollar "conk" coiffure to straighten his kinky hair. It appeared he was addressing a white female talking head, an equally well-coiffed blonde whose face appeared in the lower right hand of the television screen The White House was behind her, illuminated in the muggy darkness of a summer night. "Apropos of what you were saying just a minute ago, Jenny, the President's announcement is definitely unexpected. We didn't get word ourselves until this morning. CNN has been informed that she and the Vice President, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Homeland Security met with a delegation of senior legislators from both Houses of Congress this afternoon and apparently what they had to say took these Congressional VIPs by complete surprise. I have heard described to me that their faces leaving the White House were in some cases angry and in some cases simply baffled. It's also unexpected in that this is Chelsea Clinton's first separate nationwide address devoted entirely to the subject of domestic terrorism, outside of what might be considered the

standard and obligatory references and expressions of our national determination to with the war on domestic terror during her State of the Union addresses. Ms. Clinton has in fact devoted most of her term to the social agenda which has always been her family's strongest point when the Clintons have been in office, as opposed to the Bushes who are generally more prominent in foreign affairs and security issues, although it has to be said that the current President Clinton has continued the last President Bush's strong line in the War on Terror to the satisfaction of both parties. She's taken a firm stand on both Islamic terrorism in the Middle East and throughout the world, and she's been just as firm on racist terror in the Pacific Northwest. But this President has so far been content to leave security issues to the professionals, and in order to further professionalize the struggle against domestic terrorism, at the beginning of her term she signed off on the creation of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization without hesitation. A notable bipartisan effort which won her a lot of points on both sides of the aisle."

"Yes indeed, Paulus," said Jenny brightly, "That was to be expected in view of the fact that the FATPO bill received bipartisan backing notably from her mother, former President Hillary Clinton, in return for the Republicans' concession regarding the suspension of the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, which would allow Hillary herself one more shot at the gold ring and enable her to succeed her own daughter for an unprecedented third term. That would be one for the books, eh Paulus? But Washington is a goldfish bowl. Surely we must by now have at least some inkling of what the President intends to say?"

Ingram replied, "Well, Jenny, there is some speculation that she finally intends to declare at least three Pacific Northwest states and parts of several others to be in a state of insurrection against the United States, which is a step that Congressional conservatives and liberals alike have been calling on her to perform for many years, and if I may say so, if this is the reason for the President's address tonight, then it's not before time, Jenny. I simply don't know what else that the level of terrorism and racist intimidation which exists in Washington and Oregon and Idaho could possibly be called, if not an armed insurrection. The official reason that this hasn't been done is that to do so would concede that the United States has in effect lost control over the Pacific Northwest and thus hand the terrorists a moral victory, but a lot of people have never really bought that."

Morehouse shook his head and sighed. "They've already suspended virtually every Constitutional guarantee that our forefathers had, habeas corpus, the Bill of Rights, they set up the FISA court for secret wiretaps as early as 1978, for crying out loud—why should they bother to declare a legal status which existed de facto even before 10/22? The Federal government has been doing whatever the hell it wants to do to white people for years."

Ingram was babbling on. "I asked about that very issue earlier tonight when I had NAACP president Jamal Watkins on my show. Kenneth, we seem to have a little time, can we roll that one clip while we wait for the President to make her appearance?"

The screen flashed to another negroid countenance. He was seated in a plush studio swivel chair. "I would verra much hope dat tonight President Clinton shall indeed finally take de necessar-ray steps to address de problem ob racist terror in ah so-ci-eh-tay. De peepole ob dis cuntry hab long awaited some sign dat dose in powuh ah red-day to make a commitment to human decency and crush, extoiminate, and cut off from de oith dese white racist moiderers who hab defiled..."

Ingram broke in. "Wait, I have been informed that President Clinton has entered the Oval Office." The scene suddenly cut to the sad camel-face of Chelsea Clinton, wearing a prim tweed suit and seated behind a large mahogany desk in the Oval Office, American and Israeli flags behind her.

"I doubt that's actually the Oval Office," said Morehouse. "Third Section intelligence tells us she's afraid to stay in the White House any more, since we keep shelling it as part of Operation Pigkill. That's probably some mockup, and she's really broadcasting from Camp David or someplace."

"Why does every American president since Jug-Ears do these things with an Israeli flag in the background?" complained Bells.

"It's their way of letting us know who really has the power," chuckled Barrow. "You know, like opening a fortune cookie and finding a message that says 'Help, I am being held prisoner in a fortune cookie factory.'"

"Seriously?" replied Morehouse. "Back during Jug-Ears' second term, the Pals let off a really big banger in Jerusalem and splattered a couple of hundred hebes all over the landscape, so Bush II started displaying the Israeli flag along with the red, white and blue at White House functions, our brave little partner in the battle against evil global terrorism and all that crap, never mind the fact that none of the whole mess would have happened if it hadn't been for that insane idea of planting a few million Jews in the middle of hundreds of millions of people who loathe them, and then giving the same Jews a blank check to go berserk and slaughter Muslims right, left, and center. The so-called War on Terror didn't begin on September 11th, 2001. It began in 1948. Anyway, the tradition of the Israeli flag at all Presidential dog and pony shows just kind of stuck. Hell, give them an A for honesty."

Chelsea was still staring silently at the camera like a dead fish. Apparently, no one had told her to start speaking yet. "Does she have the little box on her back this time, with the earphone so whoever her handler is off camera can tell her what to say?" asked Dortmund. "I saw that one campaign speech back during the election, where it actually came loose and fell out from under her jacket under the floor. And you know, it didn't even raise any eyebrows. No one ever believed she spoke for herself anyway. They might as well morph her face into Hillary's."

"I swear, every time I look at her I feel great," said Emily with a grin. "Because when I see Chelsea, I know there's one other woman out there uglier than I am."

Something prompted Cody to lean over and whisper in her ear, softly but firmly, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, comrade. You are not ugly to me, or to any man here." He felt her jump, but his eyes were on the TV screen as President Chelsea Clinton began to speak.

"Good evening," she said. "Tonight I wish to speak to the United States of America, and to the world, about something which I understand and accept will be very much misunderstood, and which will cause deep feeling throughout the country. But what I must discuss with you tonight is an idea whose time has come, and it may well prove to be the beginning of a new era in this nation's long war on terrorism. For many years during the last century, terrorism was something that was restricted to foreign countries, mostly in the Middle East as the result of Muslim refusal to accept the sudden existence of a Jewish state in their midst where none had been before, and the Muslim world's subsequent abandonment of all civilized and humane standards of behavior in their effort to drive that Jewish

state out of existence. As both the foremost ally of Israel, and the standard bearer of democracy and enlightenment, it was perhaps inevitable that the United States would be eventually dragged into that terrorist conflict. Then came the cataclysmic events of September 11th, 2001. Ever since then, the United States has followed a policy of bringing democracy and freedom directly to the Muslim world, by persuasion and diplomacy where possible, by compulsory régime change where necessary. It is in the interest of all of humanity that Islam be required to embrace values and systems of government which will enable the state of Israel to survive and prosper, and thereby bring about the ultimate goal of all world history, a Brotherhood of Man. This administration, like previous ones, has continued this benevolent policy of imposing civilized thoughts and behaviors on those within the Islamic world who are unwilling to recognize the need to modernize their faith and bring it into conformity with twenty-first century human values, specifically rendering Islam inclusive of women, religious and racial minorities, and those of different sexual orientations. We will not falter in this sacred trust. Israel is intended by God to be a Light Unto The Nations, and America was created to be the torchbearer of that light.”

“I thought it had something to do with a tax on tea?” growled Bells.

“Holy moley, she’s laying it on thick,” said somebody behind Cody and Emily, who were sitting on the couch. “Somebody really glued her lips to Israel’s butt tonight.”

“But closer to home, tragic events have taken shape,” Chelsea went on. “Our own country throughout its long history has never been free of the curse of racism, of intolerance, of hatred and bigotry, of contempt for minorities and women and gays on the part of the heterosexual and patriarchal white males who controlled America and its resources for so long a part of our national existence. Within the past three generations, to our eternal credit, America has begun to step forward, out of the fever swamp of racial hatred, and into the green and pleasant meadows of brotherhood and tolerance. Beginning with the civil rights movement, led by the immortal Doctor Martin Luther King, and continuing on with the anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s in which my own beloved parents grew to political and personal maturity...”

“Dammit, woman will you just get on with it?” groaned Bobby Bells.

“No, no, all this waffle may be a good thing,” said Morehouse, watching intensely. “She may be wrapping a bitter pill for them to swallow in layers of verbal cotton candy. Or her speechwriter is.”

“It was inevitable that there would be bitter and stubborn resistance to the march of the new world order,” said Chelsea, changing tone. “Sometimes violent and criminal resistance by men with closed minds and closed hearts. For many years hatecrime was dealt with swiftly and efficiently by law enforcement and the courts, and many white males paid the price for their refusal to turn their back on the past and accept the coming of a bright new day of tolerance and diversity where the black man, the brown man, and women and gays of all colors walked proudly at his side as his equals and, more often than not, his betters. Up until a certain day in October, four years and nine months ago, we thought that ordinary criminal procedures were enough to deal with this cancer of racism and hatred in our society. Unfortunately, we were wrong. On that October 22nd, evil men who had spent years creating and perfecting a diabolical criminal conspiracy, elected to use a child custody case involving the Singer family of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho as an excuse to launch what can only be termed an insurrection against the United States.”

“Oh, shit,” said Barrow with a sigh. “Somebody’s gotten to her. She’s backing out of it at the last minute. It’s martial law!”

Emily leaned over to Cody on the couch and whispered softly, “Thank you, comrade.”

Chelsea continued to drone in a monotone. “That insurrection has gone on for almost five years now. It has claimed thousands of lives. This very hallowed and historic home of the nation’s chief executive, from which I address you tonight, has been attacked and damaged, and my own life and the lives of my family have been threatened. Some of my closest political and personal friends and allies have been murdered. The terrorist campaign has destroyed hundreds of millions of dollars worth of both government and private property, and not only in the Northwest. That destruction, combined with the lost revenue and the expense required to enforce the law and maintain security in the Pacific Northwest and now in other parts of the country, is now literally beyond calculation, as I have been informed by the General Accounting Office.”

“Bingo!” yelled Red Morehouse triumphantly. “The accountants have finally hoisted the white flag, and the generals and politicians have to follow!”

“Worst of all, the ongoing racial violence in the Pacific Northwest has distracted this great nation of ours both from America’s civilizing mission in the Muslim world, and from our domestic agenda of creating a true and inclusive paradise on earth, insofar as that is humanly possible, based on the ancient Jewish and yet also universal idea of a Brotherhood of Man. Assessing the developments in the Pacific Northwest over a lengthy period of time, I have come to the conclusion that if there is any chance of an immediate cessation of the violence and loss before the end of my term as President, then I have to investigate and assess it, regardless of my personal feelings in the matter and the deep-seated repugnance I feel in giving a vicarious legitimacy to terrorists, bombers, and murderers. But there are times when a leader’s duty to her country and to human civilization itself demand that she make difficult and controversial choices. I have never feared controversy. I know that my decision in this matter will cause alarm, despondency, and suspicion in many quarters. I will tell you all tonight that these fears are misplaced. When you elected me as your President, you have given me a sacred trust, and I will never betray that trust. In this crucial time in our country’s history I must ask for your faith in my intentions, your support in this vitally necessary development, and your prayers. I do not like doing this one bit. But if I can end the horrific violence which has poisoned our national life for so long, and which threatens to undermine and destroy everything which makes America great, then it is my duty to make the attempt. I can do no more or less.

“Accordingly, I have today signed and issued two executive orders. In my capacity as commander in chief of the armed forces, effective immediately, I hereby direct all American military units and law enforcement agencies in the Pacific Northwest to halt operations and observe a full ceasefire. I have received a reciprocal commitment to a full ceasefire from the...” Chelsea suddenly stopped and pursed her lips, almost like she was trying to repress a cough or sneeze.

“Bet she’s being prompted from that box thingie,” said Dortmund.

“From the Northwest Volunteer Army, who shall cease all attacks against American military, law enforcement, and civilian personnel

from this moment on,” she concluded, almost spitting out the sentence.

“She couldn’t bring herself to say our name,” said Barrow in disgust.

“That was better than a twenty-one gun salute,” said Morehouse gleefully. “That’s it, guys. We have just been recognized!”

Chelsea hurried on, apparently anxious to get it over with. “Secondly, I am ordering that beginning on August the first of this year, a conference shall be convened at Longview, Washington, between representatives of the United States Government and the Northwest Volunteer Army, in order to bring about a negotiated settlement which shall permanently bring this conflict and its murderous violence to an end. My fellow Americans, thank you all, and good night.”

The screen went momentarily blank and then returned to the news studio and the stunned negroid face of Paulus Ingram. His bubble-lipped jaw was down to his chest. “Mutha fukka!” he suddenly screamed. “Dat honky bitch done sold our black asses out! She gone surrender to those racist NVA muthafukkas!” Red Morehouse reached for the remote and hit the mute button.

“Well, it took her a while, but she said it,” said Red Morehouse into the silent room.

“We beat the bastards,” said Bells in wonder, almost to himself. “We beat the bastards!”

“So why don’t I feel jubilant?” asked Cody, in a daze.

“Because we haven’t won yet, Volunteer Brock,” said Red Morehouse. “Tonight is arguably the most crucial point in the entire revolution. We may still lose it all. That’s why I hit the mute on the TV. One of us will have to stay here and monitor the coverage, because I need to know what’s going on. It’s going to be pandemonium and I know we’d all like to spend all night watching all those smart-ass media niggers and Jews and liberals going raving mad on the air, but what you just heard, comrades, is the starting gun on a race that we can still lose, and to quote a line from the Three Musketeers, now we must bustle!”

“Okay, uh, define bustling in this context please, sir?” asked Cody.

“The NVA must prepare to launch two major offensives, one military, and one propaganda. For the first time in five years, we are going to be coming out from underground, and we must begin to present an attractive yet forceful and authoritative face to the public. Plus of course the political offensive that you’ll be involved in down in Longview, of course.”

“That I will be involved in, sir?” asked Cody in astonishment.

“I need to talk to you later about that, Brock,” said Barrow. “We want you to come with the NVA peace conference delegation.” Cody’s jaw was down to his knees, but before he could say anything more, Barrow went on, “That was one reason we brought these uniforms tonight, to see how you look in one. We need to make sure it fits, and make any necessary alterations before you step out in front of those television cameras at Longview.”

Cody stared at Emily, who leaned over and whispered, “If there’s a ceasefire that means they’ll want us to hold off on clipping Mitch Newman.”

“I’m still going to kill him, ceasefire or no ceasefire,” muttered Cody back, sotto voce.

“Volunteer Brock, could you please step into one of these other rooms and change into these threads?” asked Dortmund, handing Cody a stack of clothing and a pair of spit-shined paratrooper boots. “Those won’t be your actual boots unless you like the fit. These are eleven wides. What’s your shoe size?”

“Ten regular, sir,” said Cody.

“Okay, we’ll get you another pair, but you can get into these tonight. Comrade Nightshade, I’ve laid yours out on the suitcase over there.”

Emily gathered up the clothes and said, “I’ll use the bathroom,” and went in to change.

“And now Frank gets to try on his brand new general’s togs,” said Morehouse sweetly, handing Barrow a suitcase.

“Let me guess,” said Barrow. “It’s based on the uniform of a Napoleonic hussar, and I will carry a saber and wear a big bearskin shako. Or perhaps a German pïckelhaube. Why the hell do we need uniforms at all? Why not just a suit and tie?”

“Some will be in suits and ties, yes,” said Morehouse. “But you and some of the NVA delegation need to wear these because you’re soldiers negotiating an end to a war, not Rotarians going to church or a business meeting. This isn’t just costumery like in the old days, Frank. This isn’t a few pathetic Ku Klux Klansmen shuffling down the street in historically inaccurate, bilious green robes, or a few sad sacks in home-made costumes pretending to be 1930s SA men. You will be wearing the military uniform of a country. Our country. It’s a vitally important part of the image that we want to project during this conference, and this being 21st-century America, in this media-driven society image may turn out to be more important than anything else we do. We have finally succeeded in breaking the United States’ credible monopoly of armed force. We kill people and we get away with it, and now it’s time for us to strut that stuff. You represent the gun barrel of power, the real power of life and death, and we want you to look powerful. Clothes do make the man, to some extent. But by the by, we will also provide several conservative business suits and one set of formal wear for each man and woman in the delegation. It will be one of your judgment calls to figure out when it’s appropriate to wear what.”

“You mean I get a tux at Party expense?” demanded Barrow.

“But of course,” laughed Dortmund. “For all the swanky diplomatic cocktail parties you’ll be attending.”

“Can you imagine Corby Morgan in a tux?” muttered Barrow. “Right, comrades, duty calls.”

A few moments later Barrow stepped out of the bedroom, modeling his new ensemble with some embarrassment like a high school kid who was headed for the senior prom and uncomfortable in his first formal outfit. He was wearing a heavy khaki jacket with brass-buttoned pockets, a brown poplin shirt with black tie, button-down shoulder epaulettes, and military creases, a heavy brown leather belt carrying his sidearm in a leather flap holster, a polished brown Sam Browne crossbelt, dark olive green trousers, and polished brown boots with high tops. They were almost but not quite jackboots, with a small leather strap and silver buckle at the top rear. On his head was a green billed cap with a green, white and blue rondel in the center surrounded by a silver wreath, and on each of his shoulders gleamed a single gold general’s star. On the side of his right shoulder was an embroidered green, white, and blue Tricolor flag. On the left collar wing was sewn a black square patch with the numeral 33 on it. The right collar tab had the letters NDF.

“Where’d you get the boots?” asked Bobby Bells, intrigued.

“Sears and Roebuck,” replied Morehouse. “Technically they’re called engineer’s boots. They’re just for officers. Enlisted men and non-coms will wear standard black paratrooper boots.”

“What’s the number thirty-three for, sir?” asked Cody Brock, who had also emerged from a nearby room wearing the enlisted man’s version. In his case he wore the paratrooper boots, OD green trousers, and a heavy khaki shirt, and instead of the billed cap he wore a green wool Alpine ski cap with a chin strap and a sharp, creased peak, also bearing the green, white and blue Northwest rondel. He also had a 33 on his collar. “And what does NDF mean?”

“Thirty-three is technically the unit to which both you and General Barrow are now assigned. What was formerly the Number Three Seattle Brigade is now the third regiment of the third division,” Morehouse explained. “NDF stands for Northwest Defense Force, which is what the Northwest Volunteer Army will be re-named as soon as we think the time is right to make the jump. We are transforming ourselves from an underground movement based on a cell structure into an open militia which will eventually become the full-fledged regular army of a sovereign state. Instead of brigades and companies and assault teams or crews, we now have regiments. Brigades and sometimes companies have been given regimental numbers as part of the new org table, which is about as far as it’s gotten so far. Eventually each newly designated regiment will number three battalions of approximately five hundred men each, several regiments will be brigaded together into corps, a division will number about twenty thousand men, so forth and so on. Don’t worry about all that stuff for now.”

Dortmunder knocked on the bathroom door. “Comrade? You ready?” Out stepped Emily Pastras. “And modeling the female version of the Northwest’s new summer look, we have the fetching Miss Nightshade,” he announced with a flourish. Emily’s uniform consisted of the same khaki shirt with crossbelt and tabs, with silver lieutenant’s bars instead of a general’s stars, but instead of the billed cap there was a green beret with the rondel, a dark green skirt coming to just below the knee, and sensible flat shoes. For the sidearm she had an open clip holster with a .38 snub-nose revolver. “Do I have to wear this tie?” she demanded. “Women look ridiculous wearing men’s ties.”

“Now you know what we’ve felt like when we worked in offices over the past hundred years,” said Morehouse with a smile.

“Can’t I have an open collar, or failing that some kind of scarf or cravat?” she demanded.

“Mmm, I’ll ask around and see what we can come up with by way of a neckerchief, but we want you ladies looking like soldiers, not Girl Guides,” said Morehouse.

“Hey, how did she get to be a lieutenant?” demanded Cody in outrage, pointing at the insignia on Emily’s epaulettes.

“You’re a lieutenant as well, we just didn’t get around to telling you yet, and right now we’re kind of short on uniforms,” Morehouse assured him. “Virtually every Volunteer now in the NVA will have the opportunity to become an officer, and with your nice new shirt and your little silver bars, you’ll get a company of raw recruits you’re going to have to turn into soldiers, which is going to be interesting since a lot of our people have no experience whatsoever in the actual military. Plus the fact that we’ve got some elements in the NVA who are near as dammit to being outright gangsters.”

“Speaking of which, what does the Army Council plan on doing about O. C. Oglevy and those wild men in north Idaho?” asked DiBella. “I’ll tell you flat out, I don’t think they’re going to obey any order to lay down their arms. They’re having too much fun.”

“I don’t know,” admitted Morehouse frankly. “Don’t worry about it for the time being. I agree it’s a problem, but we’re still going to need those wild men, and we’ll just have to see how it plays out.”

“I look like some kind of World War One officer who’s about to blow my whistle and order the lads over the top at dawn,” complained Barrow, who had been studying himself in a full-length mirror in the hall. “I’m surprised they didn’t give me a damned swagger stick!”

“Mmmm, maybe, but I’d say Comrade Brock here looks more like an old SA man from the days of the beer hall fighting in Weimar Germany,” said Dortmunder, looking him over critically. “Much more nifty and historically apropos image, I’d say.”

Morehouse agreed. “We lucked out on the ski caps. We found a surplus warehouse in Tacoma with thousands of ‘em. We had to pretty much stick with what we could get for the uniforms, but there were those who wanted the NDF to look like everything from spacemen to cowboys to Vikings with horned helmets.”

“Red, did the Army Council absolutely nix swastika armbands?” asked Barrow. “One would look awfully good on that left sleeve and appease the spirit of Commander Rockwell in his grave.”

“For the purpose of the negotiating teams and any public appearances, yes,” replied Morehouse. “At least for now. Remember, this is as much a propaganda exercise as it is diplomatic. We don’t want to really send the Jews into orbit. Plus it’s a bit of a touchy subject.

We’re already starting to get a few mutters from some of our more, uh, conservative comrades about how this is supposed to be a white American revolution and not a Nazi beer hall putsch, etc. I know it’s appalling that after five years of fighting side by side with us, some of our comrades still have these archaic and completely meretricious ideas about National Socialism, especially since those same Nazis have probably saved their lives more than once, but unfortunately we have to play the cards we’re dealt. I know it’s frustrating that now National Socialism has proven itself once more to be a living force among men and capable of victory, we still have to cater to this ancient war propaganda and kowtow to this stupid, brainwashed hatred among the masses against the most ancient and honorable symbol of the Aryan race, but we’re going for the big prize here and we can’t afford to let ourselves get distracted from the main thrust. I’ll show you what we were able to get from them as a concession, though.” Morehouse went to a closet and took out a garment on a coat hanger, encased in transparent plastic dry cleaner’s sheeting. He pulled up the plastic and displayed a heavy camouflage shirt bearing the same black collar tabs as Barrow’s new uniform, a different camouflage from that used by the Federals. This camo was a darker green with traces of black and yellow, the fletches and swatches more narrow and largely parallel to the floor.

“This will be the fatigue uniform for the Northwest Defense Force. The camo pattern is called tiger stripe, and you see that in this, at least, the National Socialist heritage of our people has been honored.” He pointed to an embroidered eagle-and-swastika emblem with extended wings which had been sewn into the fabric just over the buttoned-down right pocket, in the manner of the old uniforms of the Third Reich. “These are for combat dress only, and you won’t be wearing them at Longview, but I was able to persuade the Army Council that we needed the swastika on here at least, as a unifying symbol and rallying point for all the diverse elements, if you’ll

forgive the term, who will be comprising our new military. SS units will have the same gear except they'll have SS runes on the right collar tab, instead of NDF."

"SS?" asked Cody. "We have an SS now? Isn't that a bit, uh, premature?"

"Form follows function," replied Morehouse. "We have the function, and now we're adding the form. We have reached the point where we need a few elite units to carry out special operations, and so the Army Council has authorized the creation of a Special Service. Carter Wingfield is ramrodding the first group right now. I might add that his boys wore this uniform that you guys are modeling tonight for the first time when they picked up a batch of newly released NVA prisoners in Millersylvania Park earlier this month. Hopefully this new SS formation will uphold the proud tradition of the heroes of old."

"How do I get into this SS?" asked Cody eagerly.

Morehouse chuckled. "Well, right now, I'm not sure. The only individual officer I know besides Carter who's in it is Lieutenant Bill Vitale. They're hand-picking the heaviest hitters we've got for his team, and with all due respect, Cody, I don't think you're quite in that category yet. But don't worry. I suspect we will have more than enough rough and tumble coming for you to prove your mettle, if that's what you decide you want. As much as I hate to say it, one way or the other our new country is probably going to be almost a military dictatorship for the first few years of our existence. Don't worry, you'll be right at ground zero for history in the making, at Longview."

"Yes, sir, I meant to ask that. Why, exactly, do you want me to come with you to Longview?"

"Joe has explained your personal situation to me, Volunteer Brock," said Barrow. "He tells me you speak Yiddish. Is that true?"

"Uh, regrettably, sir, I do," said Cody with a sigh. "I was not only taught the language in a classroom for three years, but my It Takes A Village family had Yiddische Tages where we spoke nothing else among ourselves or around the house, as well as Hebrew days."

"Hebrew always looks to me like a cockroach fell into a pot of ink and he staggered across a sheet of paper trying to escape. Can you actually read those squiggles?" asked Barrow.

"Yes, sir," Cody told him.

"Well, then, it should be obvious why we need you there," said Red Morehouse. "We have information that some of the American negotiation team will think it's cute to natter among themselves in Jewspeak, and they may be so confident that none of us can understand them that they slip up and say things that will be of interest to the delegation of the Republic. We want you to go to Longview with us as an aide-de-camp or something of the kind. You will stick close to General Barrow, carry his briefcase, light his cigar, keep your mouth shut, and your ears open."

"Got it, sir!" said Cody happily.

"What about this ceasefire, sir?" asked Bobby Bells. "How exactly does that work? We just sit on our asses while they bullshit with each other down in Longview?"

"Hardly," said Morehouse with a thin smile. "What do you think that Special Service unit is being set up for? While General Barrow and his team are down in Longview finalizing our independence, the rest of us will be out and about the Homeland grabbing everything that isn't nailed down. But we have to keep the gunplay to an absolute minimum. We're going to stage a coup, but it has to be bloodless."

"All strangling?" asked Bells.

"I like the way you think, Captain DiBella," chuckled Morehouse.

"Someone seems to have neglected to explain the concept of a ceasefire to the enemy, sir," spoke up Morehouse's bodyguard Dexter from the doorway to the rec room.

"What?" exclaimed Morehouse.

Dex held out a cell phone. "Commandant Graham from Number Two Seattle Brigade on the horn for you and for General Barrow," he said. "Immediately after the President finished her speech, FATPO units all over the city left their barracks and started going berserk. Looks like they knew what was coming, and they were all gassed up and ready to go. They're setting fire to buildings, setting up roadblocks where they stop cars and beat the drivers, occupying malls and public places and shaking everybody down, roaring through residential neighborhoods and firing into people's homes, all kinds of crap like that. They've already killed some people."

Morehouse grabbed the phone. "Yes, Jock?" he said. He listened for several minutes and then he said, quietly but firmly so everyone in the room could hear him. "I will stand for the Army Council tonight until they can get in touch and be apprised of the situation. Get your men out on the streets, Commandant, all of them, and hit FATPO troops wherever you find them. Chase those plague rats back into their holes, and make sure they stay there until they leave for good under the terms of the settlement. As of the end of President Clinton's speech tonight, this is now our country. We will defend it, and we will let everyone see us defending it. America ended tonight. It's time we let the world know that the boss man is back, and we ain't putting up with any more shit from uppity niggers! Get out there and cut those bastards down!"

IV.

"We've won. We're the law now, and we're gonna be signing the paychecks, so from now on you do what we tell you."

– Bobby Bells to the police.

Morehouse folded up the phone to cheers and applause from the group around him, and turned to them. "Bold words," he said. "Let's make them good, comrades."

Barrow spoke up. "That includes Number Three Brigade as well," he said, quickly re-assuming his old command. "Our first requirement is intelligence. We need to know where the Fatties are and what they're doing."

"Jock's got scout cars out and he will be giving me regular reports," said Morehouse. "Number One Brigade will handle everything from Bothell on north. The other two brigades will need to secure the East Side and downtown. The most important thing he mentioned is that this seemingly spontaneous police riot looks organized. I agree. I don't think it's just some drunken Federal hoodlums out on a spree. It has a political purpose. Somebody in D. C. must have tipped the FATPO off as to what was coming down, and apparently they intend to convey their displeasure to Miss Chelsea by hijacking the peace process. If these Federal goons allowed to just run berserk and make it

clear to everybody that they are not bound by and will ignore any ceasefire, then that's the whole Longview conference scuppered right there, before it even begins. They're trying to strangle the Republic in the cradle. We have to slap them down, and that's going to be hard, because they're not only better armed than we are, but there's a hell of a lot more of them. We don't have the manpower to go storming through Seattle like a Panzer division, but we can move and strike in the dark and inflict as much damage on the enemy as possible. We can make it equally clear to a watching world that we consider ourselves to be in a position of authority now, and we will exert that authority."

"The disparity in numbers is not insurmountable, sir," said Cody stoutly. "I'm no military strategist, but I remember reading in Clausewitz that successful attack takes about four times as much in manpower and supplies as defense. Somehow we need to make them attack us."

Morehouse smiled at him. "I don't think this is exactly Waterloo, son, and we sure as hell don't have Marshall Blücher coming up on our flanks to pull our chestnuts out of the fire like Wellington did," he said with a chuckle. "But I see your point, and I believe that the maxim still holds true. Defense does still require less, especially when it's fought on what's called interior lines, which is one of the reasons that Israel was always able to withstand massive attacks from poorly trained, poorly equipped, and poorly led Arab armies. That and a blank check from the United States, of course. Okay, let's see if we can set up some interior lines within the East Side of Seattle, and work out tactical situations where they walk into our traps." Morehouse called for his briefcase from Dex, and he pulled out a map of Seattle. He studied it while he rubbed his chin. "I think we need to deploy by sectors, to catch the Fatties in transit when they move through each sector. The regular NVA companies need to set up ambushes on the main streets and approaches to the bridges, to hit the Fatties when they move through those areas. Let the SS do the actual search and destroy."

"Okay, and where would the SS be, sir?" asked Bells.

"When we went on nationwide alert early this morning, Colonel Wingfield got his men together in two action groups, as we've temporarily designated them," said Morehouse. "One of them is to the south, somewhere down around Lake Tapps. The second is to the east of here, near Issaquah I believe, and if they're not already coming into the city, they will be as soon as I can get hold of Carter. The Issaquah action group can move into the East Side and give us a hand here."

"Okay, I think I get you, Red," said Barrow, looking over Morehouse's shoulder at the map. "Captain DiBella, you need to get all your A Company people in here, Sammy Feet's crew and Charley Wingate. Joe, get on the horn to Sanderson and get C Company to rendezvous here as well. Oh, and those Russian muscle men whose names I can never pronounce. I think they were some kind of weight-lifting team back in the Motherland. We use them for specialty jobs requiring a heavy hand," he explained to Morehouse.

"We just call them Alex and the Droogs," said Dortmund "You know, like in Clockwork Orange?"

"They're definitely ultra-violent," agreed Barrow. "Speaking of things Russian, where has the Brigade Quartermaster stashed those AK-74s that we were issued from that big shipload?"

"Here, sir, and also a big cache at the Black Hole of Calcutta, plus smaller stashes of a few weapons and some ammo with Volunteers at various other places around town," said Dortmund.

"Okay, Joe, get D and E Companies to muster at the Black Hole and have the quartermaster tool them up," Barrow ordered. "Break out all the long-arms and ammo. Also RPGs, grenades, machine guns, LAWS rockets and everything else we've got. Tell everybody that tonight we get to play with our toys. Anything goes." He took the map from Morehouse and studied it. "The Fatties will be coming and going into the East Side in a north-south line from their barracks on Northeast 132nd Street, plus we'll be dealing with that bunch that took over the main police station in Redmond a while back, and also from their barracks in Renton. I presume they'll be using their usual APVs, Strykers and Humvees, but there may be helicopters as well. Damn, I wish we had some Stingers or SAMs! I'd love to bring down some choppers tonight! We need to move into these areas as soon as it gets completely dark, here and here and here." He circled some places on the map. "We set up ambushes on any overpass or area overlooking the freeways where we can pot at any Feds that go by and also as many of the exits and on-ramps as we can. Make sure there's at least a couple of RPGs with all the teams who are assigned to freeway access ramps, because coming or going, their vehicles will have to slow down and we can hit them. Any extra men we have, we lay out ambushes at likely places where FATPOs will pass. We're going to be spread really thin."

"Do we go out in combat wearing this get-up, sir?" asked Cody, indicating his uniform.

"And me wearing a dress?" asked Emily. "I mean, not that this new outfit isn't just très chic and all, but it might be hard to dry-clean if it gets all bloody and full of bullet holes."

"Uh, no," decided Barrow. "Sorry to deny you kids a historic first, but you need to wear something a little more practical. You guys go change."

"I'm lucky my clothes are upstairs," Cody told Emily. "I wouldn't want to go running and crawling through the dirt in cut-off jeans."

"You're a remarkably slim youth, not to say girly-boy," she said. "Any chance you got some long jeans I can borrow? I don't want to skin my knobby knees, beautiful as they may be in the eye of some beholders."

"Sure," said Cody. When they came back down they were both wearing jeans, running shoes, and long-sleeved winter lumberjack shirts Cody had dug out of his limited wardrobe. "It may get chilly out there tonight," he had explained when he handed Emily the shirt and a pullover sweater.

"You two go out and see Eddie in the garage," ordered Bells. "Since it looks like we're gonna have a real blow-out tonight, he's got some more stuff for you." They buckled on their field belts they had already received from Hagen that afternoon. In addition to his canteen, Cody had four 35-round magazines for his AK-74 in canvas pouches, and several twenty-round magazines as well, manufactured especially for the Russian assault rifle by an NVA quartermaster. He also carried the Makarov pistol in a holster and several extra clips for it in his shirt pocket. Nightshade had almost 400 rounds for her M-16 in similar pouches. They went out to the garage where Eddie Hagen, who was acting quartermaster since the previous man had been arrested, had pushed several folding tables together to serve as an armory bench.

"Here," he told them, handing them two wool balaclavas. "The boss says that despite all this truce shit we might as well stick to

procedure. You may get into a sitch out there tonight where you two don't want to get recognized. Put 'em on your heads and you can pull them down if you think you need to. Secondly, everybody gets two of these beauties." He stooped to a case on the floor and handed them two hand grenades apiece, U.S. Army military issue in cylindrical cases of heavy cardboard with a metal clip on the side. "These cardboard carrying canisters clip onto your web belt like this," Hagen said, showing them how to wear them. "If you want to use one, just pull the top off the canister and pull it out with a firm grip on the detonating mechanism. Do not be a dumb-ass and try to tug them out of the canister by the ring on the pin. Once you pull the pin, throw the damned thing immediately. None of this popping the spoon and counting to three and a half shit. Always carry them one to each side, or behind you on your hip. These things should be safe until you pull the pins, but you still don't want to be crawling around in the prone position with them under your body. A final word of advice: you guys be sure to fill those canteens," Hagen told them. "You may think you won't need water in the middle of a city. That's what we thought in Tehran. Take my word for it, fill the canteens."

By this time other Volunteers from A and C Companies were beginning to arrive, including a group of four huge, square-built, muscle-bound men with bullet heads who were muttering among themselves in Russian. Hagen leaned out of the garage and yelled at them, "Hey, tovarich! Come here. I got something for you guys." When the four of them crowded into the garage Hagen plunked down one of the company's three carefully-hoarded belt-fed light machine guns. "You guys are from Mother Russia, right? Did you ever use one of these?" he asked.

"Sure," said one of the Russians. "Is PKM. I carry one in Chechnya. Is good gun."

"Okay, well, I'll give you this one. What's your name?"

"Ivan Ivanovich," said the Russian in a deep, melodious voice.

"I hadda ask. Okay, I don't know if there's supposed to be a spare barrel for this weapon. I don't have a manual, at least not one I can read. We didn't get a spare with it, if there is one, so be careful not to overheat it."

"No extra barrel," said Ivan. "Barrel of PKM is line with titanium alloy, so weapon does not overheat unless soldier play silly buggers and fire thousand-round belt all at once no pause. Few seconds between bursts keep cool enough so gun keep on shoot. You have calibration key?"

"It's taped to the butt," said Hagen, pointing.

"Is good gun but every ten, twelve thousand rounds must re-set firing pin gap. You have belts and assault boxes?"

"Right here," said Hagen, hoisting a couple of light metal boxes up into the table. "250-round boxes plus here's a stack of 100-round belts. We asked some of our sources to get us these PKMs specifically because M-60s were getting hard to come by, and these weapons chamber 7.62 NATO rounds, which is ammunition we can get easily."

Ivanovich hoisted the weapon expertly, dropped the strap over his left shoulder, pulled back and locked the bolt, and clipped on the assault box. He drew forth the tip of the belt, hooked it into place, and released the bolt. "Karasho. We go kill gendarmes now."

Cody spoke up curiously. "Uh, comrade, if you don't mind my asking, someone said you guys were part of a weight-lifting team back in Russia?" Ivanovich spoke briefly to the others in Russian and they laughed.

"Not weight-lift," he explained. "Wrestling. We come to America to do professional wrestle for WWU. Two tag teams. My brother Boris, who is this man, along with myself, we are the Crazy Cossacks. Anton Semyonevich and Grigori Pavelovich are the Russian Bear and Rasputin, Mad Monk, because he have beard. We stay to make revolution against Jews. Is only fair, since Jews make revolution against Russia in 1917."

"Hey, who says all immigration is bad?" asked Hagen.

Cody and Emily went back inside to the rec room where the television was still on, monitoring the news broadcasts. "How's everyone taking the President's announcement, sir?" he asked Joe Dortmund.

"The talking heads are screaming to high heaven," replied Dortmund. "Chelsea really pissed in the punch bowl. It didn't do the poor woman much good to wrap the pill in all that waffle. The media elite knows surrender when they see it, or think they see it."

He turned up the volume. A CBS news anchor, a white man with a reputation for sterling political correctness, was almost spluttering in outrage. He was speaking to a panel of equally appalled liberals, blacks, and Jews. "There simply isn't any way that this astounding development tonight can be regarded as anything other than giving in to terrorism!" he ranted. "Not just giving in to terrorism, but actually...I mean, what agenda is the President going in there with? What in God's name does she think is going to be discussed at any such conference? The NVA will be demanding that we sit back and allow them to carve off a big chunk of the United States of America to form some bizarre Fourth Reich ruled by some cartoonish super-villain as Führer or whatever the hell...I know the President will deny that there is any chance of that happening and it's just being done to stop the violence, but the mere fact that such a meeting could take place and such a thing even be discussed...well, words just fail me!" They continued to fail him for another five minutes, until Dortmund got bored and changed the channel.

The screen now showed several burning buildings in downtown Seattle. The voiceover was a woman. "The office of the governor of Washington State, and the Director of Public Safety for Seattle, have confirmed that a number of officers of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization seem to have gone on a kind of vandalism and violence spree which is believed to have resulted in several deaths and a number of injuries. This is apparently a spontaneous protest on the part of the officers against the President's startling speech tonight wherein she stated that she was ordering the FATPO and all other United States military and law enforcement bodies to cease offensive operations against domestic terrorism in the Pacific Northwest, as a prelude to what appears to be some kind of peace conference scheduled to begin in Longview, Washington on August 1st, at which the outlawed Northwest Volunteer Army will be a participant."

A dazed Seattle police chief appeared on the screen at some kind of hastily organized press conference. "Yes, there has been extensive damage to property, including some arson, and there has been a lot of reported violence against citizens, and yes, it does appear to be carried out by Federal law enforcement officers. There is simply not much that the Seattle Police Department can do, in view of the fact that under the Patriot Act these people's Federal mandate overrides our purely local jurisdiction. About all we can do is advise people to

stay off the streets and hope that the Federal authorities will re-establish control over what I am sure is a very small minority of FATPO officers who are committing these acts. I can understand why they're upset, in view of the President's speech tonight..."

"Beautiful!" said Dortmund with a grin. "The so-called real cops are sitting on their hands trembling in terror, while a bunch of crazed niggers and Mexicans with American guns go berserk and slaughter and burn at will! If we can stop them tonight, or at least fight them, then we can start making a moral claim to run the country!"

"Is it happening anywhere else, Joe?" asked Red Morehouse, sticking his head in the door.

"No sir, so far it's just Seattle," replied Dortmund.

"Hmm...so it seems none of the other Fattie units are so indisciplined as ours, eh? Yeah, this is looking for and more like it's a political demonstration." One of the television station's camera crews had worked up enough courage to approach one of the prowling FATPO trucks, and a screaming negroid face suddenly appeared on the screen.

"We sendin' out a message to Miss Chelsea Clinton and de Congress and every goddamned muthafukkin' white supremacist piece ob shit in de Northwest!" the FATPO raged. "Dey ain't gone be no goddamned treaty with dese racist sons ob bitches, and they ain't gone be no goddamned meeting in Longview or anywhere else! Every day we put our black and brown butts on the line out here fo' dis gubmint, and we come back every night with dead bodies, and you fink we gone put up wid dis shit? Chelsea fink she gone give dese muthafukkas three states! Bullshit! She gone gib the black folks six or seven states in the South foist, and she gone gib us forty acres and a mule while she at it! I am telling all you muthafukkas now..." Dortmund muted the set.

By now there were more Volunteers in the house than Cody had ever seen in one place, almost seventy people. The house was crowded and there was inevitably some spillage onto the lawn. "Uh, sir, I think the neighbors are starting to notice all this activity around the house," Bells reported to Barrow. "I've seen a number of them in the houses on the right and left and also across the street, peeping out the windows. Suppose they call the cops?"

"Well, we probably would have had to abandon this safe house anyway after tonight," decided Barrow. "Let's go out with panache." Barrow went to a closet and took out a long wooden flagpole from which he unfurled a blue, white and green Northwest Tricolor flag. He walked right out of the front of the house and stuck the flag into the bracket on the porch which had in the past been used by various owners and tenants of the mansion to display the American flag and also the silly seasonal yuppie flags with pumpkins for Halloween, bunnies for Easter, etc. Many of the armed Volunteers followed Barrow out of the house and raised a cheer as the Tricolor hung and then billowed in the light warm breeze, hoisting their Kalashnikovs in the air and firing a few shots in salute to the flag of the new nation.

"Cease fire, you guys!" yelled Bobby Bells. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"Hey, Captain, there's a truce on, remember?" Barrow quipped. "We don't have to worry about offensive operations from the enemy." As if in mocking answer there was a burst of small arms and automatic weapons fire in the distance.

"That's been going on for a while, sir," commented Bells. "Sounds like it's coming from up around 148th Street."

"Well, the neighbors need to get used to the sound of gunfire and the flag," said Barrow. "They will be seeing and hearing a lot more of both. As to calling the police, from what I see on the news, I think the boys in blue will have other things to do tonight than come out here."

A Volunteer came up to them on the lawn. "Sirs, Colonel Morehouse asks if you could step inside, please? Something's come up." Inside, Morehouse told them "We just heard that the Fatties have taken over the Eastgate shopping mall in Bellevue. They apparently have taken a number of people hostage and are abusing them in various ways, making them dance by shooting at their feet like drunken cowboys, maybe working themselves up to murder them. We can't wait for the SS. We need to get some people over there and see what we can do."

"I'll go, sir," said Bells.

"Very good, Captain. Pick a team and see what the hell is going on over there. If you can put the kibosh on the situation without getting wiped out yourself, do it. I will give you the cell number of one of Jock Graham's kids who is at the mall now, hiding and observing the situation. He's got his phone on vibrate so you can call him without the phone ringing and tipping the enemy. Ironic, isn't it? You get to open the above-ground phase of the Northwest Revolution by defending the ultimate Amurrican temple of Mammon, a shopping mall." Bells took his own personal crew with him. This consisted of Cody, Nightshade, Jumping Jack Flash, Thumper, Eddie Hagen, Farmer Brown, and seven other Volunteers from A. Company. He also took the four Russians, along with the PKM machine gun and several thousand rounds of ammunition. He described the situation they would be going into to them in the kitchen. "Sir, I used to work at the Eastgate Mall," spoke up Jumping Jack Flash. "At the Rule Britannia Fish and Chips. Our nosh came frozen in packets, the potatoes where from Idaho and the fish were from some company in Japan, but they still wanted that English accent up front. The trouble is, I had to pretend I was a Cockney. You Yanks have been watching too much BBC. Someone needs to tell you that not everyone in the U.K. was born within the sound of Bow Bells or on Coronation Street. Anyway, there is an employee's entrance at the very back of the mall, in the sub-level parking, which I doubt the Fatties know about and which I'm pretty sure we could use to gain entry, depending on how many sentries the enemy has posted."

"What about the mall security cameras?" asked Bells.

"This door and staircase aren't covered by the cameras for some reason, sir," replied the Englishman. "Don't know why. Perhaps the contractors who built the place cut some corners on equipment. It was an open secret among the employees that when one came in late or wanted to slip out early or go and smoke something, that was the entrance and exit to use. There's a staircase inside and it should get us up onto the mezzanine level of the mall, where we can get a dekko at the situation."

"Okay, you come with me in the Caddy and show me where. Also Cody and Nightshade." Rapidly Bells assigned other vehicles. They took several cars and a pickup truck with four Kalashnikov-toting Volunteers in the back, a Tricolor flag flying defiantly from the truck. The mall was only a few minutes away from the NVA base house in Medina. They drove carefully and slowly through the back streets in the gathering twilight gloom, on the lookout for any Federal presence or anything that might indicate an ambush. Several passing

motorists saw the truck with the Tricolor and the armed men in the back, and turned away in flight with screeching tires. The Volunteers made it to Eastgate mall and into the lowest ground-level parking area without running into any FATPO patrols, although as they came in they could see the Federals' armored trucks and Humvees pulled up in a circle around the mall's main entrance. "That door to the employees' back stairs is just behind a concrete column," said Jack. They pulled around the corner and ran headlong into a Bellevue police cruiser, sitting parked, its blue lights silently flashing. "Bloody hell!" exclaimed Jack. "It's the Old Bill!" Two cops were sitting in the car and they got out quickly, hands on their pistols. Bells braked the vehicle and said, "Get out of the car, slowly. Don't pull down on them, don't do nothing until I say or they do something first." He opened his door and stepped out, his glowing White Owl clenched in his teeth.

"Shit! That's Bobby Bells!" Cody heard one of the cops gasp to another.

"The name is DiBella, actually," called Bells. "Keep 'em in the holster, guys. I just want a word, okay?" The two policemen had already taken in the cars behind the caddy and they saw the Volunteers jumping out of the back of the pickup with their AKs, and the four large men getting out of their van with the machine gun. Bells asked them, "What the hell are you guys doing skulking out here? There's people you're supposed to serve and protect getting hurt inside."

"Yeah, and about fifty crazy niggers and spics with machine guns," said the older of the cops. "We called for backup an hour ago. Nobody came."

"We came," said Bells. "You guys hear the President tonight?"

"We heard," said the older cop.

"Then you know what it means," DiBella told them. "It ain't all settled yet, that's gonna have to wait for the big sitdown in Longview, but tonight the President of the United States raised the white flag. We've won. We're the law now, and we're gonna be signing the paychecks, so from now on you do what we tell you. Right now it means that we also get to go in there and do your jobs for you. As of tonight those Federal goons in there showing their butts aren't law enforcement officers any more. They're the criminals now. Hell, they always were. You want to sit this one out, fine by me. But I want your word that you will do for us what you've been doing for the Fatties for the past hour. Nothing. Come on, guys, it's almost over and you've almost made it. Don't pick tonight of all nights to end up on a slab."

The two cops looked at one another. The older man threw up his hands. "Sure, knock yourselves out," he said. Bells turned away from them, already forgotten, and dialed the cell phone.

"We're down at the door, but it's locked," he told the person on the other end. "You gotta come down and let us in. Can you make it without being seen?"

One of the policemen stepped forward. "This is our beat, so we have a master key," he said. He pulled a ring of keys off his belt and opened the steel door. It gave into a staircase.

"Never mind, we're in," said Bells into his phone. "Meet us at the top of the stairs. What are you wearing? McDonalds? Well, you deserve a break today, so we'll try and not shoot you."

The two cops were talking among themselves. The older man said, "Hey, Bells, mind if we tag along? I mean, it is supposed to be our job, right?"

"Yeah, sure, the more the merrier," DiBella replied. The cops opened their trunk and pulled out flak vests and shotguns, and a grenade launcher with several tear gas rounds. "CS gas," one of them said. "It might come in handy."

"I think it's gonna take more than gas," said DiBella, jerking his cigar towards the door. "It sounds like Soul Train on a bad night in there." Through the open door the Volunteers could hear a cacophony of noise, including several gunshots, a blaring gangsta rap song, and the raving sound of drunken negroid voices. The Volunteers and their police escort climbed the stairs slowly in a line, their gun muzzles pointed upward to cover the staircase. The Russians brought up the rear, Ivan Ivanovich hefting the machine gun and the other three toting AK-74s and an extra assault box of ammo for the PKM apiece. One of the cops looked at Emily in sudden surprise.

"Hey, you're a girl!" he said.

Emily turned to Cody. "See! I told you!"

Just inside the upstairs door a teenaged boy with blond hair in a slightly long and unkempt cut appeared. He was wearing a brown and yellow service shirt and a paper McDonald's hat. "Hi, guys! I'm Ted from B Company, Number Two Brigade. You the famous Bobby Bells?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm the famous fuckin' Bells, Volunteer," said DiBella in an irritated voice. "Jesus, with all that racket we don't even need to whisper! What the hell is going on up there? How many of them are there? And why the hell did they come here in the first place?"

"There's about fifty of them, near as I can count," said Ted. "The reason they came in here was that WKPR-FM radio was doing a live radio broadcast from the main floor, in front of Dorfmann's Menswear, some advertising thing. They took over the show. They're making the disc jockey spin hate-whitey rap songs and funky monkey music, and in between they get on the mike and rant and rave, babbling about how there will be no treaty in Longview, no surrender to wicked racism, dey gone kill all us racist honky muthafukkas, hey NVA here we is why don't you come out and get you pale asses capped, you get the idea. They've got about twenty white people hostage, and they say if anybody at the radio station cuts them off the air they're going to start killing people. They keep wandering around stealing and breaking stuff, and going in and out, so there could be a Fattie anywhere. They grabbed a bunch of people including the radio crew, and they're holding them hostage, beating on them. I think they've raped some women. General negritude."

"Any of 'em up on the mezzanine level?" asked Bells.

"Not at the moment, no," said Ted. "When they first came storming in, they went up there and smashed up some stuff, shot out windows, looted the boutiques and jewelry stores, and generally made a mess. Plus they cleaned out all the fried chicken and the Taco Bell, and they made me give them all the burgers we had up. Now they're all back down on the main floor again. That's where the booze is. The Rite Aid has a beer and wine cooler, and they've gotten into that and helped themselves, so they're all drunk and partying now. There's a bunch of customers trapped in places around the mall, including about a dozen people in the food court where this staircase

comes out, hiding behind the counters, and they'll panic and start running around and get in the line of fire if you're not careful, plus the hostages."

"Okay, now the million-dollar question. What about the security cameras?" demanded Bells.

"The whole place is crawling with them," said the kid. "They pan everywhere. I got here by watching the camera in the food court and waiting until it was panning the other way. This door is a blind spot."

"Yeah, we got a guy that used to work here who told us that," affirmed Bells. "Used to dish up the fish at the Rule Britannia."

"Yuk!" said Ted, "I'd prefer Mickey D's to that grease trap!"

"So would I, old chap," spoke up Jack Flash from behind them.

Ted chuckled. "Well, getting back to the cameras, the minute you step out the door you'll be visible to whoever is in the security control room, unless you stay one step ahead of their sweep like I did, but that was just a few short steps from behind the counter at Mickey D's to over here, and I was able to dodge it. It's impossible for a bunch of guys like this to go unnoticed to whoever is watching the monitors."

"Do we know who's in the control room?" asked Bells in a worried voice.

"Maybe the regular security guys, Glenn and Randy, and maybe the Fatties," said Ted. "I didn't see if any of them went in there or not. I was too busy hiding under the bun rack from those apes. We got one bit of luck, in that the control room is up here on the second floor. It's down a little hallway across the food court from here, just past the rest rooms."

"Okay, let's sneak a peek," said Bells. He opened the door a short crack out onto the mezzanine floor of the shopping mall carefully. In the glittering neon and fluorescent light he could see the wide expanse of the mall's food court with all its junk food restaurants, Chinese and fish and chips, McDonald's and vegetarian, sub sandwiches and fried chicken. The tables and chairs weren't affixed to the floor in this food court, so they had been smashed and upended, and the floor was covered with trays and the remnants of meals, hamburgers and salads and all kinds of goo. Bells and Cody could see about a dozen white customers cowering behind the tables and under the counters. The racket from the main floor of the mall was thunderous. "We gotta check out that control room and make sure no one is going to warn them," decided Bells. "I need a couple of droogs. Pass it down, Anton and Grigori, get up here!" The two huge Russians climbed the stairs to the top landing, slipping past the rest as they waited along the staircase. "You guys peep out here and take a look at that security camera. You see it? See how it's going back and forth?"

"Da," said one of them. "I see it."

"You guys are supposed to be good at hand to hand. We'll see how good you are. See that sign over there that says rest rooms? You're going to have to get there while avoiding the security camera, then down that little hallway there and into the control room, take out any Fatties in there, and do it with no shooting or noise."

"Da da," replied the Russian. "We shall be as quiet as falling snow on winter night in Novosibirsk."

"I assume that means very quiet. Ted, is there a camera on the door of the security room itself?"

Ted thought hard. "No," he said. "There were cameras on the outside of the rest room doors to try make sure nobody conceals merchandise or sells drugs or anything, but some faggots complained about it, because they were using the men's room as part of their lifestyle, as they put it, and so the mall management took them out. This is an older mall, built before 10/22 and maybe even before 9/11, and the purpose of the closed circuit system is to catch shoplifters and vandals, not fight off a commando attack."

"Okay, you need to get these guys down there and get them into the control room. Can you do that?"

"I'll do it, sir," said the kid. The two Russian men gave their Kalashnikovs to Cody and Nightshade to hold, and laid down their ammo boxes with belts for the PKM.

"We follow you, malchick," said one of them. Moments later, when the camera had swung away, the door opened and Ted and the Russians, keeping low, slipped out. They made it behind the counter of the McDonald's before the closed-circuit camera rolled back onto the court, and disappeared from view. They were out of sight for several minutes.

"What the hell are they doing, chowing down on Big Macs?" muttered Bells in growing frustration as he peeped through the crack in the door. Then as the camera swung away the three of them re-appeared. Ted was carrying a tray stacked high with burgers and paper soft drink cups, as well as paper containers of fries. "Good thinking, kid!" said Bells with a nod. "They'll think he's bringing them the gift of junk food and let him in. Pass it back, this may break bad and Fattie may be warned, so everybody get ready to come out this door blasting, find yourself a firing position, and duke it out with these motherfuckers. Once we go in, we go all the way." They made it to the rest room hallway and disappeared down it just as the camera swung back and covered the entrance. "Whew!" sighed Bells. Then there were long minutes of silence. Then four people, not three, emerged, keeping down but disregarding the still panning security camera. The fourth man was a uniformed security guard, a young white man with no hat and a bruise and bloody face, who was carrying a military-issue M-16 rifle. They made it back to the door to the outside staircase. "Well, how'd it go?" demanded Bells.

"Is one neeger only," said one of the Russians. "Grigori give pile-driver."

"Busted that nappy head open like a watermelon," confirmed Ted, slightly green. He pointed to the rifle in the guard's hands. "That's the Fattie's Sixteen."

The security guard said, "My name is Glenn Dane. Ted has explained what's going on. My partner Randy is back at the control room, he'll watch and if he sees any of them coming up here, he'll call me on my radio. I want to come with you and join the NVA. That porch monkey slammed his rifle butt into my face and his buddies maced Randy and kicked him when he was down. Broke a couple of ribs but he can function. Let's do it. Do I have to take an oath or something? I've goddamned had it with being bullied and terrorized by these scum!"

"Haven't we all, son?" asked Bells. "You're in if I say you're in, and I say you're in unless you fuck up. Welcome aboard, don't fuck up, and now you do what you're told. Good work, droogs. Pick up your rifles and get ready to dance. Okay, now we all go out, me first, and I'll place you guys where I want you."

"That damned floor is going to be slick," said Cody.

“Well, you won’t have to worry about slipping in anything, because we’re going to low-crawl into position so they don’t see us,” said Bells. He turned to the rest of them behind him in the stair well. “Pass this down. We can’t let them see us. We all need to get down on the floor and crawl out. We got about eighteen inches of what looks like concrete, probably encasing a steel girder that can stop bullets, at the bottom of those railings that overlook the main floor. That should be enough to prevent ourselves from being seen, and it should also give us some cover when we open up. I want us to get into position so when I give the signal we can sweep the goddamned ground floor.”

“You can command about half of it from here, sir,” said Ted, “But there’s a kind of bridge or crosswalk about fifty yards down, and if you want to cover the entire area you’ll have to put some guys on that. It will take some time to get into place.”

“Then we’d better get started,” said Bells. “Oh, Christ, what’s that smell? Is that what I think it is?”

Ted nodded. “After they got through trashing the food court they used the floor as a toilet. I think they wanted to give us pale people a lesson in the joys of diversity and multi-culturalism.”

Bells raised his voice. It didn’t matter; he could barely be heard in the stairwell over the din from the raving thugs inside the mall.

“Guys, I’m sorry, but we gotta crawl through these animals’ shit and piss. Literally.”

“It isn’t the first time, sir,” replied Cody. “We’ve been crawling through their excrement for years.”

“Yeah, but tonight will be the last time!” said Bells in a ringing voice. “Okay, we take it slow and stay down. I’ll go first and you all follow, one at a time, on your bellies, low. I’ll position you where I want you. You cops, get up here.” The two policemen mounted the stairs. “Look, I don’t want those people hiding in the food court panicking when they see us and all these guns, and maybe drawing the Fatties’ attention up here, so I want you to come out after me and get over there behind the counters. If they see your uniforms hopefully they’ll understand we’re the good guys tonight. They’re used to obeying you, and more likely to do what you tell ‘em than me. I’m putting you in charge of getting them out safely. Once we’re out of this stairwell, I’m going to need you to low-crawl the civilians over to this door, then they book down the stairs. I’ll call down and tell my two guys I left on our vehicles that they’re coming out. Okay?”

“Got it,” replied one of the cops.

The boy Ted spoke up. “Uh, sir, I was just here earning my minimum wage crust flipping burgers when all this broke out, so I’m not strapped. Can I get a rifle from you?”

“You ever actually pulled a trigger in anger, kid?” asked Bells skeptically.

“Gotta learn sometime,” said the boy. “I was trained on the AK-47, though. My Dad brought one home from Iraq and he let us fire it.”

“These are 74s, but it’s more or less the same. Here, you can have mine.” Bells handed him the rifle and several magazines. “You got one up the spout and the safety’s on. Stick those mags one each in your back pockets, so they don’t rattle, although that probably don’t matter with all that boogie-woogie down there. Okay, let’s do this thing.” Bells dropped down on his substantial gut, stubbed his cigar stump out on the floor, and slithered out the door. He peeked around the corner, saw no hostiles, and crawled to the edge of the abutment looking down onto the main floor. On his way he paused to pick up a metal napkin dispenser and pull out a handful of paper napkins. He peeped over cautiously, studied the situation for a moment, and then beckoned. The two policemen followed, one cradling a shotgun and one the tear-gas launcher. They headed for the long row of junk food counters. Several of the people who were hiding behind upturned tables looked up and saw them, and the cops put fingers to their lips.

One by one the NVA Volunteers snaked out of the door and Bells pointed to where he wanted them. He handed each one a paper napkin and said, “Tear this in two, chew the pieces into a gooey ball, and stick them in your ears as earplugs. When we start shooting in here the noise will be so loud it could break your eardrums.”

Several Volunteers took up prone firing positions at the edge of the railing, lying flat behind the base beam. The Russians with their light machine gun he sent on a long crawl down the causeway to the bridge or crosswalk that spanned the chasm of the main mall. “Don’t go out into the middle,” he told them. “That will put you in our line of fire, and even though we’ll be shooting downward there will be ricochets that might hit you. Hole up along the left wall there and wait for it to begin. Once the shooting starts, they’re going to take cover behind whatever they can find and return fire up here. I want you to run down to that yogurt stand on the far left there.” Bells pointed. “That’s far enough down so that you will be able to turn the machine gun on them more or less from their rear. Those you don’t kill, see if you can force them out of cover for us, and try not to hit any of our own people once we get down there and close in. You getting all this? I mean, your English OK?”

“We understand, Comrade Captain,” Ivanovich assured him. “We were all in Chechnya. We remember how this is done. We can, what is word, wing it?”

“Yeah, that’s the word.” He gave them their paper napkins and the Russians moved out, flat and quick on their stomachs, Ivanovich carrying the PKM and the others with their assault boxes on their backs. Bells kept Cody and Emily beside him. “Take a look,” he invited. “Carefully.” They both risked a peek over the abutment, down into the main mall.

It had been trashed even more thoroughly than the upstairs. The plate glass windows of most of the stores were riddled with bullet holes, although few were actually shattered since most were made of safety glass. The walls and windows had been spray-painted with anti-racist slogans and obscenities, including FUCK THE REPUBLIC, FIGHT THE FACISTS (sic) and NO SURRENDER TO RACISM. There were, as nearly as Cody could tell, about forty members of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization strolling, dancing, or lounging around on the upholstered mall benches, lazily cradling in their laps or on their hips M-16 assault rifles, Uzi submachine guns, and a few 5.56-millimeter Steyr AUG assault weapons as well, deadly plastic things, half rifle and half submachine gun. Several of them were lording it over a small, bedraggled circle of fourteen or fifteen white people of all ages and both sexes on the floor, who sat cross-legged with their hands clasped behind their heads, their faces hung down in shame and fear. Several of the white females had black or Mexican FATPO officers bending over them, talking to them, thrusting their hands down the womens’ blouses or lower. Cody could hear one prisoner sobbing and cursing her tormentor hysterically, a white FATPO officer who was also a woman, and who had already pulled off the captive’s blouse and brassiere.

The floor was covered with trash and debris and a growing layer of empty beer cans and wine bottles. There was a large plywood

bandstand in the middle of the floor with a WKPR banner, and beside it was a white sound van which had been brought into the mall with the WKPR lettering and logo on the side. On the stand was a table with some radio mikes and gear, and in the seat was a hapless white disc jockey surrounded by uniformed FATPO officers. His face was bloody where he had been beaten and he seemed only semi-conscious. The FATPOs up on the bandstand were all black or Hispanic, and it seemed that a drunken argument was breaking out over what kind of music to play on the speakers, which was presumably also being broadcast over the air by the radio station. Suddenly the bawling negroid rap song was cut off and replaced by lilting and very loud salsa music, with Spanish lyrics being sung by what appeared to be a trio of castratos.

“Aw, come on, Ruiz, what de fuck is dat shit?” bawled a black FATPO, hatless, who was guarding the white prisoners.

“Hey, man, dass Los Tres Paragueños Paranoios,” yelled back Ruiz. “Dass some good mellows, essay!”

“Dat’s beaner shit, is what dat is, muthafukka!” yelled the black.

“Who you callin’ a beaner, man?” demanded Ruiz. “We supposed to be defendin’ dis country against dat kind of racist bullshit, essay!”

“If they’re expecting us to come out and fight them, they aren’t taking much in the way of precautions, are they?” asked Cody. “Just one guy watching the cameras, tucked away up here? What the hell’s wrong with them? They’re supposed to be soldiers!”

“Sheer fuckin’ arrogance,” said Bells in disgust. “They honest to God don’t think we’ll come after them in a stand-up fight. These assholes have been ruling the roost in this country so long that they can’t wrap their minds around the concept of white people who aren’t afraid of them.”

While the argument over the evening’s musical program progressed, Emily turned to Cody. “The Three Paranoid Paraguayans?” she asked in wonder. “Who the hell are they?”

“Didn’t anybody tell you?” replied Cody. “They’re the three guys we’re all out to get. That’s why they’re paranoid.”

“Shut up and let me think!” snapped Bells. “How the hell are we gonna do this without getting those white people slaughtered in the crossfire?”

“Well, for one thing, no grenades,” said Cody.

“The police procedure manual says that in a hostage situation you’re supposed to surround the scene with overwhelming force and then try and talk them out,” said one of the cops, who had joined them where they lay, heads down, on the polished concrete floor.

“I won’t dignify that with an answer,” growled Bells. The salsa music was abruptly cut off and was replaced by an old soul classic, James Brown, Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud. A number of Spanish accents raised in shouted protest.

“Sir, I don’t see any way,” said Cody. “We just open up and hope to God those people have sense enough to roll under any kind of cover they can find.”

“Captain,” whispered Emily, “If they knew what was coming, they might at least be not caught by surprise and they could plan what to do. They could run into Dorfmann’s and hide in the coat racks or something.”

“And how do we warn them?” demanded Bells.

“I can go down there on my own and try and get close and tell them,” said Nightshade. “It’s a zoo down there, complete with a cage full of baboons. They won’t pay much attention to one more skinny little white girl. I could get myself captured and get thrown into their circle, then once that happens, give me a couple of minutes. When I’ve done the best I think I can to warn them, I’ll take this rolled-up Balaclava off my head as a signal, you guys start blasting, and I’ll herd as many of them as I can into making a break for Dorfmann’s.”

“And that will put you at ground zero when all hell breaks loose!” hissed Cody.

“I’ll be okay if you turkeys up here just won’t shoot at me, and keep those Fatties’ heads down so they don’t shoot me,” she said.

Bells sighed. “Do it,” he said.

“Jesus, Bells!” protested Cody.

“Do it,” Bells repeated, ignoring him. Nightshade took off her field belt and pulled all her M-16 magazines out of her pocket, and without a word slithered off around the corner to make for the nearest staircase. “She didn’t even give you a goodbye kiss,” commented Bells.

“That’s not funny, sir,” said Cody.

“No, it’s not,” he agreed. “Make yourself useful, troop. Go up and down the line here, tell the rest of them what’s happening, and tell them to wait for me to get up and fire first. They’re going to have to get up, site in, select a target, and fire fast before the Fatties can break out of their drunken stupor down there and start taking cover and firing back. And tell them do not shoot the chick in the blue plaid shirt.”

By the time Cody crawled back to his position beside Bells and peeped slowly and carefully through a drain pipe he’d found that gave him a restricted view of the floor, the salsa music was back on and the dispute between the black and Mexican FATPOs on the bandstand was becoming heated and raucous, with some serious shoving and getting into faces. He was amazed to see that Nightshade was now part of the circle of prisoners, squatting with her back to them, fingers interlocked on the back of her head. “How did she do it?” he asked in wonder.

“Rastus went up on the bandstand and started shoving that Mexican around who took off his nigger music to play paranoid Paraguayan music instead, and there was a squabble over what DVD to put in, and it distracted them all for a moment,” said Bells. “Including the dyke who was pawing that poor broad’s tits. Nightshade just slipped out of nowhere and joined the circle.” Cody looked again, and he could see Emily leaning over towards the man on her left, no doubt whispering to him.

“And none of them noticed?” he asked incredulously. “My God, these fools are incompetent!”

“Holy Mother, look at the bastards! They’re drunk out of their minds! Half of them aren’t even wearing their body armor! This will be shooting fish in a barrel!” said Bells.

A white FATPO officer with a buzz cut, apparently a senior one, suddenly appeared on the bandstand and settled the dispute among his men with a few sharp words. The salsa music cut off and the man picked up the microphone and began to speak. “This is Colonel Wendell C. Josephson of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization, and I have something to say to you people out there in radio

land. More importantly, I have something to say to the politicians in Washington. For almost all of my life, I have fought as a proud Amurrican soldier in the war on terror, in Iraq and Iran, in Saudi Arabia and Syria and Egypt. For almost five years now, I have battled against terror here in the Pacific Northwest, first as an agent for the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms enforcement division, and then as an officer in FATPO. I have had the privilege of commanding some of the finest young men and women that America has to offer in this battle, many of whom are with me here tonight in the Eastgate Mall here in Bellevue. I have also had the painful duty of bringing many of them back to their stations dead. More times than I can count, I have had to write e-mails to the parents and families of my boys and girls, telling them how a beloved son, daughter, husband or wife or significant other died in action against the wicked and cowardly forces of racism and hatred and bigotry, not in a foreign land, but here in our own country. Like all of us here in the 'PO, we undertook this risk willingly and without thought for our own lives, because Amurrica called and we could do no other than to answer. We served Amurrica faithfully and with honor and courage, and we will continue to do so. But tonight we heard something on television, from the very lips of our Commander in Chief, which has so horrified and appalled us, that I simply could not restrain this brave band of brothers, and sisters..."

The colonel ranted on in red, white, and blue. Through his vantage point via the drainpipe, Cody could see that the lesbian FATPO officer had suddenly noticed Emily. She strode over, muscular and with a haircut so short as to be almost a crew cut. She looked down at the girl, grabbed the woolly pea cap off her head, and shook it out. The knitted eyeholes and mouth seam of the Balaclava appeared. There could be very little excuse for wearing such headgear in July. The FATPO started fumbling with her holstered pistol and turned to shout a warning to the others. Seated as she was, Nightshade didn't try to get up, which would have wasted precious seconds and gotten her killed. Her right wrist twirled, Cody could see a glint as the switchblade leaped out and locked into place, then she drove it right into the dyke's meaty inner thigh. Then quick as a striking snake she slashed to the left kneecap. The woman screamed in bestial rage and fell on the girl in the blue plaid shirt. "NVA!" roared Bobby Bells, leaping to his feet. "NOW!" For a brief fraction of a second the stunned FATPOs looked up and saw a dozen leveled weapons aimed at them over the railings above them, and then the mall exploded. The noise was beyond description, especially as in some way the DVD player on the radio station's sound deck was hit or jostled, and the paranoid Paraguayans started to wail again for about the first thirty seconds until a bullet hit something, and their paranoia was silenced forever. The acoustics inside the mall echoed and re-echoed the gunfire until the whole structure of glass and steel and concrete was actually vibrating sonically and giving off a sound of itself, like a free hanging bell that has been struck hard and lingers. It was like being inside a thunderbolt, as hundreds of rounds went off. Cody fired and fired, his AK on semi-auto, and in the scrambling mass of bellowing and twirling enemies below he seemed to see that he got some hits, dust jumping on body armor, blood splattering, although who could tell who was really firing which bullets? His magazine emptied and his bolt locked back, and he saw one of the railings behind which he was kneeling pop and a small neat hole appear. The Fatties were shooting back.

He and Jumping Jack Flash shoved an overturned table up against the railing to provide at least a little cover, and jammed new magazines into their weapons. "Do you see Nightshade?" he yelled at Jack, who pointed in a general downward direction. Cody rolled to the right, covered down behind the base of the railings, and risked a peek over the top. He saw bodies lying all over the floor, but none of the hostages seemed to be among them. Then motion caught his eye, and he saw Nightshade and the lesbian FATPO rolling together across the concourse floor, the dyke with her pistol out now and Emily's left hand on her wrist trying to deflect the muzzle while she tried to stab with her right through a flak vest. The two women's faces were glued together; they seemed to be kissing in an obscene parody of diversity.

Cody grabbed up her field belt, tossed his arm through it and shouldered it, then picked up his own rifle in his right hand and Emily's M-16 in his left. He got up and ran down the left-hand deck of the mezzanine, past the shops full of glittery junk and Third World trash and unnecessary plastic objects. The bullets were flying and ricochets screaming around him. When he got more or less over where he thought the two battling females might be, he heedlessly looked over the rail, and through some miracle his head stayed on his shoulders. Nightshade was below him, staggering to her feet in a daze. The dyke was lying on her back, completely still, with a blood-smearred face and a pool of blood growing and welling beneath her head. He dropped the field belt down at her feet and she looked up at him. "Get down, you damned fool!" he roared. She held up her hands, he held the M-16 out level, dropped it down, she caught it and dropped to the floor herself, and rolled behind a concrete pillar.

An insane woodpecker the size of a skyscraper suddenly landed on the shopping mall and began to peck; the Russians down the concourse had unlimbered the machine gun. Ricochets were screaming like banshees. Cody ran for the midsection stairs. A wounded FATPO was staggering up the stairs, his M-16 barrel weaving in the air. Cody aimed above the flak vest and shot the black in the throat, a messy business. He dropped his M-16 and rolled down the stairs gagging and gargling and grabbing his spurting shattered neck and jaw. Another FATPO was just charging up the first few stairs at the bottom. This one had somehow managed to get his full body armor on, as well as his helmet. Cody fired twice, hit the Fed dead center in his vest and staggered him back, but the FATPO nearly cut him in half with a burst from his Uzi.

Cody leaped back off the landing onto the upper stairs and leveled his Kalashnikov in case he saw a helmeted head appear. I can't go down and he can't come up, thought Cody. A Mexican standoff, no pun intended. He ripped open a grenade cylinder on his belt, pulled out the grenade with his left hand, and pulled the pin with his teeth in the best Audie Murphy tradition. In direct contradiction to Eddie Hagen's directions Cody slowly counted to three before he dropped it gently over the rail and let it bounce down the stairs. In the enclosed stairwell the blast knocked him off his feet and he slid down to the landing, banging his elbow and his head, but when he looked he saw the FATPO was a smoking mass of cloth and oozing blackened flesh. Cody leaped down the stairs over him. Heedless of the bullets that were whizzing around him like electrons, he ran to join Nightshade behind the pillar. She was firing semi-automatic shots calmly from the M-16, and did not acknowledge his presence. Cody leaned out looking for something to shoot at.

Then suddenly it stopped. It was dim in the mall now, since so many of the lights had been shot out, an odd twilight as opposed to the neon glare of before. It wasn't silence, since Cody's ears were ringing like an oscillator, ear plugs or not, and his right ear hurt. He pulled the primitive earplugs out and the right one was soaked in blood. He peeped out and scanned the hall. He saw carnage. Every wall

was pockmarked and battered, every piece of furniture was ripped and shredded to kindling, the potted plants and ferns both natural and artificial were chopped up into a powder like bay leaves and scattered all over the floor, and lumps of dead meat in cloth and body armor lay everywhere. And there was blood. A sea of blood, already an inch or so deep, mixed with water from the fountain whose pool had been perforated with bullets and was leaking out onto the floor.

“Cody? Nightshade?” shouted Bells from above. “Are you alive? Do you see anything?”

“We’re both here, sir,” he called back. “I don’t see anything moving.”

“We’re coming down!” shouted Bells. “Hold your fire!”

The Volunteers descended in pairs, with the Russians kept in place to cover them with the machine gun from the upper level. “Minchia!” said Bells, shaking his head in awe as he lit a White Owl. “It’s like the fucking St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in Chicago down here! Check every one of these bastards carefully,” he ordered, “If they’re still alive, get rid of them.” But not a single coup de grace was necessary. There had been more Fatties than the NVA thought at first, for they eventually counted an even sixty enemy bodies. Outnumbered by roughly three to one, the rebels had wiped the Federals out. Of the seventeen Volunteers, including Ted from Two Brigade, the security guard Glenn, and the two Bellevue police officers, not a single one was killed or wounded, although Cody’s right ear was bleeding slightly. “I thought I might have had a burst ear drum, but I can still hear okay out of it,” he told Bells, “Must be just a nick. Once the ringing stops I think it will be fine.” He saw Nightshade lean over and pull her switchblade out of the dead FATPO dyke’s eye, and wipe it clean on the corpse’s sleeve. He looked closely and saw that the woman’s nose had been bitten off. “You didn’t eat it, did you?” he asked her.

“Naw,” she said. “I had one of those microwave burritos in the refrigerator before we left the house.”

“You know, Bells took note of the fact that you didn’t kiss me goodbye before you left us up there,” he said, looking pointedly at the dead officer’s mutilated face. “Just so you know, in the future, don’t bother. By the way, where are all the hostages? We don’t seem to have killed any.”

“Probably hiding in Dorfmann’s among the Fruit of the Looms,” she said. “I told them to try and make it in there when the band played Waltzing Matilda.”

“Here they come,” said Cody. Farmer Brown and Thumper were leading the hostages out of Dorfmann’s Menswear. The woman who had been molested and stripped to the waist by the dyke had helped herself to a man’s shirt from the stock. They seemed to be in a daze. “This wonderful little girl told us what to do,” a middle aged woman said, crying as she came over and hugged Emily. “You—you look younger than my own daughter! Are you in middle school?”

“Uh, no ma’am, eleventh grade,” said Emily.

“Eleventh grade!”

“We go to a really rough school,” Cody told her.

One of the men said, shaking his head, “I never thought I would be glad to see any of you guys, but I—God, I don’t know what to think any more! I always considered myself to be a loyal American before tonight, but how can I possibly overlook what these government hoodlums did to me and these other innocent people? I just don’t understand. Things aren’t supposed to be this way, dammit!”

“There comes a time when white people just can’t pretend any more,” said Bells. “For some people it comes later than others, is all. You heard the President’s speech tonight?”

“Yes, we all watched in the Radio Shack.”

“Well, even though it isn’t formally settled yet, we’re the government now,” said Bells.

“But can you make that stick?” asked the man. “You heard what that police colonel was saying on the radio tonight?”

Cody slapped the butt of his Kalashnikov. “Yes, sir,” he promised. “We’ll make it stick.”

“Speaking of that asshole FATPO colonel, where is he?” asked Bells.

“A good question,” said Jumping Jack Flash. Another search across the shattered mall and in the bandstand area produced no sign of any corpse of one Colonel Wendell Josephson. “The gallant colonel seems to have taken the better part of valor,” observed Jack dryly.

“Okay, we got one more thing we gotta do,” said Bells. “We have to go out front and commandeer those FATPO vehicles, and drive ‘em to wherever we’re told by Brigade, hopefully without being fired on by any of our own ambushes. Now, I suspect that colonel has beat feet. But even Fatties probably leave a vehicle guard. They may have taken off as well, but we approach with caution and weapons ready. I’ll take point, with our Russian friends and their street sweeper. Eddie, you take three guys and stay here and police up all these Fattie guns and as much ammo as you can scrounge. We’re gonna bring back a whole goddamned Fed arsenal for the NVA. Farmer Brown brings up the rear with Cody and Nightshade. You guys have been up front enough today. Let somebody else get some glory for a change.”

By this time it was completely dark outside. There were three camouflaged FATPO armored personnel vehicles and two Humvees parked under the line of street lights which ran along the sidewalk, pulled up along the curb, as well as an OD green military staff car which had presumably belonged to Colonel Josephson. All appeared to be empty. “Okay, one man check out each vehicle with another covering him,” said Bells. “Do not assume the Fatties are all gone, and watch for booby traps. We ain’t the only people who know how to set a spring switch or a wire.” It turned out that the APVs were all empty and clean.

“Hey, Captain, each of these APVs has an M-60 and a 40-mil launcher!” called one of the Volunteers from the back of a truck.

“Good, we’re gonna need those,” said Bells, puffing on his cigar.

Moving around the staff car, Cody and Nightshade and Farmer Brown saw what appeared to be the body of Colonel Wendell Josephson stretched out on the ground, face down. “Hey, looks like we bagged that ATF asshole as well, Captain!” said Cody, turning to call over his shoulder to DiBella.

“Where’s the blood?” asked Farmer Brown. “I don’t see a trail.” With a wild animal scream that could have been rage or terror, or both, Josephson rolled over, his Glock service pistol in his hand, firing wildly. Farmer Brown’s rifle flew from his hand and clattered to the asphalt, the receiver smashed by a bullet. He was between them and the Federal, and neither Cody nor Emily could fire. Josephson

leaped to his feet and grabbed the stunned Farmer Brown, pistol barrel at Brown's head, using him as a human shield. "Back off, you fascist bastards!" he shrieked hysterically. "I'll kill him! I'll..." Brown went down on one knee and wrestled with his attacker, grabbing at the pistol, which went off. He managed to throw the FATPO off him, slamming him against the staff car, freeing himself. Bells leaned over the hood of the car from the sidewalk and his arm shot out like a striking cobra, the .45 Colt blasting one, two, thee times, a column of flame roaring from the muzzle, bright golden cartridge casings soaring high and clattering onto the windshield. Josephson seemed almost to turn a back flip and collapsed in a heap onto the asphalt. Bells ran around and kicked the corpse again and again, shouting enraged obscenities.

Farmer Brown leaned against the car. His left sleeve was already a mass of bubbling scarlet, and his left hand a bloody mass. Bells grasped him around the waist, lifted Brown up bodily onto the hood, and laid him back, ripping off his shirt to get rid of the soaked sleeve. Emily and Cody already had their first aid packs out. "Gimme your canteen!" Bells commanded them. He took Cody's, opened it, and poured the water all over Brown's bloody left hand.

"It's a Dick Tracy special, just brushed my shoulder," moaned Brown.

"Your shoulder ain't hit, it's your hand, it's just your whole arm that's goin' numb. You're gonna be okay," said Bells. But he wasn't going to be okay. The gaping wound was more than a brush; it had gone clear through his palm. The hole was pumping blood. Bells took both sterile gauze pads from their kits and pressed down on from both sides, making the wounded man groan. "Cody! Each of you have a small bottle of alcohol in your first aid kits. Take out your canteen cup, pass it around to everybody, and fill it up with alcohol to the brim. Donnie, this is going to hurt like the very fires of hell, but we have to stop that bleeding long enough to get you to a doctor. I'm gonna have to sterilize and plug you up long enough to get you help."

"I know the drill, Bob," gasped Brown. "Get on with it."

"Gimme another gauze pad," called Bells. Someone gave him one. He stuck it between the injured man's teeth. "Bite down on this so you don't bite off your own tongue. Now hold him down." Cody, Emily, and one of the cops grasped Brown's arms and legs. Bells took the alcohol. "Here it comes, Donnie." Slowly he poured it into the bloody mess. Brown jerked and groaned but did not scream.

"I should have been paying better attention. Like I told you once, Cody," he said groggily. "This things we do is like driving on the freeway. A single moment of inattention, and you get hurt."

"Okay, now we got to get you to a doctor," said Bells.

"Where's Mary Beth?" asked Jack, referring to the nurse who served as A Company's medic.

"She's back at the house in Medina and she's set up, but this is going to be a bit beyond her," said Bells. "That's major trauma. Somebody's going to have to X-ray it and check the damage and he'll probably need some kind of cauterizing, and then that whole mess had to be packed. He needs an honest to God doctor who knows what to sew up and how, and he's going to need a blood transfusion. Mary Beth may or may not have whole blood in Farmer's type. We have to get him to a hospital, but that means we have to move in on one in force, take over the joint, and stay there guarding him while he's treated, which is going to take a while. It also means we have to abandon all this Fattie gear."

"That's just asking for trouble, Bells," said one of the cops. "All the hospitals and clinics in Seattle are already running at full clip tonight with all this fighting going on, and there's gonna be FATPO and cops all over them, on the lookout for people with unexplained gunshot wounds. Plus if the Fatties hear you guys have forced your way into some emergency room, they're going to come after you in force, and this time you won't be so lucky. You'll have a pitched battle in a hospital with all kinds of sick and injured people getting in the way, which won't look very good for you people propaganda-wise, and you won't have the element of surprise this time. You won't get off with just one wounded man if you do that. I thought you guys had secret hospitals in Canada?"

"He needs help now, and he's going to get it," said Bells.

Cody Brock spoke up. "Hey, do you guys know if the freeway bridge to Mercer Island is open?" he asked the policeman.

"So far as I know, yeah," said the cop. "Why?"

Cody turned to Bobby Bells. "Sir, you and the unit go ahead and get these vehicles and weapons secured. The NVA need them. Give Farmer to me, and let me take Jack and Nightshade and the Cadillac. We'll get him help. I know where there's a doctor."

V.

"Just because I was born in a sty, that doesn't make me a pig." – Cody Brock

Jumping Jack Flash brought the Cadillac around to the front of the mall. One of the Volunteers had gone into a drugstore in the mall and gotten bandages and more alcohol, and liberated some oxycodone tablets from the pharmacy, so the wound was bound up and Brown's pain was somewhat alleviated. Then they gently loaded Farmer Brown into the back seat. He was conscious and coherent. Bells was speaking to someone on his cell phone, and once Brown was in the car he closed the phone. "You keep in touch and you let me know what's going on," he told Cody. "Use my 2387 number. It will have to be in the clear, but fuck it. I just got off the phone with Brigade. There are running battles going on now all across Seattle between us and renegade Fatties. Lotta people hit on all sides, including bystanders. The cop was right about the hospitals. They're madhouses, and there's been some shooting in emergency rooms when both sides bring their wounded in." Even as they spoke, Cody could hear the rattle of small arms and the occasional crump of a grenade in the distance. "Oh, there's a password now. Ragnarok. That should get you past any of our people you come across who want to know why you're riding around with guns. If they've been told about the password, that is. Now move out!" He leaned into the car. "Donnie, we got a job to do for the cause, or you know I'd take you myself. But these great kids of ours are gonna take care of you."

"Don't worry about me," grated Brown. "Get your ass back out there and rip those ZOG bastards a new one!"

"Let me drive, I know the way," said Cody. "Jack you ride shotgun. Nightshade, you stay in the back with Farmer and let me know if anything happens, if he starts bleeding again. Let's go."

"Where exactly are we going?" asked Emily as they pulled out of the mall.

"Kelly Shipman's house," said Cody. "Her father's a doctor. A pretty good one, apparently. The problem is, they live on Mercer Island,

and there isn't any way to get over there from here except on I-90, which is where we're most likely to run into Fatties. I'm going the most direct route, since time is of the essence here. Get ready to hold Farmer steady in case I have to try and outrun or bust through something. Jack, you get ready to fire in case we have to bop our way out of a situation."

"Got it," said the Englishman, who had folded in the stock of his AK-74. Cody drove down five blocks and got onto Highway 908, the Mercer Slough Park on his left, and then up an entrance ramp onto I-90. Right at the top of the ramp they passed a burning FATPO truck and an overturned Humvee, with several uniformed Federal bodies lying on the asphalt. There was no sign of any of the NVA or SS who might have been responsible for the attack. Traffic was very light and they made it to Mercer Island with no mishaps, and down onto East Mercer Way.

"What if the doctor isn't in?" asked Farmer.

"Then we go find him and bring him back," said Cody with determination. "This is actually better for you than some emergency room, Farmer. Doctor Shipman's got part of his house in the front set up as an office and a kind of a little clinic for his private patients. I saw it when Kelly had her pool party, that time I told you about when I ended up tossing that asshole Crabtree in the pool. It's got an examining room and all kinds of medical equipment, an X-ray machine, drugs and supplies, the whole nine yards. Kelly told me that he sees a lot of celebrities and politicians privately, treating their AIDS or other loathsome diseases, drug ODs, that kind of thing. Kind of a physician to the hoi poloi, so you'll be getting the best." They pulled up to the large wrought-iron gate which led into the Shipmans' exclusive housing community. Cody reached out to the automatic control panel, punched in a code, and then when a mechanical voice asked for verbal confirmation, he stuck his head out the window and said "Kelly Shipman, guest. All the world's a stage." The gates rumbled and began to swing open.

"My, my, we're cozy enough with the homecoming queen to have her entry code to the palace, are we?" said Nightshade waspishly.

"Done this before?"

"No, she gave it to Craig Crabtree, and he couldn't resist bragging about it in gym," explained Cody. "That and their little get-togethers in the Shipmans' pool house," he added with a sigh.

"Did you ever do Miss Shipman the courtesy of telling her about the bounder's unconscionable conduct?" asked Jack curiously.

"The Arabs have a proverb: 'There is danger to him who snatcheth the tiger's cub, but more to him who snatcheth delusion from a woman.'" answered Cody.

"Point taken," said Jack.

"And what's that supposed to mean?" asked Emily archly from the back seat.

"No disrespect, comrade, but women do have a nasty habit of shooting the messenger," said Jack.

"Do you really want to day that to a girl sitting behind you with an M-16?" asked Nightshade.

"We need to keep an eye out as we drive through here," said Cody. "I think they've got some kind of private security guards who patrol the area to keep riffraff like us out."

"I wonder if these rich people who are so loyal to America ever notice how much time and effort they have to spend in protecting themselves from America?" said Brown.

"How you feeling, Farmer?" asked Cody.

"Not so bad with that dope you gave me," replied Brown. "This hole in my hand just feels like a bad sprain right now."

"We've got more if you need it, sir," said Jack.

"Naw, I don't wanna end up getting hooked on painkillers," replied Brown.

"Is there a house in here that goes for under two million?" sniffed Nightshade.

"Uh, you live in a neighborhood that's just as ritzy," pointed out Cody. "And your house is just as plush as Kelly's."

"Yeah, but my dad was a criminal. What's her excuse?"

A minute later they pulled up in the Shipmans' driveway. The house lights were on and all three vehicles were in the open carport, including Kelly's new Explorer. "Okay, I'll go first," said Cody. "You two follow along and bring Farmer."

"If the quack has drugs in there, won't he have some kind of security system, closed-circuit television monitors?" asked Jack. "If only to prevent break-ins by addicts, that sort of lark?"

"There is an alarm system, yes, and a panic room inside the house, but no cameras," said Cody. "Kelly and Kelly's mom didn't like the Big Brother feeling of being constantly spied on by cameras. I asked about that when I was checking the place out in case we ever needed it for something like this."

"Oh, is that what you were checking out?" asked Nightshade skeptically. "Not Kelly in a bathing suit? Now that's dedication."

Cody ignored her. "I've been here a few times, and Kelly's folks know me. They'll open the door for me."

"You can tell them you and Kelly have a date to go and watch the revolution," said Nightshade.

Cody got out of the Cadillac, reached back in and pulled the Makarov out of the holster of his web belt, and stuck it into his belt behind his back. "One of you bring my belt, will you? I don't want whoever answers the door to see me wearing it if they look out first." He took his AK from Jack and went up the front walk to the door. He leaned his rifle against the corner of the door frame, out of sight. Then he rang the doorbell. After a short delay Doctor Ed Shipman opened the door, dressed casually in shorts and a knit shirt and sandals. He looked distracted. "Oh, hello, Cody," he said. "I didn't know you were coming over. If you had a date or something with Kelly, she forgot to mention it. Look, I don't mean to be rude, but this isn't a good time. Not only is there apparently all kinds of rioting and shooting going on all over town, but we've got a bit of a family crisis on our hands, and I..."

"I'm not here to see Kelly, Doctor Shipman," Cody said politely. "I'm here to see you."

"Me?"

"Yes, I'm afraid we need your help. Medical help."

"Who's we?" asked Kelly's father. Suddenly Shipman looked up as the three other Volunteers appeared behind Cody. The bare-chested Brown was able to stumble along, but he was leaning on Jack, and the bandages his hand were starting to drip red. Nightshade stood

beside them with the M-16 on her hip, Cody's web belt over her shoulder, rolled balaclava on her head, looking very revolutionary and determined. Cody reached down and took up his own Kalashnikov. He didn't point it. "Our friend has been shot. He needs your help," he told the flabbergasted Shipman.

"Oh my God," he breathed. "You're one of them?"

"So I've been told."

"But you've been a guest in my house!" babbled Shipman in a daze. "You've been out with my daughter! You..."

"We need to come in, sir," said Cody politely but firmly. "If we're seen standing out here and one of your neighbors makes a phone call, then you might end up having some visitors who are even more unwelcome than we are." As if to give point to his remarks, there was another sudden burst of machinegun fire, spluttering rifles, and several explosions possibly a half a mile away.

"What are you going to do if I refuse, son?" demanded Shipman. "Are you going to shoot me?"

Cody ignored the question. "We're wasting time, Doctor Shipman," he said.

"Oh, Christ!" sighed Shipman, accepting the inevitable. "The whole damned world has gone insane! Bring him in!" They half-carried Brown into the house, down a hallway, and into Doctor Shipman's medical office. Shipman opened a folding partition into a room glass cabinets and a paper-covered examination table. "Lie down there, Mister... what's your name anyway? Or do I really want to know?"

"They call me Farmer Brown."

"What happened?" asked Shipman.

"What the hell do you think happened?" growled Brown. "A political gangster with a Federal badge shot me."

"That's his job!" snapped Shipman. "Shooting political gangsters without badges."

"Yeah, well, this is the last job he'll ever do," said Brown. Shipman turned pale.

"Dear God, we see this on television, and sometimes we forget it's all real," he moaned. He turned to Cody. "What the hell have you been doing tonight? Are you people trying to take over the city or something? Why all this shooting and bombing?"

"Uh, you didn't see the President on TV tonight, sir?" asked Cody.

"No, I was going to watch but something came up, a family matter, and... why, what did she say?"

"Well, I don't quite know how to tell you this, Doctor Shipman, but the Americans have surrendered," said Cody. "We're going to get our Republic, and you're standing in the middle of it."

"What?" shouted Shipman. "What the hell do you mean the Americans have surrendered? You're an American yourself!"

"Just because I was born in a sty, that doesn't make me a pig," replied Cody evenly.

Shipman shuddered. "Okay, look, I'm not even going to try to wrap my mind around what you just said. I'll do what I can for this man and then it would be nice if all of you would leave, and it would be even nicer if you'd leave without murdering anyone in this house." He went to a drawer, drew out some stainless steel scissors, and cut the bandages away. "What did you do to him thus far?" he demanded, studying the wound.

"Sterilized it with alcohol," said Brown.

"He's had two oxycodones," spoke up Emily.

"That's good, because otherwise he'd be screaming in agony and going into shock," said Shipman. "I suppose a hospital is out of the question? Silly me." He examined the wound with a probe light on an odoscope. "Good clean wound, at least. Okay, the alcohol was a good move. It partially cauterized the injury and hopefully stopped any immediate infection. You had a stroke of luck in that it was through and through, and also that it seems to have missed the bone, although I'm going to have to X-ray it and make sure. There are no major arteries in the palm, although there's sure to be nerve damage and I can't promise you that you'll have much use of the hand, not yet. I am going to apply a local anesthetic, do the X-ray, and then depending on what I see there I'll pack it with antibiotic foam and put on a better dressing. I'll give you an antibiotic as well. The packing will hurt like hell but we can't leave that hole open. The oxycodone will do for a while, but they're addictive as the devil. You need to take it down to Darvon or something lighter as soon as you can. Do you know your blood type?"

"A-negative," said Brown.

"You're sure? I'll need to top you up and I don't want you going into shock."

"I'm sure."

"Believe it or not, you're not the first person to come in here with a gunshot wound they want treated with discretion, although usually it's some eminent person who doesn't want the world to know what games he's been playing with sex and drugs and rock and roll." He took a phial out of the drug cabinet and tore open the paper wrapping of a syringe.

"Ed, what's going on?" spoke up his wife Marty fearfully from the doorway. "Who are these people? Cody?"

"Hey, Mrs. Shipman," said Cody. "I'm really sorry about this, but we need your husband's help. We don't want to be here any more than you want us here, and we'll be gone as soon as our friend has been seen to."

"Guns!" she said, shrinking. "Oh, Cody, I always thought you were one of the good and decent ones!"

"He is, ma'am," said Brown from the table. "That's why he's carrying a gun tonight."

"I don't understand. Which side are you on?" asked Marty, confused and upset.

"Oh, they've got us working for the other side tonight, marm," Jack Flash told her cheerily.

Shipman injected the wounded area several times, making Brown wince. "Lie back. We'll give that a minute or to take effect." He pulled a big wad of gauze off a roll and cut it with the scissors, then folded it up in a smaller roll. "All right, one of you needs to put down your weapon, come here and hold this down into the hand, while I set up the X-ray machine. Don't worry, none of us will snatch up your gun and do a Bruce Willis. None of us would no what to do with one anyway."

"I never would allow guns in my house," said Marty.

"I'll do it, Dad," said Kelly Shipman, calmly walking into the room. She was barefooted and wearing gym shorts and a sweat shirt, and her long blonde hair was down her back and wet, as if she had just stepped out of the shower, which she had. She had been in the shower

for almost two hours and finally accepted that she would never again be clean.

“Kelly, I think you need to go back upstairs,” said Ed. “I’ll take care of this.”

“I’ve helped you before, and I don’t think any of our guests has had the hospital CNA course I went through,” said Kelly. She did not look at Cody. “I’m not afraid. I’m not afraid of anything any more.” She walked to the head of the table and took the roll of gauze from her father, and molded it gently and firmly into Farmer Brown’s gunshot wound to absorb the oozing blood and lymphatic fluid. Shipman went to his cabinet and began pulling out X-ray plates. Then she finally looked up, at Jack Flash. “I know Cody and Emily, but you I’ve never seen before,” she said. “You don’t go to Hillside High, do you?”

“No, I got my A levels some time ago, in the U. K.,” said Jack.

“We call him Jumping Jack Flash,” said Cody. “The man you’re working on is Farmer Brown. I know you won’t believe this of any of us, but he’s a good man and worthy of your help.”

“I’m glad. I could do with meeting a good man today,” she said quietly.

“You know, in view of this evening’s developments, it strikes me that we really have no further need for a *nom de guerre*,” said Jack.

“My name is Nigel Moore, and I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Shipman.”

“That’s your real name?” asked Nightshade.

“It’s the name I’m wanted under in Britain, yes,” said Jack with a David Niven-ish smile.

“What did you do in Britain?” asked Marty fearfully. “Did you kill someone?”

“Actually, I was a columnist for a student newspaper at Oxford, and one night after a bit of a fracas with a West Indian policeman I came back to the Quad quite bottled, got onto my laptop, and wrote an article which carried ten years’ penal servitude under the Race Relations Act. I hit send, and staggered into bed to sleep it off. I was awakened the next morning by the Special Branch dragging me out of bed and kicking me with steel-toed shoes. In view of the fact that my copybook was now permanently blotted, I decided to come to this country where the racial resistance has taken on a more robust form.”

“He drinks tea, too!” Emily informed them. “With his pinky extended!”

“You couldn’t murder black people in your own country so you came here to do it?” snapped Doctor Shipman. “Is that it? So you can take over and lord it over us here in Washington?”

Moore replied with cool courtesy, “In point of fact, doctor, my reason for joining the NVA and helping to establish the Republic here is rather similar to the motivations of most foreign Volunteers. We want help to go back to our own countries and fight against the same kind of Zionist régimes as those which broke my ribs with those steel-toed boots, and put the bullet in that man on your table.”

“And what about you?” Kelly asked Emily. “I thought you were kidnapped and brutalized by these gentry a few weeks ago? You must have one hell of a case of Stockholm syndrome.”

“Yeah, that’s it,” said Emily. “My code name is Patty Hearst. Death to the Zionist insect!”

“Well, congratulations are in order, I suppose,” said Kelly with a faint smile. “I had the TV on when I was upstairs drying off.

Everybody’s going batshit over the President’s speech tonight. Looks like we’re going to be living in the Fourth Reich soon, Dad. Better start learning how to click your heels, and I suppose I’d better quit calling you guys spuckies.”

“That’s Mister Spucky from now on!” said Cody.

“What? You were serious?” said Shipman, staring incredulously. “The President and the Congress are actually going to hand us over to—you people?”

“It’s not that simple, and there’s a lot that has to happen still, but the process has begun, yes,” said Brown. “That’s what all the street fighting is about tonight. There are those who can’t handle the idea and they’re refusing to go along.”

“Then you can still be stopped!” said Shipman desperately.

“Check the news from Eastgate Mall,” said Brown. “That was where I got this. It was we who stopped them tonight. Barely armed kids and blue collar rednecks like me, the people you rich guys have spent your whole lives looking through like we didn’t exist, until you needed us to fix your cars and your air conditioners and your toys. Outnumbered three to one, and we beat the best America could put up. We wiped them out. We’ll stop them again tomorrow, and as long as we have to, until every American soldier leaves our land and that goddamned red, white, and blue Masonic dishrag comes down forever in the Northwest.”

“As Victor Hugo said, ‘Mightier than the tread of marching armies is the power of an idea whose time has come.’” put in Jack

“We’ll leave,” muttered Shipman. “We’ll get the hell out. We’ll all go to California with Kelly.”

“I hope not, sir,” said Cody. “The Republic is going to need you. All of you.”

Shipman sighed. “Now’s not the time or the place.” He turned on the overhead light. “Right, let’s get you under that X-ray machine over there.”

It took almost an hour for Shipman to perform the best repair job he could on Farmer Brown’s bullet wound and transfuse him with a pint of whole blood and a pint of saline. “As reluctant as I am to entertain you people in my home for any longer than necessary, he needs to rest for a couple of hours so I can monitor his condition, make sure he doesn’t go into shock, and he can recover some of his strength. After that you can move him, but I really would recommend he get to a legitimate hospital as soon as he can, if that’s possible. God knows what will be possible after tonight.”

Cody had spent the past fifteen minutes talking with Joe Dortmunder on his cell. “It may be more possible than you think, Doctor Shipman,” he said after hanging up.

“What the hell’s happening out there?” demanded Farmer Brown, lying on the table in his still wet cast.

“There’s still a lot of fighting going on, and there have been a lot of casualties, including some of ours,” Cody told him soberly. “But the FATPO seem to be pulling in their horns, and they’re scuttling back to their barracks. Apparently they honestly never expected we’d come out and face them, like that bunch tonight at the mall. Brigade is waiting on orders from the Army Council as to whether we start dropping mortar rounds and rockets on the barracks and stations, or whether that would be too much of a ceasefire violation. Anyway, after we left to come here, the captain got an idea. Instead of taking those Fattie guns and vehicles off somewhere, he went back in and

more or less took over Eastgate Mall himself, and one of our guys who knows electronics was able to fix that WKPR-FM radio hookup so that it could broadcast again. He called the station and said if they didn't transmit what he was saying they'd be getting a visit from the NVA, and they got the message and put Bells on the air. He told the audience who were listening who he was, and where he was, and what happened earlier tonight to those Fatties who'd been ranting and raving on the air, and he said 'We got a lot of guns down here and those Fatties ain't gonna need 'em any more, so anyone who wants to join the NVA, come on down to Eastgate Mall.' And guess what? Already we've signed on a hundred new Volunteers, even if it is almost midnight. We always had to recruit in secret before, but now that people know where to find us, looks like we'll have more than enough Volunteers to create a genuine national army."

"Civil war instead of mere terrorism," moaned Shipman. "Beautiful! I suppose you have some justification for all this, something about not being able to make an omelette without breaking eggs? What's the term you Brits came up with? I used to see it all the time on all the war monuments when I went to England. Dulcy something Latin?"

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," corrected Jack Flash. "How sweet and good it is to die for your country, which of course is a load of bollocks. Death is never sweet or good. And yes, with regard to those two pointless and stupid wars against our racial cousins in Germany, it was the old school lie. But sometimes, doctor, worthwhile things can come of death. I happen to believe that this is worthwhile, because I have seen what came of listening to the lies of the people who have sent Englishmen to die everywhere from the Somme to Anzio to Basra, always for the benefit of some alien race of thieves and liars. This time we are killing and dying for our own blood and a Homeland for all of us, sir. To me, that makes a difference, and I am willing."

"God, I love that accent," said Kelly with a smile.

"You should hear me emote Shakespeare, Miss Shipman. 'How now, you black and midnight hags, what is't you do?'"

"Look, I suppose I might as well make us all some supper," said Marty wanly. "I promise none of us will run away or try to call the police. God knows I don't want this fighting to come to our house."

"I'll stay with Mr. Brown," said Shipman. "You three go on and have something to eat, and Marty, could you bring in some soup for our patient? Kelly..." he said turning to his daughter.

"I'm all right, Dad, as all right as I'll ever be," she told him. "Actually this has been a therapeutic distraction for me. Besides, it can't hurt to get in good with the new régime."

"You have, you know," said Cody. "You too, Doctor Shipman. We won't forget this. I really do hope you'll reconsider leaving the Republic. It's to be a home for all of us, like Jack, er, Nigel said."

After they left the surgery Shipman stared after them. "My God, they're just children! Even that English kid! He ought to be out sculling on the Serpentine or in some pub drinking warm beer and talking drunken undergraduate bullshit, not coming to a foreign country to commit murder, and maybe die when he runs into someone who's a better shot than the one who plugged you. As to the others—high school? How can you lead boys like Cody to their death?" demanded Shipman roughly. "Or that skinny little girl who thinks she's Patty Hearst and it's all some kind of giggly game? How can you live with yourself, knowing that you're destroying the lives of children? White children, since I know you don't care about black or brown ones."

Brown sighed. "I got nothing against black or brown children, any more than I have anything against rabbits or mice. But you can't let rabbits or mice run loose in your fields, or they'll destroy your crops and devour your grain while giving nothing in return, and then nobody eats. And Cody isn't a boy. He became a man the day he stood up and took on a man's work in life by striking a blow at the enemies who destroyed his family, no matter what you think of his choice. There's nothing wrong with becoming a man at sixteen. That's the way it used to be for many thousands of years before we got so damned civilized, and that's the way it needs to be again. But if you think we just use kids like Cody and Emily for cannon fodder, well, you're wrong. I'm not going to argue with you, but you're wrong." He was quiet for a time. "They call me Farmer Brown because I used to have a farm once, seven hundred acres of prime wheat and sorghum and soybean in Latah, just outside Spokane. I had a son, too."

"What happened?" asked Shipman.

"The bank took my farm and Iraq took my boy. And yeah, every day I collect a little on that debt from the pigs in human form who did that to me, and I enjoy every minute of it. That pleasure's the only one I've got left in life. I could get the farm back after we win the Republic, but what would be the point? No one to leave it to. But it's not just revenge. Revenge all on its own is nothing but a black hole you can never fill up, and I'm not so dumb or full of hate that I don't understand that. I'm a Volunteer to make sure it never happens again. Do you think for one minute that after having buried my own son, I would ever lead Cody or anyone else into danger of death by gunfire unless there was no other way to make things right with the world? I tried your way. I even ran for office before 10/22. None of the local television stations or newspapers would take my advertising, my campaign manager was beaten by hired goons, I was arrested on a phony charge of embezzling campaign funds, and I still won, so my opponent simply went scuttling to a Jewish Federal judge and had the result thrown out. We use bullets now, not ballots. Bullets work. Ballots don't, unless you count 'em yourself."

"You can't order the future all nice and neat with a gun!" said Shipman.

"Yeah, I know that too. But I can try. I can do what little I can, and if enough of us just do what little we can, well, maybe we can't make sure everybody gets a winning hand a hundred and two hundred years from now, but at least we can re-shuffle the deck."

Shipman sighed and slumped into a chair. After a while Brown said, "By the way, thanks."

"Don't mention it," said Shipman.

Mrs. Shipman managed to whip up a passable meal of microwave bean casserole, hot dogs, and salad, which the Volunteers wolfed down. Kelly declined to eat anything and went into the den where she turned on the TV and watched the raging news commentary and reports of violence around Seattle. After Cody had finished eating Marty tapped him on the arm. "Cody, may I speak to you privately? It's about Kelly."

They went into the living room and sat down in a corner on a sofa, Cody uncomfortably lugging his Kalashnikov along. "I'm apologize for the shooting iron, Mrs. Shipman, but I might need it quick," he said. To his surprise, Marty buried her face in her hands and started to weep. "Oh, jeez, look, ma'am, I'm damned sorry about this! It's just that we had to have your husband's help for Farmer. I hope you

understand that we wouldn't really have hurt you. You're Kelly's parents, and I really like Kelly a lot..."

"I hope so," she whispered. "Dear lord, I hope so, Cody. I hope you like her enough to do something for Kelly that in this horrible world, it seems that only you can do, or will do."

"Huh?" asked Cody.

"Dear God, forgive me for what I am about to do! Cody, ever since I saw you and your friends with those guns and I knew who you were—well, don't be embarrassed about putting that machine gun or assault rifle or whatever it is on my coffee table. I'd like to kiss it, actually."

"Uh..."

Marty laughed. "No, that's not me being kinky. Cody, normally I wouldn't ask you something embarrassing like this, but do you more than like my daughter? Do you love her?"

"Yes," he told her simply.

Marty looked at him with all the despair in the world in her eyes. "Then avenge her!" she cried in agony.

A few minutes later he went into the den where Kelly was staring at the flickering screen in the dark. She had the sound muted. He sat down on the leather couch beside her and carefully leaned the AK against one corner of it, muzzle pointing away, and then spoke to her.

"Hi," he said.

"I think I always knew," said Kelly softly. "There was always something different about you. You were always so gentle and polite with me. You spoke to me like a man, not just a high school kid with half his mind in my pants and the other half still on his skateboard and his computer games. It was a subtle thing, but I noticed. I could tell that you were a lot deeper than you let on to be, and I admit, it fascinated me. I just never knew how to say anything to you about it. I kept hoping that you would decide to tell me what was going on with you. I know you love me."

"I damned sure never said anything about that," he replied, not bothering to deny it.

"No, dear, but I picked up on the signs," she said with a little smile. "I knew you wanted me, like all the others, but you never came on to me. I think you're the only guy I've ever met over the age of fifteen who never did. Why didn't you try? You might have been surprised by the result. Heck, I might have been surprised by the result."

"I wasn't just looking for an hour with you in the back of that Explorer, Kel," he told her with a shrug. "What I want from you is something I can never have, and most likely never from anybody else. There was no point in my starting something I couldn't finish. Yes, I like you. I won't say I love you because that word simply isn't appropriate to anything to do with the world I live in. If things were different I would have made an effort to win you, somehow, but they weren't. I am who I am and you are who you are." He was silent for a while. "Your mom told me what happened to you today at school. Ironically, it was only this afternoon that Nightshade and me got permission from our captain to kill Newman. We were too late, and I will go to my grave regretting that. But it will be taken care of, for what it's worth. Soon."

"Nightshade?" asked Kelly.

"That's Emily's Volunteer name. Not Patty Hearst. That was a joke."

"Yes, dear, I got that. And what's yours?" she asked.

"Just Cody Brock. I never had Volunteer handle."

"Why not?" she asked curiously. "Emily is Nightshade and Nigel is Jumping Jack Flash, and I really don't think Farmer Brown's first name is Farmer, and I heard you call your captain Bobby Bells. Sounds to me like you guys pass out the neat nicknames along with your secret decoder rings, if you have them."

"I was an It Takes A Village kid," he told her. "They took my name once, my father's name and his father's before him. When I ran away I decided I would never let them take my name again"

"Well, it's sweet of you to want to avenge my honor, as our ancestors would have said, but it isn't worth you getting killed over," she said.

"I disagree. I risk getting killed every day," said Cody. "And never with better reason."

"Are you with Emily now?" asked Kelly. "I mean, what do you two do together when you're not going to church or shooting up shopping malls? And what the hell was the story on that kidnapping deal in June?"

Cody chuckled. "Oh, that was just a glitch in a minor operation that kind of developed a life of its own. Long story. You mean do we pass our nights in wild abandoned passion, in between manning the revolutionary barricades and shooting people? No. Believe me, we have other things to occupy our time. The closest we've ever come to getting physical is when she tried to stab me once."

"Huh?"

"Part of that long story I mentioned. No, we're not together like you mean, but in a way we are. We're comrades and we face the same enemy, the same death if we're caught, and every day our lives depend on one another. In that way, yeah, we're together in a far closer way than anyone can ever be after a little backstage snogging with Craig Crabtree."

"Ooh, touché," she said. "Cody, really, this thing with Newman...it's very odd, but right now I honestly don't care if he lives or dies. I just feel...dead inside. I can't think about the future, I can't think about acting, I don't even think I'll dream any more for a while. Everything seems to be shut off inside me right now."

"That's the worst part of it," said Cody, nodding. "It feels like a vampire attacked you and sucked your soul away."

"Well, that's not a bad description, but with all due respect, dear, how the hell would you know?" Kelly inquired.

"I know. Kelly, I'm going to tell you something I've never told anybody. Something I never thought I would ever discuss with another human being." He took a deep breath. "I told you I was an It Takes A Village kid. I was eight years old. They sent my dad to prison and they took my sister away to wherever the hell they took her, and then they sold me. To Jews, down in San Francisco. Now you know why I don't exactly have any love for the Chosen Ones. My stepfather was a Jew with a capital J who gave me these constant bombastic lectures on Jewish ethics and moral duties and yadda yadda yadda, my stepmother was a very nice Gentile broad with a great body and a

room temperature IQ. Plus, I had two stepsisters. Karen was two years older than me, and Leah was five years older, so when I was eleven they would have been thirteen and sixteen respectively.

“That’s when it started, when I was eleven. Both of them came to my room one night after everyone was in bed, and they told me they wanted to play some special games with me. I wasn’t a naïve kid, I’d had sex education even in the yeshiva school, and so I understood what games they wanted to play. They made it clear that if I didn’t go along they would claim to my stepparents and the police that I had been the one coming to their room with the games in mind. So we played, only it wasn’t normal sex. I think I can count on my fingers the times anything normal figured in these little sessions that sometimes went on until dawn. I won’t get into any more detail. Most of it makes me want to vomit, even now, years later. Okay, I know the male-on-female rape dynamic is different, and I know what happened to you was more violent and terrible, but in my case it went on for years, regularly, until Leah was in college and engaged to be married, yet still she came with Karen to my room. Until I ran away. So I just want you to know, Kelly, that yes, I have some idea of how you feel. As much as a man can have, I suppose.”

“Didn’t you ever even try to tell your stepfather or stepmother the truth?” asked Kelly, fascinated.

“You still don’t know everything,” said Cody softly. “Early on, when it started happening, I decided to tell Larry, and if those two bitches lied about it and accused me then so be it, but something happened. Nights are usually foggy in San José, but one night, soon after the games began, there was a very bright moon outside. I was lying on my back on the bed while the girls—did what they were doing, when I heard the door to my room creak a little. I turned my head to the left and in the moonlight I saw my stepfather’s face protruding around the edge of the door frame, looking into the room, watching us. Thick coke-bottle glasses, nose and frizzy hair and all. It looked like those old World War Two Kilroy Was Here cartoons, but it wasn’t funny. It was ghastly, because you see, his face as he watched us around the door was down on the floor, like some hideous ball that was about to roll into my room. He must have been lying full length on the hall floor outside, and occasionally I got a glimpse of what appeared to be his shoulders, and they were bare. I don’t know if he was actually naked, but he wasn’t wearing a shirt, anyway.”

“You’re really creeping me out, Cody,” whispered Kelly in horror.

“It was suddenly obvious that it was Larry who had set the whole thing up,” Cody said. “He must have. The girls surely knew he was there. Their eyesight was as good as mine.”

“Why?” asked Kelly. “What kind of perv would do that?”

“We never spoke about it. He knew I saw him that night. He was watching us close enough, and he must have known that he’d been seen. But he never said anything, ever. What would go on in a man’s mind to make him do something like that I don’t know, but I quickly decided that as bad as things were, any attempt on my part to force it into the open would make it ten times worse. Now I’m sure it had something to do with my being a Gentile and the son of a man who had gone to prison for hatecrime and was classified as a Nazi.”

“What did you do?” asked Kelly, fascinated.

“I looked away and the games went on, that night and other nights. But I never looked at the door again. No matter what the girls and I were doing, I always made sure I never faced the door to my room while we did it. One more thing. From little things that Karen and Leah let slip over the years, I knew that on certain nights they weren’t in my room, they were in Larry’s room with him and Gina. Doing a foursome with variations. Those two didn’t sleep in their own beds much. So don’t tell me that Newman’s death won’t make you feel better, Kelly. Because I know. I promise you, it will be taken care of.” He stood up. “I’ll go see how Farmer’s doing. We need to be gone from here. I don’t want the Fatties to catch us in your house, or they’ll kill all of you too once they realize your dad has helped a wounded Volunteer.”

Shipman agreed that Farmer Brown could be released. He even lent Brown a shirt against the night chill. “Thank you again, Doctor,” said Cody. “And you, Kelly, and Mrs. Shipman for the supper and for your patience. Again, I apologize for this intrusion. Doctor Shipman, as soon as we have some kind of open offices in the city, please feel free to send the NVA a bill. I promise you, it will be paid. Now, I’d like to ask you one more favor. I’d like to ask if you would say nothing at all to anyone about our being here tonight. There’s no good purpose to be served by speaking of this incident. If you call the FBI or Homeland Security, you’ll get on the wrong side of the Feds for having helped us, even at gunpoint, and although we ourselves would never repay your kindness with harm, there are some in the NVA who would consider it informing, and you don’t want that. Kelly, I am assuming that drama school will continue, although I don’t know who’s going to want to see those stupid one-acts with a revolution going on in the streets outside. But I ask that you keep our little secret when we get back in class, Kelly. You know why. There’s something we need to take care of.”

“And that would be?” asked Doctor Shipman.

“I think you know, sir,” said Cody, looking at him steadily.

Shipman looked away. “Yes, I know. And to my shame, I have to admit that I want it to happen. We won’t say anything about your visit here tonight. I suppose that when it comes right down to my own family, my veneer of civilization is no thicker than yours and all I want is vengeance against the monster who hurt my child. I’m a savage just like you.”

“Oh, no no no, that won’t do at all,” said Jack Flash. “Niggers are savages, Doctor. We are barbarians. A much braver and more noble article.”

As they were driving away in the Cadillac, Emily asked him “What was that all about? I noticed your little intíme with Kelly in the den. What is it we have to take care of at school?”

“Newman,” said Cody. “The son of a bitch raped Kelly this afternoon after class.”

“Bloody hell!” cursed Jack Flash.

“I’m sorry, Cody,” said Nightshade sincerely.

“We’ll get him, son,” said Farmer. “If you don’t mind a hand on your first independent hit, I’d like to be in on this one myself. I have at least one left to lend, and this left isn’t as bad as it looks. Or feels.”

“Could we possibly make it a foursome?” asked Nigel Moore. “That is a lovely lady indeed and I would consider it a privilege to assist in rendering this particular sheeny dead, dead, dead. Oh, I say, there’s a thought! Any chance of a good old English topping?”

“A what?” asked Brown.

“A hanging,” explained Nigel enthusiastically. “The old Tyburn ticket. Make this Red Sea pedestrian dance Danny Deever.”

“A Jew lynching!” laughed Brown. “The old Leo Frank trick!”

“Precisely!” agreed Nigel.

Cody mulled it over. “Mmm, yeah, that catwalk in the auditorium ought to take the weight of a body. I don’t know if Bells will go for something that exotic, but we can at least make a plan and run it by him. But there’s a problem. Nightshade and I are still on special intelligence assignment, unless they decide to call it off now, and going to that stupid drama class and listening to that kike spout off about Stanislavsky and The Method may be essential to maintaining our cover with those people at the Assembly of God.”

“Jesus, how long do you think the school can keep on with this summer school gig anyway, trying to pretend that nothing has changed?” asked Emily.

“Hopefully long enough for you to make your acting début as a duckbilled platypus,” said Cody.

“And I was so looking forward to your opening night,” said Farmer Brown from the back seat. “I was going to play the proud parent and sit up front and applaud,” he added wistfully.

Cody drove slowly, and along the way back to Medina they watched for signs of the street fighting they had heard from all over the area. The bulk of it seemed to be over. Here and there were burning vehicles, some FATPO and some civilian, and shattered glass and debris filled the streets, but they didn’t see any more bodies. The street lights were still on in most places, and the houses were all dark in that they had their porch lights turned off and their window shades pulled down, but through the shades could be seen the lambent glow of television screens. “Unbelievable. History is happening right on their doorsteps, and these people are all inside watching it on CNN,” growled Cody, shaking his head.

“It’s the American way,” said Jack Flash. “The white man has become almost completely passive. Life has become a spectator sport, when it’s not a video game.”

“They’re all watching Fox News if they’re Republicans, and CNN if they’re Democrats,” said Emily. “All the Assembly of God people watch CBN and 700 Club religiously, of course, no pun intended. We need to try and catch up on what Pastor Renfield and Billy Benbow said on the tube tonight, Cody, so we can mention it in church. We need to let them know we’re good Christians, and in a crisis a good Christian always turns to the pastor to be told what to do.”

“A Judaeo-Christian does, honey, yes,” said Brown. “A Christian-Christian turns to the Bible.”

“I didn’t know you were religious, Farmer,” said Jack Flash.

“I’m not,” the wounded man replied. “My wife was.”

As they approached the NVA safe house in Medina through the empty neighborhood, they came to a crude but bulky street barricade which had been built under a street light using what appeared to be a picnic table, lawn furniture from nearby houses, garbage cans and plastic recycling tubs off the street, and part of a chain link fence which had been ripped up from somewhere. Behind the barricade was a large FATPO truck, but even as they pulled up they could see a man busy with several cans of spray paint, covering over the Federal insignia and spraying onto the doors a crude target-like rondel in green, white, and blue. A Northwest Tricolor flag was rammed on its staff down into the junk on the home-made barrier. “Looks like they’re already making use of those Fattie vehicles we impounded at Eastgate,” said Cody. There was a crude sign spray-painted on plywood, barely readable in the dim light: NVA - STOP OR BE SHOT. Cody slowed the Cadillac and a Volunteer in civilian clothes he had never seen before approached the car with his Kalashnikov at the ready. Another couple of Volunteers covered him from the open roof of the truck with the M-60 machine gun which up until that evening had been U. S. government property. Cody rolled down the window. “We’re NVA!” he called out. “A Company, Number Three Seattle Brigade.”

“Yeah? Got the password?” asked the armed man.

“Ragnarok,” said Cody.

“Okay,” said the rebel. “We’re with Slim Jim in E Company. You guys heading back to the brigade HQ?”

“Yes, we have a wounded man.”

“Farmer Brown? Yeah, we heard. How ya doing, Farmer?” the man called into the back seat.

“Still frosty, thanks to my personal posse here,” replied Farmer. “You’re Jason Miller from the phone company, right? Yeah, I remember you. How’s Slim Jim doing?”

“He’s a captain now, like Bells,” said Miller. “I guess now we’re in an open war we’ll all get promotions. I wanna be an Übergruppenführer.”

“Uh, what’s that in American?” asked Farmer.

“No idea, it just sounds cool.”

“We had a local quack I know patch Farmer up, but we still want Mary Beth to look at him,” said Cody. “How’s it been going tonight? Any Fatties around?”

“Not for an hour or so,” said Comrade Miller carelessly. “The Commandant told us to set up these barricades to guard the approaches to the safe house, to make sure if there’s an attack on the headquarters they get some warning, but I don’t think Fattie’s got the stones for it. They can dish it out, but they never could take it. Heard on the news that they’re flying in some Fattie general to try and get them to pull back and establish the truce that bimbo Chelsea was talking about on TV tonight. I heard him broadcasting a while ago, telling the Fatties they’ve made their point with their so-called protest. Protest, my ass. They stuck out their arm and they got it chewed off, is what. You drive careful going into HQ. Some of the guys are still a bit psyched on adrenalin, and that Cadillac looks a little official.”

“Anybody shoots it up, there will be hell to pay,” said Cody. “It belongs to Bobby Bells. We’re all expendable, but so much as scratch the paint on this Caddy and you sleep with the fishes.”

They arrived back at the safe house without further mishap. After the NVA field medic Mary Beth checked out Farmer Brown, she said, “This Doctor Shipman knows his stuff. Not much I can do for him that hasn’t already been done, and I’d say he’ll be okay. I have been

told that we are actually going to more or less move in and take over one of the local hospitals, and use that for all our wounded, as soon as things calm down enough and we can get the FATPOs back in their cages, so he'll be sent there for recovery whenever that happens. I'll change his dressing before we send him over, but he should be back on his feet in a couple of weeks."

"Uh, I gather from the flag out front and the party-down atmosphere inside that this safe house is no longer maintaining any pretence of secrecy," commented Cody.

"Yeah, tonight we make like the queers and come out of the closet," said Mary Beth. Someone actually hung another sign cut from a cardboard box on the front door of the mansion, written in magic marker, that read Northwest Volunteer Army, No. 3 Seattle Brigade HQ. Please Wipe Feet Before Entering. Someone else had gotten up onto the roof, run up a Tricolor, and then turned one of the lawn spotlights shining onto it so the rebel flag was visible in the night. The house was full of people now, running around the rooms, sitting on all the available furniture and on the floor, sleeping in all the beds, and gabbing with one another out on the floodlit lawn in total disregard of the possibility of a sudden hail of bullets from the surrounding darkness. There were weapons stacked in every available corner, and the garage had been turned into a full-scale armory and auto body shop where several FATPO Humvees were being re-sprayed with NVA rondels and insignia. There were people Cody had never seen before sitting in corners banging on laptops, talking on cell phones, and the big living room was occupied by officers who were poring over maps spread all over the tables. "Christ, I never realized there were so many of us!" said Cody to Emily, shaking his head. Everyone who wasn't talking seemed to be eating. There was food, paper plates containing bits and pieces of food, and food containers everywhere, as well as what seemed like hundreds of plastic soda bottles in various stages of consumption. There were also big huge piles of McDonalds' burgers and sandwiches and fries in the kitchen, heaped up next to the microwaves, as well as Chinese and subs and pizza. This would be a truly American revolution, fueled on junk food.

"That kid from Number Two Brigade, Ted, went back to the food court at Eastgate and cleaned it out along with the other burger-flippers and counter hands, to feed the NVA on this momentous night," said Eddie Hagen.

"Is there any order in this chaos?" Cody asked Hagen. "Is anybody in charge?"

"Yeah, it's bit more organized than it looks," Hagen told them. "We got a rota system, four hours out on the street, four hours back here or in another safe house where they can catch up on shuteye, but nobody is sleeping. They're all watching it go down on CNN. I think maybe some of the guys are hoping to fulfill the great American ambition of seeing themselves on TV."

"How are we doing?" asked Emily. "Are we winning?"

Hagen laughed. "The sitch is still kind of fluid, but yeah, we've given the Feds a good bitch-slap. Our crew at Eastgate turned in the best performance yet, but the Fatties seem to have been caught by surprise at the level of resistance. I think we've killed at least twenty of them besides that big bunch we whacked in the mall. There's been another interesting development as well. In several cases that we know of, local citizens who were being terrorized by FATPOs took matters into their own hands, brought out whatever guns they had hidden away, and opened fire on their asses. Plus there have been reports of some of the few remaining non-whites in Seattle getting attacked and chased down the street by white gangs. Everybody heard the President's speech and everybody understood. The word has gotten out that the times they are a-changin'. Bells has got 'em lined up down at the mall wantin' to join the Volunteers, and it's two in the morning! It will be really interesting to see how the white population reacts now that the lid is off and they can stand up and say nigger again."

The two teenagers went into the crowded den and watched TV for a while. It had been hours since the President's speech, and yet the cable news network talking heads were still screaming at the top of their lungs about it. The general tenor of the reaction was sheer, utter incredulity. Commentators both liberal and neo-conservative were literally spluttering and stuttering. Red Morehouse wandered in for one of his periodic visits to check up on what was going out via the media, and he chuckled with delight. "Actually, this idea that the entire North American continent is some kind of gigantic single political and social entity and destined to be ruled from Washington, D.C. is a very old one, even pre-dating the destruction of the Constitution in 1861," he explained. "Back in the nineteenth century it used to be called Manifest Destiny. That's what the War of 1812 was really all about. It had nothing to do with Britain impressing American sailors, it was a straightforward land grab. The United States wanted to conquer Canada. Fortunately for the Canadians, gross incompetence was already an established feature of American government and military strategy."

"Yeah, all these Amurrican yay-hoos can claim that the United States never lost a war," said Emily. "Bullshit. The U.S. lost at least a couple of times that I know about. The Canadians and Brits kicked American ass in 1812 and burned the White House to the ground. The Bolsheviks defeated American troops when they tried to invade Russia in 1919. And I have never understood how any moron can claim that Vietnam was an American victory."

"It's pretty clear the United States is also going to be run out of the Middle East eventually," added Morehouse. "But this idea that the North American continent always has to be in one piece politically speaking is almost a religion with these people. The fact that a President of the United States is willing to sit down with separatists of any kind is astounding to them. They can't wrap their minds around it."

"Every other continent on the face of the earth has more than one nation on it," said Cody. "Even northern Australia was handed to the gooks recently and became South Irian. Why, exactly, should North America be any different?" After a while Cody and Emily got bored with watching all the gibbering negroid and liberals and blow-dried neo-cons on TV, and they went and found Commandant Dortmunder, who was in the kitchen pouring out the last cup of coffee from the coffee maker. Several other officers, new to Cody, were sitting around the table talking on cell phones or among themselves. "Sir, do you have a minute?" he asked. "What do you want me and Nightshade to do now? If it's all right we'd like to be put on one of those duty rosters for street patrols, or else go back over to Eastgate Mall and re-join Captain DiBella's team."

"Hmm," said Dortmunder, thinking while he pulled out a paper filter and made another pot of coffee. "According to the news media all public school functions have been canceled due to the unsettled conditions, as they put it, so you don't have to go in to that silly drama class tomorrow, or I suppose I should say this morning. Kind of like a snow day, I guess."

"That's good," said Nightshade. "Once you've been an urban guerrilla, it's kind of hard to go back to being a duckbilled platypus." "Should we report to Captain DiBella back at the Eastgate mall?" asked Cody again. "I hear he's running a regular recruiting station for the NVA out there now."

"Mmm, normally I'd say yes, but there's still this church investigation thing you two are involved with," said Dortmund. "You have to remember, Cody, that organizationally speaking, Nightshade isn't part of A Company, she's Third Section, and until I hear otherwise we don't want her doing anything that might get her recognized and blow her cover. Technically, you two shouldn't even have gone on that expedition to Eastgate, you know. I didn't realize you were going when Bells put together his crew, although I suppose even if I'd caught it in time I wouldn't have had the heart to stop you. You're still young enough to think war is an adventure. Well, that's spilt milk, but it's now more important than ever that we find out if ZOG is trying to set up some kind of counterrevolutionary movement through these Holy Joes. So I want you and Nightshade to stick here and stay out of sight. Don't worry, we'll find something for you to do, and then if they re-open the schools and start that silly drama class up again, you'll have to try and resume your life as American teenagers, although God knows how long that's going to be possible. I know it's hard for you to go back to being ducks after a night like tonight..."

"Duckbilled platypus," said Emily.

"Whatever. But this is important. If something is in fact moving in the shade at these churches, then now is the time the government will spring it on us."

"Are we staying here in this house, sir?" asked Cody.

Dortmund shook his head. "No, this place is in the middle of a residential area, and it would be hard to defend if we were attacked, plus there would be a lot of civilian casualties. The NVA is coming out of hiding and we are actually going to set up a proper brigade headquarters, in public. We haven't decided where yet. Maybe even in the mall you guys captured tonight. By the way, that's getting a big play on the media. Bells was able to get the radio equipment functioning again and we've already got some guy from the Agitprop department of Third Section down there broadcasting official NVA statements and some kind of music, even. Wagner, Hank Williams, and old Skinhead rock CDs, I think. An odd combination of tunes by which to bring a new world into being. Anyway, we'll be moving our digs to somewhere, so I suppose I should put you guys to packing up all the gear and getting it ready to move. With any luck, this may be the last time we have to do a covert E & E."

"Mmm, I suppose I better at least check in with my mom," said Emily. "She'll be going crazy wondering where I am and what I'm doing."

"Tell her you got kidnapped again," suggested Cody.

"I don't mean to pry, comrade, but I just have to ask. Does your mother honestly have no idea at all what you're involved in?" inquired Dortmund curiously. "I mean, how is that possible?"

"My mom acquired a habit of not asking questions when she lived with my father," replied Emily carefully. "Look, don't get me wrong, she's not a bad person and I love her in my own way, but she's like a lot of Americans. She's just kind of opted out. She doesn't want to know, about anything, because she's come to understand that knowledge is frightening and it makes demands of her, demands she can't handle, so she deliberately avoids it. She knows I spend a lot of time away from home. But then so does she, when she checks into a motel for a week and wallows in wine and, well, other stuff. In a way, what she does is just as potentially dangerous as what I do. I'm likely to get shot or arrested and tortured, and she's likely to crash her Lexus on the freeway while she's smashed, or get strangled with a belt or a pillowcase by some freak she picks up in a bar or a truck stop. I guess you could say we both name our poison. Then she comes home again and wallows in Jesus down at the Assembly of God for a couple of months, before she does it again. At some point we seem to have worked out an unspoken arrangement. We just don't ask."

"How utterly American," said Dortmund, shaking his head.

"Sir, in the American dysfunctional stakes you know I got that beat," said Cody grimly. "Is there any white kid born in my generation who does not have some kind of horrible, sick and twisted family history? There's simply no such thing as normal any more. The Brady Bunch are dead, if they ever were real at all. Did an America like that ever really exist?"

"And the actor who played Mr. Brady was a faggot who died of AIDS," Emily reminded him.

Red Morehouse had come into the kitchen just in time to overhear the latter part of the conversation. "Oh, yes, there was once goodness and health in America," he assured them. "So long ago that no one remembers, but yes, there was once a world where Tom and Huck played pirates on the river and Penrod and Sam played detective. And yes, it is possible to go back. Human beings can do anything they want to, if the will is strong enough. You two kids grew up in hell, but your children won't have to. What you're doing tonight is making sure of that. Make no mistake, guys. This is the good fight we're fighting here. Joe, I need to talk to you about something. We're going to be setting up a kind of district command for the Seattle area which will serve as a pilot project for the rest of the Homeland, and..."

"I'll call Mom and leave a message," said Emily to Cody, dialing on her cell phone. "She probably got into the Beaujolais before I left for school this morning, and most likely she's been drunk all day. She may even have missed the whole thing."

Frank Barrow came into the kitchen. "Right," he said, "Looks like all the renegade FATPOs are now back in their barracks or have been helicoptered out of the city."

"Congratulations on the Republic's first open military victory, General," said Morehouse with a smile.

"Hey, don't congratulate me," said Barrow admiringly. "Bells and his boys gave a bravura performance at Eastgate mall, no question, but Carter Wingfield and the new Special Service were the ones who really shone tonight. They not only drove the Fatties off the streets, but the Redmond police station is now in our hands as well as the FATPO barracks in Renton. We have captured a mammoth shitload of weapons and ammunition at both places, and also freed over a hundred white prisoners, most of whom were arrested and dragged in just tonight. Some of them had already been subjected to various kinds of abuse. All of it legally impeccable under the Patriot Act, of course." Barrow's face assumed a scowl. "The SS also found their interrogation room in Renton, and we've got a nice little selection of instruments of torture we can display for the media. Electric prods, dentists' drills, special pliers for ripping off fingernails and toenails,

slow strangulation collars, and a steel chair with a thing like a vise-grip built recessed into the seat, and a crank on the back of the chair that tightens it. They call it the ball-crusher. ‘Nuff said. I might add that all of these charming artefacts still have their Israeli manufacturer’s marks stamped into them.”

“Hey, when it comes to torture and human degradation, you can’t beat Israeli expertise,” said Morehouse dryly. “That’s another thing we need to do, draw up a list of those media personnel who seem to be the least biased against us and start building a relationship with them by giving them the juiciest stories. This one would be a good start.”

“Uh, sure, Mom,” said Emily over in her corner. “Uh, yeah, he’s here with me. No, Mom, we’re not committing carnal sin! It’s just that Cody was scared I might get hurt on the streets if he let me come home, and so we’re over here at this other guy’s house. What’s his name? Simpson. Bart Simpson. You remember, he’s this kid from school we know. I told you about him.”

“She drunk?” asked Cody sympathetically, suppressing the urge to laugh. “And we go to school with Bart Simpson now?”

“She’s so worried that we might be screwing that it never occurred to her that we might be killing people,” Emily replied in a whisper, her hand over the phone. Then she turned back to it. “Huh? Who wants to...? Uh, uh, okay.” She put her hand over the receiver again, then said quickly and urgently to Morehouse, “Sir! That army Captain Regenthal, from the church, the one we’re supposed to be watching! He’s been looking for Cody! He called my house trying to find him.”

VI.

“Everyone in the new Republic is free to worship as they please. They are not free to commit treason and then hide behind religion to escape the consequences.” – Gen. Frank Barrow

Morehouse held up his hand for silence in the room. “Quiet, everyone! Did Regenthal say why?” he demanded.

“Uh, Mom, did Jesse say why he wanted Cody?” asked Nightshade into the phone. “Uh, okay.” She grabbed up a felt-tipped pen from the table and wrote a number on her hand. “Okay, I’ll get him to call. Right now? Mom, it’s three o’clock in the morning! Oh, okay. Yeah, I’ll have Cody call him. Yeah, I know, there’s no summer school tomorrow, I heard on TV. Cody will bring me home once it’s daylight out and the TV says it’s safe and there’s no more crazy Nazis shooting up the streets. Yes, Mom, I know. Don’t worry, we’ll be praying for peace too, and we won’t be doing any sins of the flesh, I promise. Okay, see you soon. Praise the Lord.” She hung up.

“Did Regenthal give any indication of what’s going on?” repeated Morehouse.

“No, but he left a cell number and he says it’s urgent that Cody call him right away, no matter what time it is,” said Nightshade. She handed him the phone. “Here, Cody, use mine in case he’s got some kind of caller ID. He’ll be expecting you to call from my number.”

“Everybody keep it down in here,” ordered Morehouse. “Go ahead, Volunteer Brock.” Emily held up her hand and Cody dialed the number on it. Morehouse and Nightshade both leaned over close to listen. Regenthal’s voice answered, deep and hearty. “Praise Jesus!” he boomed. “Is this Miss Pastras?”

“So he is using caller ID,” muttered Dortmund.

“Uh, hello, Brother Jesse,” said Cody, going into Beaver Cleaver mode, modulating his voice to seem a bit younger than he was as best he could do so. “It’s me, Cody Brock from Sunday school. Emily’s mother told her you wanted me to call you.”

“Sure did, young man! We’re worried about you and Emily down at the church, Cody,” said Regenthal. “You know there’s been a lot of trouble going on tonight, and she wasn’t sure where her daughter was, or you.”

“Yeah, well, things got kind of hairy last night, sir,” said Cody. “I was going to take Emily roller-skating, but then the President came on TV. We watched her in the snack bar at the roller rink, and that kind of messed up the evening. Then I got a call from the hospital and they told me my dad got shot at work by some of those damned, oh, sorry for cussing, Lord, I mean, by some of those blasted Nazis. A nurse patched my Dad up in the emergency room, but there were all kinds of guys with guns running around, right in the ER and out on the street, and we ended up taking him over to Mr. Simpson’s house, because it was closer. He’s gonna be all right, but I didn’t want to take Emily home until it got daylight and the police were able to chase the Nazis away. I just don’t know what’s happening, captain sir, it sounded like the President is going to give the state of Washington away to the Nazis and we’ll all have to start goose-stepping or something.”

“Well, that’s what I’m calling you about,” said Regenthal. “Cody, sounds to me like you understand that our country is now in the greatest danger it’s ever been in. For some reason which surpasses rational belief, the President of the United States is apparently considering actually going into negotiations with those Natsie bastards, and I’m not going to apologize to the Lord for swearing because that’s just what they are. Now, there are a lot of red-blooded Amurricans who just ain’t gone put up with that kind of betrayal, President or not, and I’m one of ‘em. Give part of this fair land of liberty to those evil Satan-worshipping Natsies, them as have laid their bloody hands on the Apple of God’s Eye? No, sir! As much as I hate to say it, it looks like we decent Christian men are going to have to take matters into our own hands.”

“Uh, what do you mean, take things into our own hands, captain sir?” asked Cody.

“That’s what I’d like to talk to you about, son,” said Regenthal. “But for reasons which will become obvious, I can’t do it on the phone. You never know who’s listening, and since we’ve been betrayed by our own President, good men and true no longer know whom we can trust. Can you come over to the church at nine o’clock this morning? There will be some of us getting together here and I’ll fill all of you in then.”

“Sure, Brother Jesse,” said Cody. Meanwhile, Nightshade was making frantic gestures, pointing to herself and silently mouthing “Me! Me!” Cody shook his head, until Morehouse tapped his shoulder, pointed to Nightshade, and gave a firm and definitive nod. “Uh, Brother Jesse, I think I got an idea what you may be talking about, and if I’m right, then I’m your man for sure. But can Emily come, too? I know that she hates those Nazis ever since they kidnapped her and did, well, what they did to her. Whatever you’ve got in mind, I know she’ll want to be in on it.”

“Are you sure about that?” asked Regenthal. “She’s a girl, after all.”

“So was Judith, and yet she slew Israel’s great enemy the Assyrian king in his tent,” argued Cody. “And the woman Rahab prepared the

way for the hosts of the Children of Israel into the promised land, when she received Joshua's spies into her house. Women can serve Christ and America today as well. Emily is really strong in the Spirit."

"I don't suppose I can argue with Scripture," said Regenthal with a chuckle. "And we made need a feminine touch on some things before we're through. Do you seriously think she'd make a good undercover operative?"

"Well, I don't know if she'd be any good as a spy, captain sir," said Cody judiciously. "Emily's such a very shy and gentle person. But she can always bake cookies or something." Nightshade extended her middle finger and held it up in front of his face.

"Well, I'll talk to her when you get here," said Regenthal.

"We'll be there at nine, sir."

"Praise His Name!" said Regenthal, and hung up.

"Well, whatever they're up to, I guess we'll find out today," said Morehouse.

"I presume you want us to infiltrate up as high as we can get into this Christian militia or whatever they're planning, sir?" asked Nightshade crisply. "This meeting this morning will be just one of the many tips of the iceberg. I imagine you'll find little groups like this getting together surreptitiously in fundamentalist churches all across the Northwest today. Whatever the master plan is, looks like they're putting it into action, and I doubt if that redneck fool Regenthal is the big cheese behind it all. With the peace negotiations about to begin, I'd say it's almost as important for us to find out who's pulling these people's strings from D. C. as it is for us to assess the situation on a military threat basis."

"Yes, you're right," said Morehouse, drumming his fingers on the kitchen counter. "A very perceptive analysis, comrade. I'm glad the NVA has found employment for your talents other than baking cookies." Cody had the good grace to look sheepish.

"So what do we do, sir?" asked Dortmund. "Just send them into the church? I have a bad feeling about that. Pandora Clinton opened the box last night, and the demons have escaped. There's no longer any telling what's going to happen out there from day to day. Why did Regenthal come looking for Cody specifically? That bothers me. This may be some kind of trap. And if these people even suspect the kids are Volunteers, they'll probably kill them right on the spot. What if somebody from this holy roller church recognized them out at Eastgate mall last night? I know this has to be done, but I want these kids covered somehow."

"Commandant, suppose you send Nightshade and me in strapped?" asked Cody. "We can tell Regenthal that we figured out what he wanted to talk to us about, that we knew we were going to be called upon to fight for God's Chosen People and so we came prepared. Give us some civilian style pieces, like an old .357 Magnum police service revolver or a deer rifle for me and maybe a .38 snub or something like that for Nightshade, the kind of thing most people still have lying around their houses. At least that way we can try shooting our way out if it breaks bad."

"That's one possibility, but I'm a little more concerned with the big picture," said Morehouse. "Comrade Nightshade was right. We have to look at this in the context of the upcoming conference at Longview. That's the sun our universe will be revolving around for the next few months until it ends, one way or another. This whole idea of using evangelicals as a kind of fifth column against the Party and the Republic smacks of long-term planning, the kind of thing some neo-con think tank came up with. They love playing out scenarios like this. Someone in the power structure anticipated that at some point things would reach the negotiation stage. What would be the purpose of such a formation from their point of view?"

"Obviously, to cause disruption and harass and hinder the new Republic and its government in every conceivable way, sir," replied Dortmund. "A counterrevolutionary force. Frankly, if these fanatics decide to organize some sort of underground strike force, there is little we could do to stop them and there won't be for some time. We're not even in partial control on the ground yet. Hell, these people established the most powerful tyranny in human history, and even after a century in power they couldn't stop us from organizing against them, once the white man recovered his testicular folliculation. I think Comrade Nightshade is right. We need to find out how high this goes and that means they're going to have to work their way up through the chain of command, from Regenthal to his handler, so forth and so on."

"Dammit, we don't have time for that, Joe!" insisted Barrow. "In a couple of weeks I'm going to have to go down there to Longview, and I'm going to have to find some way to bluff and browbeat and sweet-talk these monsters into giving us back some little portion of what's ours. I have to go in there to that table holding as strong a hand as possible. That means that their hand has to be correspondingly weaker, and I don't want them to have some kind of Christian death-squad card as a hold-out they can suddenly deploy to change the situation on the ground if things start going against them at the talks. That's one option we need to strike off their menu. We need to roll this crap up now, nip it in the bud before it even begins."

"I agree," said Morehouse. "Back a few months ago when we were still underground, or a few months from now once we're established as a government, I would say we go ahead and take our time and do this right, get you two on the inside with these yay-hoos, work your way up and see where the drain flows into the sewer. But this is a crucial cusp time, and we can't afford to make any mistakes, nor can we afford to go in ignorance of a possible budding threat to our independence. It's possible that this evangelical insurgency thing may be the foundation, the linch-pin of the United States government's whole plan for these peace talks. They finally sit down at the table with us, and then all of a sudden there's this big patriotic uprising in red, white, and blue as the great silent majority of true-blue Amurricans of the Northwest step up for Mom and God and apple pie, and brave little Israel, and the Great Jumping JEEEE-ZUS. That kind of horse shit. No, comrades. Oh no, no, no, no, no. Not happening. We're going to stomp on this nonsense. Now. Today. We'll send you two into that church, strapped and wired for sound if we can, and once you can get as much info as possible out of these ignorant bastards, preferably on tape, we're going to move in and smush them. The one sticky point is that this redneck moron Regenthal has to be taken alive. He has the information we want and we'll get it from him. Frank, you're a former cop, you've worked with wired informants before, right?"

"Yup," said Barrow.

"Where is that Doctor Doom kid, Joe?" asked Morehouse. "Can he rig one or both of these comrades up either with a covert recorder or better yet some kind of broadcast bug?"

“He’s out at Eastgate mall looting the Radio Shack,” replied Dortmund. “I’ll call him in.”

“Don’t use the phone. Send somebody reliable out there to find him and explain what we want, so he can get what equipment he needs, then bring him here,” said Morehouse. “That will take a while, I’m sure. I suggest that you two comrades use the intervening time to find a dark corner and catch a couple of hours of sleep.”

“And none of that carnal sin stuff,” Dortmund reminded them with a chortle.

“Get thee behind me, Satan!” said Cody, shaking his finger sternly at Emily, and getting another elevated middle finger from her in return.

The mansion was a large home built back in the late part of the last century, intended for wealthy cyber-yuppies, and it actually had servants’ quarters which had no doubt hosted a long series of illegal alien maids and gardeners and pool boys. Cody and Emily were able to find a spare bedroom with two twin beds in it tucked off to one side on the top floor. They lay down in their clothes on the separate beds, Cody set a travel alarm clock he carried in his gear, and turned out the lights. “Tell me a story,” demanded Emily.

“Once there were three bears who tore up and ate a little girl who wouldn’t let them sleep,” said Cody.

“Tell me the one about why you didn’t want me to go with you into that meeting at church today,” she said.

“Do we really need to be talking about this now?” he asked.

“Not if you don’t want to,” she said with a shrug he could feel if not see in the dark.

Cody sighed. “Look, we both know that you can do anything a man can do in this line of work, and you do it damned well, as good as me or better,” he said. “No argument. And no, my macho isn’t offended by you personally. It’s not about you as such, it’s a deeper thing, and I think it’s the natural way for a man to feel. Just because women can do these violent and military things, some of them anyway that don’t require as much physical strength and endurance as others, that doesn’t mean that they should be doing them. Okay, I accept the world as it is, I know we need female comrades and we’d be stupid and probably lose the war if we didn’t use all the available talent and intelligence and courage that women bring to our racial struggle. Girls like you are a necessary evil, if you’ll pardon the expression, with emphasis on the necessary. Again, no argument from me. And if you feel you’ve got something to prove by being here, take my word for it, you’ve proved it to every man jack of us. I know we’ve got some Neanderthals in the NVA who don’t want women to vote under the Republic, who want to shove you back into the kitchen and keep you barefoot and pregnant, and that’s crap. Women like you have earned the right to do whatever the hell you want in our new country, for you and all your sisters and daughters, pardon the trite language. When they start handing out medals you’ve earned every one of them and I want to pin them on you myself. But God damn it, it just doesn’t...” He ran down.

“It just doesn’t feel right?” she concluded for him.

“No, it doesn’t. I’m sure you’ve seen it on TV when some Army or National Guard unit is leaving for Iraq or Saudi or Gaza, and they show some woman in camouflage with an M-16 over her shoulder kissing her children good-bye and then handing them to her husband, who is going to stay home and take care of the kids while Mommy goes off to war, and those scumsucking liberal asshole news commentators think this is just the greatest and most wonderful scene since sliced bread. I used to see those stories on the tube and I’d wonder, what kind of so-called man could do something like that? How could he live with himself? How could he look himself in the mirror every morning knowing what a cowardly turd he was?

“Emily, for Christ’s sake don’t think I’m dissing you in any way. I’m not, I swear. But I shouldn’t be fighting with you at my side. I should be fighting for you or—well, for some woman, back in a home some place with a family and children that I am trying to protect from these horrible tyrants. That’s the way it’s been down through history. And you, I mean women, you’ve always been a civilizing and moderating influence on men and their urge to fight one another. Kind of a brake that periodically gets called into play to stop us boys from burning down the whole house with our horseplay, so to speak. That’s what your role should be in any kind of sane society, stopping us guys from doing a lot of the stupid things we do. Making us grow up and be responsible. But in America, a couple of generations ago, women decided they wanted in on the menfolks’ rat-race, and the menfolks’ pointless brutal competition, and the menfolks’ politics, and the menfolks’ wars, and when you did that, you stopped being a civilizing influence and became part of the problem. We ended up with power-mad bitches like Margaret Thatcher and Hillary Clinton sending the troops out to slaughter just as easily as men ever did. Look, am I making any sense at all, or am I just really pissing you off? Because if we’re going to go into that den of fools this morning and break bad on them, I don’t need you pissed off at me.”

She laughed, “No, no, not at all. All you’re telling me is that you’ve got healthy racial instincts, which I knew already. Look, Cody, you’re spot on. It doesn’t feel right to me either, because it isn’t right. It’s completely against nature for me to be doing what I’m doing, and I despise these Jewish feminists like Gloria Steinem and Germaine Greer and Shulamith Firestone and Andrea Dworkin and the whole plug-ugly nickel-nosed crew. They started all this nutty man-hating crap, this idea that men are enemies and competitors, so that now two generations later I have to live like this. I should be wearing dresses every day, and really baking cookies for a decent and honorable man who loves me and protects me and supports me, so I can get on with my own job in life of raising as many children as I can bear, beg, borrow, or steal. I need a man to be the head of the family while I am the heart. That’s what every female chromosome in my body demands that I do, but these damned Jews and the lunatic world of toxic waste they’ve made won’t let me do it. In the world that they’ve forced me to live in, I have to spend every waking hour getting one up on every man in sight, or else I’m a failure and a victim in society’s eyes. I’ll show them victim! There are women who haven’t been so badly damaged by feminism that they’ve lost every genuinely feminine instinct. They know that something has gone badly wrong in our lives. Most of us have some little corner in the back of our minds where we understand what we’ve lost, kind of a genetic memory if you like. It hurts like hell, and we want it back. And thank you for not wanting me to go in with you today, male chauvinist that you are. Like all girls I’m a sucker for a romantic gesture. I think it’s really sweet.”

“I’m a really sweet guy when I’m not shooting people,” Cody assured her.

She laughed softly in the darkness. “So I’ve noticed. Look, there’s something else, and I suppose I might as well ask. Never mind my mother and never mind all these carnal sin jokes, are we ever going to get it on? I don’t mean now. We have to go back on the job in a

few hours. But is it ever going to happen? If you can tell me one way or the other, I'd like to know where I stand. For future reference, I'm interested and I'm on the pill."

"Emily, I just don't know," he said with another sigh. "I know that's not what you want to hear, but I just can't tell you now."

"Kelly?" she asked.

"No, not Kelly," he assured her. "Apparently I was pretty damned obvious, eh?"

"As an elephant in church, yeah," she agreed.

"That was just me taking a last gasping shot at having some kind of adolescence, which is another thing those It Takes A Village snakes took from me. I think that's why I talked Bells into letting me go back to high school for a year. I wanted one last taste of what might have been. Kelly and me were never possible. We talked a little about it at her house tonight, and we both understand that." That hadn't been exactly the gist of the conversation earlier that evening, in the Shipman den by the light of the flickering tube, but as young as he was, Cody understood that there were times, especially where women were concerned, where honesty is not always the best policy. Besides, it was true. There had never been any realistic chance for him and Kelly, so he wasn't actually lying to Emily. "But suppose I did get involved with you?" he went on, "And then tomorrow or the next day, or next month, or next year, we get in another firefight with the Feds and you end up dying in my arms, or me in yours? Although I doubt it would be that dramatic, just horrible. You see what I mean, Em? I shouldn't even be having this discussion with a fellow soldier. None of this should even be a consideration. It simply adds to the confusion of an already stressful and confused situation. You shouldn't be here. But having said that, I'm glad you are. And I know now that the one thing that I remember my father telling me about women is true."

"And what's that?" asked Nightshade.

"They always want to have deep and heavy analytical talks about the relationship at four o'clock in the morning, when you have to work next day and you're trying to sleep."

* * *

"This was the best I could do on short notice," said Doctor Doom a few hours later, as he handed Nightshade her bugged Bible. He was a thin, blond young man with an intense and ascetic look, but not the thick glasses usually associated with science nerds. "I put this together from some of the bits and pieces I got from the Radio Shack. The Feds have all kinds of homing devices and tiny little fiber optic surveillance mikes and cameras the size of a pinhead, that you can wear in your hair or your lapel or disguise as a dozen different things, and which will broadcast for a two mile radius. Third Section has a little bit of that kind of exotic stuff that they've used on our own covert ops, but the only person I know who would have access to it or know how to use it would be Doctor Joe Cord, and he's off on some kind of special mission at the moment. So this will have to do. Basically, I pulled out the videophone micro-circuit board from a cell phone and slipped it into the spine this Bible. It's about the size of a small person's thumbnail, so it fits fairly snug. I glued it in with super-glue so it won't fall out at an embarrassing moment. This particular model of chip has its own power cell, so it will work on its own without the rest of the phone. There's no lens, since Commandant Dortmunder told me all you guys wanted for this morning was audio. It's a small chip, and it nestles very snugly in the spine, and it's black, so unless someone takes your book in hand and feels a bump in the spine, or examines it closely, no one should see it. But it's a pretty clumsy job, and anyone who actually handles the book may notice when they try to open it that the spine is a bit stiff, and get curious. So be careful and try not to let anyone else handle it. Before I pulled out the chip I dialed the number of a laptop with telephony that the Commandant gave me, and so you've got a wireless connection to that device that will transmit through the local cell sites. Let's just hope they don't space out on us or we don't have a sunspot surge. Try to hold the top of the Bible in the direction of whoever is speaking, almost like a mike, but don't make it too obvious. Your conversation will be recorded as an MP3 file on this laptop, so we'll have a permanent record of whatever goes down."

"Give me those highlighters," requested Emily, pointing to a set of the felt-tipped pens on the table which the officers had been using to mark maps. She hadn't come to the safe house dressed for church on the previous afternoon, so she was now wearing a hastily assembled Christian-like female costume which included the skirt and the shoes from her NVA uniform which she has been trying on only the evening before, and she'd had to borrow a cross on a chain from one of the Christian Volunteers at the headquarters. Emily took the Bible and began going through it quickly, highlighting various passages in color. "In a fundie church everybody has their own Bible, and if I show up with a new one that's unmarked, someone might notice. Ever since these things were invented, a really devout Christian's Bible always has a psychedelic look. As to the bug, I presume we're going to have other things going on to distract everybody's attention. Is this thing broadcasting now?"

"Yes, it's on," said Dortmunder. "General Barrow, myself and Eddie and several other Volunteers will be in our vehicles, circling the neighborhood of the church. Bobby Bells wanted to do it when he heard what was going down, but he's got his hands full running our new public recruiting and broadcasting station at the Eastgate mall. He thinks a lot of you two, apparently. I will be monitoring you on this laptop that the Doc here has programmed to receive your audio feed. I won't be able to see anything of what's going on, but I will have the laptop and I will be able to hear you and whatever goes on at this unusual prayer meeting."

"What did you decide about sending us in strapped?" asked Cody.

"That's going to be up to you two, since you know the ground and the people, but I would be more comfortable if you went in with some kind of armament, even if it's concealed," said Dortmunder. "This set-up still makes my antennae quiver."

"What do you think?" Cody asked Nightshade.

"Suppose they search us going in?" she replied.

"You think they'll be that security-conscious?" asked Dortmunder anxiously.

"My guess is, not," said Cody. "I think this is just going to be a preliminary meeting for Regenthal to call down the spirit and see who's with him on this little vigilante venture. I don't think they're going to try to go out and attack anyone. Who would they attack? We're not out in the open yet, except at a few places like Eastgate. He'll be praising the Lord but not passing the ammunition, at least not today."

"You guys willing to bet your life on it?" asked Dortmunder.

“The thing is, we have to stay in character,” said Nightshade firmly. “They think we’re a couple of brain-dead high school kids who are into Jesus and each other. Would a couple of kids like that show up at a secret meeting to do the Lord’s work carrying guns, when we have never before shown any indication of even knowing what a piece looks like? I’m sure we could come up with some kind of excuse, but it would be out of character. Yeah, I’d be more comfortable myself with a holdout in my purse or in an ankle holster for Cody, but suppose we’re searched? Maybe we could explain them away, but again, it would be a variation in pattern and it would make them curious. I’m not even going to be carrying my blade, because good Christian girls don’t go around tooled up in that manner. I’m none too happy about going in with this bugged Bible, even. Suppose they run a metal detector over us?”

“It shouldn’t pick anything up,” replied Doctor Doom cheerfully. “Once I removed the lens and the other components the chip is largely plastic, and the micro-circuits are mostly silicate compound, even the conductive elements. Latest thing from China. We’ve really let the gooks get ahead of us in technology.”

“Again, do you want to bet their lives on it?” repeated Dortmund, looking at Doom.

“What exactly is the plan, anyway?” asked Cody. “What are you comrades on the outside going to do? Just listen in?”

Red Morehouse sighed. “No, we’re going to nip this in the bud, like I said earlier, but we need to be a little circumspect about it, and we need you two in there first to scope out the sitch. Because this event is taking place in a church, we don’t want just to raid the place and take everybody into custody, with or without gunfire. I cannot overemphasize how utterly vital it is that the NVA and hence the Northwest Republic not be perceived as being anti-Christian in any way, especially at this crucial phase of events. We don’t want to bust in there and find it’s nothing but a prayer meeting calling down the Great Jumping Jesus to smite all us Nazi sinners, so forth and so on. The enemy media would be all over something like that, and they’d squeeze every ounce of propaganda value out of it. We have to get some kind of proof that something untoward is going on. This Regenthal character has to actually say something in our hearing that indicates that they’re planning some kind of un-Christian paramilitary or terrorist attack against the Republic. Terrorist attack—damn, that sounds odd for someone on our side to be saying! Once we hear that, we’re going to bust in the doors and grab them, especially Regenthal. We’ll get what we need from him. Be interesting to see how long he lasts in his own ball-busting chair we captured in Renton. But we need you to provide us with the necessary final ingredient of proof, and also we need you wired so you can give us some kind of information about what the setup is inside the building, how many of them there are, what weapons if any, whether or not Regenthal has sentries posted, etcetera. He wouldn’t be much of an army officer if he didn’t. We do not want to end up staging a massacre on church grounds that the enemy propaganda can turn against us. I’m not comfortable in subordinating your lives to considerations of public relations, but sometimes that’s how it plays out.”

“Nightshade is right,” said Cody with a sigh. “This is a role we are playing, and we have to stay in character. Take the bug, but no guns.”

“I will be commanding your backup crew myself,” said Barrow. “Don’t worry, we used to do this kind of thing all the time when I was a cop. We’ll be following you out there, and owing to the potentially national-level sensitivity of this assignment, the AC has decided there will be a special squad of reinforcements assigned to this case, to make sure we bag them fast and alive. You’ll get to meet your first SS men, Cody. They’re going to be an hour or so getting there, but once they’re in place around the church and we have the information we need, we’re busting in and we’re grabbing Brother Jesse’s sanctified OD green ass, and that preacher as well, plus anyone else who’s there gets dragged into the net. I don’t know what we’ll do with them exactly, but we not only need to find out what they know, we need to let the rest of the evangelical community know that the jig is up, we’re onto them, and we’re not going to tolerate any counterrevolutionary shenanigans. Everyone in the new Republic is free to worship as they please. They are not free to commit treason and then hide behind religion to escape the consequences. This morning, you guys will have to play along with whatever they say until we move, and be ready to take cover or whatever you need to do when it goes down. Don’t worry, we won’t leave you comrades dangling in the wind for too long. Now, like I said, we’ll be listening on Doctor Doom’s laptop. If at any time you feel threatened and you think you need immediate extraction, your SOS is ‘That Old Rugged Cross’. Kind of an inside joke there. That’s the gospel song they used to play at Klan cross-lightings. Think you can work that into a conversation?” he concluded with a chuckle.

“If necessary I could work the lyrics to a nigger rap song into the conversation,” said Cody.

Nightshade and Cody drove to the Assembly of God together in the old Nissan, followed by two carloads of armed NVA Volunteers. They pulled over at a corner two blocks down from the church building. They ran quick test on the audio from the bugged Bible and it worked. “Okay, scope the place carefully before you go in,” Barrow told them. “Remember the distress code, ‘Rugged Cross.’ Good luck.”

The two of them drove into the church’s gravel parking lot, which had about two dozen cars and trucks and Christian bumper sticker-bearing SUVs in it, unusual for that time of the morning on a weekday. “I’m assuming that you can hear us okay, comrades,” said Nightshade into her Bible. “There’s Regenthal and Sheldon at the door of the fellowship hall.” She waved at them. “They’re wearing civilian clothes. So far no visible weapons other than Regenthal’s usual sidearm, or any danger signs. We’re going in.” They got out of the car and walked across the parking lot, Emily with the Bible under her arm. Cody was carrying a battered and annotated paperback copy of Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which was held in almost as much reverence as the Bible itself in evangelical circles.

“How’s your father doing, Cody?” asked Pastor Leonard as they came up to the door of the fellowship hall. “Brother Jesse told me he was hurt by the Antichrists last night.”

“He’s laid up, and it will be a while before he can go back to work, but he’ll make it, praise God,” Cody told them.

“Praise Him! Where did he get shot?” asked Regenthal.

“In his left hand,” said Cody.

“No, I mean where did it happen?” pressed Regenthal.

“He was in Eastgate Mall in the Drug Hut getting some things, and there were some Federal anti-terrorist cops there who were doing some kind of radio telethon about the President’s speech. He stopped to listen, and before he knew it the Nazis came out of nowhere and starting firing into the crowd,” said Cody, shaking his head as if in disbelief. “He got hit in a crossfire. I didn’t catch all the details, but I

understand it was a bloody mess. A good Samaritan got Dad out of there and got him to the hospital.” Cody hoped they wouldn’t ask for any further details, since quick casual lying wasn’t his forté, but they seemed satisfied.

“We will add him to our prayer list for the sick,” said Sheldon.

“Thank you, pastor,” said Cody. “Dad hasn’t found the Lord yet, but I’m sure he’ll appreciate the gesture.”

“Well, my young brother in Christ, are you ready to help us get the dirty Natsie bastards who did it?” asked Regenthal, laying a serious hand on Cody’s shoulder.

“Yes, sir!” replied Cody immediately. Regenthal responded by giving him a crushing bear hug.

“And how about you, Emily?” he asked, turning to the girl. “You know that this might turn out to be a very dangerous witness for Christ indeed.” She rolled up her arm and showed one of the scars from her self-inflicted cigar burns.

“What do you think, captain sir?” she replied.

“Good girl! May Jesus bless and keep you both!” boomed Regenthal, giving Emily a slightly less crushing and more dignified embrace.

“Come inside, kids. We have a lot to talk about.”

“How did that hug feel to you?” whispered Cody as they entered.

“He was feeling me up, but not like Sheldon would have done,” she returned sotto voce. “He was feeling for a wire.”

“Yeah, me too,” said Cody. “He’s not as dumb as he looks.”

“Nobody could be as dumb as he looks,” whispered back Nightshade. They went into the long and spacious fellowship hall where the church held all their bake sales, dinners, meetings, and some of their revivals. It was a high-ceilinged building lit by bright fluorescent lights, and with a well-buffed linoleum floor. There were large murals and paintings of Biblical scenes along the walls, and a large crucifix hung over a small stage or platform at one end of the hall, with a speaker’s podium in the center. There were long rows of folding chairs facing the stage; the place could comfortably seat at least three hundred people. A group of about thirty other men, mostly middle-aged, from the church’s congregation were waiting for them, clustered in the front row. Cody knew from careful listening during his several weeks of attendance that almost all of them had some kind of military experience in Iraq or Saudi Arabia or other parts of the American oil empire. Emily was the only woman present. Another man whom Cody had never seen before, who had a distinctly military haircut and bearing, was sitting in a chair beside the door and seemed to be acting as doorman, and Cody noticed he had what looked like a 9-millimeter in a holster on his belt. At the rear door to the hall sat yet another newcomer, similarly armed. Cody immediately noticed some suspiciously long, unmarked OD green cases that were stacked at the side of the stage, and he nudged Emily and nodded in their direction. “Uh, gee, captain sir, what’s in those long boxes?” yawned Cody for the benefit of the bug in the Bible.

Regenthal grinned and strode over to the stack of boxes. “How are you on the Psalms, Cody?” he asked.

“Uh, sir? Which one?”

Regenthal raised his voice so all could hear. “Our young brother here has asked me what is in these boxes which I’ve brought from Fort Lewis, and I recommended he look in the Psalms. So say I to you all, my brothers, and sister. It’s true that these receptacles contain something that you may find unusual in a house of God, but these end times are strange, and ye shall see many wonders, which we must not fear. You know that the Bible is replete with men who were both strong in war and strong in the Holy Spirit. In Psalm Number Two we find: Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. My friends, last night I was deeply saddened to learn that the President of the United States became one of those princes and powers of the earth who imagines the vain thing. This weak woman of little faith has set herself up against the Lord and the Lord’s Chosen, the Jewish people who are the Apple of His Eye, and she has traduced the unfolding of God’s revelation in the holy land of Israel that is the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. She goes now to treat with the servants of damnation, and she’s doing it right here in this green and pleasant land where by right the peace of Amurrica and the grace of God should reign! Last night was a terrible night for us all, a terrible night for Amurrica and for those who believe in His promise of redemption in Zion! But when we seek further in the Psalms we find, in verses eight and nine: I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Regenthal threw back the top of one of the crates and lifted out a new, military-issue M-16, which he held aloft. “Behold the rod of iron with which we shall fight the battle of the Lord! Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth! Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” “Praise Jesus!” several of the men shouted aloud. “To hell with Hitler!” another one yelled. No one seemed overly surprised at Captain Regenthal flourishing the weapon aloft in a church. Cody understood that Regenthal had been working on them and psychologically prepping them for some time. “Where’d you get those guns, captain sir?” he asked as Emily clutched her Bible high in both hands, apparently in religious fervor, but in actuality to make sure the hidden transmitter picked it all up. “Golly, you got six boxes, why that must be sixty M-16s! But I only see about thirty of us here, including me and Emmy!” he said, hugging Emily around her shoulder and pulling her and the Bible close, so he could speak over it. He hoped that Regenthal couldn’t catch on to what he was doing, which was carefully describing to the listening Volunteers what was going on in the hall.

“There will be more,” Regenthal told him confidently. “The Lord God has friends in all kinds of places, Cody, including the United States military. Let’s just say that when His hosts arise to break asunder the foes of His Chosen, we won’t be lacking for rods of iron to do it with. These weapons will never be missed from any arms room, and they’re untraceable. The Lord does indeed provide. Now brothers, if we might all have a seat, I’d like to get serious for a bit.” They all trooped to the folding chairs and sat down while Regenthal ascended the podium. “My friends and brothers in Christ,” began Regenthal solemnly, “There are some of you who already know why we are gathered here today in the shadow of apostasy and despair, but some of you other folks including our younger comrades are new to our little group, and so an explanation is required. I don’t have to tell you what has been happening in this part of our beloved nation for the past five years. Satan has been unleashed upon the earth in an orgy of murder and racial hatred and terrorism, and revilement of God’s Chosen, as the sacred Scriptures predicted would happen in the end times, when the Great Enemy shall be given dominion over the earth for a period so that the Lord may come to know his own, and the Great Tribulation begin, as was written. The Pacific

Northwest has become yet another of the many battlegrounds upon which Amurrica must fight the War on Terror, which as we all know is really the Biblical war against the Anti-Christ who has manifested himself among men as Gog and Magog, in the equally devilish twin forms of Islam and Nazi fascism. These are but two heads upon the Great Beast upon whose back rideth the Whore of Babylon.”

“What the hell is Nazi fascism?” whispered Cody to Nightshade. “The two are completely different world views! Doesn’t this asshole have a clue what the hell he’s talking about?”

“Shut up!” she whispered back urgently. “Smile, dammit! You’re in church, Jesus loves you, and I’m gonna kick you in the balls if you don’t act like it!” Both of their faces assumed the slack-jawed, slightly eager lobotomy grin which was customary for evangelical services.

Regenthal went on with his rant. “Now our country’s crisis has come to a head. The Bible also tells that in the end times there shall be false prophets, and that those who are saved in His Only Son must face betrayal and rejection from their loved ones, from their leaders, and from all the world,” he told them. “This we know already. But just as this development was predicted in prophecy, I have to tell all of you that it has not been unforeseen in the halls of power in Washington, D. C., either. I will be honest with you folks. My presence in this congregation is not an accident, and the presence of military and law enforcement men of faith in certain other congregations today all around the Pacific Northwest is no accident either. All across Washington, and Oregon, and Idaho, and beneath the big sky of Montana, small meetings such as this between determined people of faith are taking place this morning. We knew that this day would come. It was known some time ago that there are certain weak and ill-intentioned elements in the United States government who have been pressing for negotiations with these Nazi devils. Negotiations that would violate the territorial integrity of the United States of Amurrica, and which would violate every single principle on which this country was founded and every basis of our faith and our Amurrican way of life! Unfortunately, these treasonous elements appear to have prevailed, for at least the short run. The President’s shameful speech of yesterday evening comes as no surprise to some of us, because we are already involved in the preparations which have been made to defeat this evil purpose, on many fronts. Today we are here to open up one such line of resistance to the powers of darkness and hatred that seek to engulf us. I am going to have to ask you all to take on a significant degree of personal risk for the greater glory of Christ and God’s Chosen People, and some of us may assume the crown of martyrdom, but I want you to know that we are not alone. There are still powerful forces in our nation’s capital that stand for truth, justice, and the Amurrican way.”

“Can they leap tall buildings at a single bound?” whispered Cody. Emily kicked him in the ankle.

Regenthal was warming to his task. “Throughout this mighty nation of ours there are those who will be behind us all the way, and who will give us all the support we need in our battle against evil. These rifles and the ammunition behind me are just one small sample of the kind of support we will receive as we gird our loins and go forth to fight the battle of the Lord. Strong in His faith and courage, we intend to make sure that the Pacific Northwest remains a part of the United States of America as it always has been, and that these evil people who have shed the blood of the anointed are punished for their wickedness.”

“We gonna whup some Nazi ass!” cried one of the audience.

“We gone slice ‘em and dice ‘em!” agreed Regenthal. “We will give ‘em a dose of their own medicine! In essence, brothers, we are going to do to them what they have been doing to the United States over the past five years. Despite the weakness of our President and those around her, we are going to wage guerrilla partisan warfare against this so-called Northwest Republic, and make it impossible for the fascists to establish any kind of stable society or all-white racist abomination of a government here. Whatever ticky-tacky régime these Natsie bastards set up, we will knock it down and prevent it from functioning. President Clinton will not be able to negotiate away our statehood and our American citizenship, because we will create such chaos and such upheaval that the United States will be forced to step back in, reassert its rightful authority and restore order. They can’t negotiate with a gang that can’t control its own turf and can’t deliver on any agreement. Once the Natsies have been forced out from under their rocks and out into the open, where we can see them and we have visible targets, then they can be destroyed!”

The men were all staring at Regenthal dumbly, eyes glazed and lips grinning absent-mindedly. Cody raised his hand. “Uh, captain sir, I think I understand what you’re saying. You know I’m with you. I’m going into the army anyway in September to fight against the Ay-rabs who hate us because we’re free and they’re trying to destroy our Bible, and I’m sure ready to fight against the Nazis here in our own country as well, but what can we do if the President of the United States is against us? I mean, who in the government would be on our side and willing to stand up to the President and defy her if she says she wants to talk to the NVA?”

“Yeah, how can we go against the President?” asked one of the other men in the group. “And how can you? You’re in the army, and she’s the commander in chief!”

Regenthal smiled unctuously. “Boys, let’s be honest. A lot of times in politics, things ain’t exactly what they seem. The President...well, now, she’s a sweet lady personally, but you know, in real life she doesn’t exactly run things in this country.”

“Bet this negotiate with Natsies business comes from her momma,” speculated another one of the men. “I always figured Hillary for the real Whore of Babylon.”

“Mmm, well, yes and no,” said Regenthal. “Okay, this gets into some really complex politics. Yes, Hillary does still call a lot of the shots, and she is working some kind of plan to get back into the White House even though she’s already had her two terms as specified by the Constitution. But it’s not that simple. Like that vision seen by the prophet Ezekiel, there’s wheels within wheels. The fact is that there’s a faction, or a party, within the United States government that wants to surrender and give up the Northwest over simple dollars and cents, but there are others who want to do it for what is Biblically a pretty good and sound reason, if that’s possible.

“I can’t tell you everything, because it’s classified, but a lot of it has to do with Israel, and of course anything to do with Israel has to do with the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. And then there’s another faction within the Federal government who are dead set against any negotiations of any kind with the Natsies, for any reason, and the problem is that they’re all good Amurricans too. As you can imagine, a lot of this group that believes in no surrender are Jewish people, so you can bet they love Israel. They just understand that we can’t save Israel by carving up Amurrica. Ain’t nobody in the government who really loves these evil Natsies or wants to negotiate with them, it’s just that some think it has to be done for Israel’s sake. I’m all for Israel, as any Christian man has to be, because Israel is the key to

salvation. When in doubt, we need to listen to what the Jewish people tell us.”

“Uh, I thought the saving grace of Jesus Christ was the key to salvation,” questioned one of the men, his brow furrowed.

“Well now, you can’t follow Christ’s teachings without honoring and exalting the State of Israel, now can you?” explained Regenthal patiently. “Haven’t you seen Pastor Sheldon’s videotapes and read *The Late, Great Planet Earth*? But me and my teammates on this mission don’t believe we should be throwing out the baby with the bath water. We don’t believe that we can’t find a way to serve Israel without giving up part of the United States.”

Several of the men started speaking at once, and Nightshade took the opportunity to whisper under the cover of their voices, “That’s it!” She held the Bible up to her face to try and conceal her moving lips. “That’s the secret reason the America government has cracked, and they’re talking to the NVA! Israel is in trouble!”

“Must be really big trouble,” added Cody.

“And we will find that way, Brother Jesse,” said Pastor Leonard Sheldon, stepping firmly up to the podium. “All we need to know is that the Lord has called, and we must answer. Gentlemen, you all know me. I have served as your pastor for many years. I have known about the true nature of Brother Jesse’s mission within this tabernacle for some time, and I am proud and honored to be part of it. It is time for us to return to the good old days, brothers. Surely many of you recall how it was only a few short years ago, when we could share our worship in this church with people of many skin colors and national origins? You remember the wonderful and spirit-filled members of our congregation from Korea and the Philippines and Nigeria, who would sometimes fill our gospel hall to the point where the church was full to bursting? How long has it been since any of you have seen a full church?”

“Or a full collection plate?” wondered Cody below his breath. Nightshade kicked him again.

“You will also remember the overseas missions and the programs that our denomination and our church supported throughout the Third World, before The Trouble started and all of our friends of color were so badly terrorized and frightened away,” Sheldon went on.

“Especially those wonderful Save A Child missions, where your contributions helped to bring thousands of beautiful little black and brown babies here to Amurrica? Those days will come again, my brothers!” Sheldon raised his arms in benediction. “Yea, shall they come again! We, the Lord’s anointed, will arise in defense of Amurrica and of holy Israel, and we will be joined by our brethren from all of the evangelical churches of the Northwest! Again let me speak from the Psalms: Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord!”

Then the bugged Bible beeped.

There was a sudden silence. The Bible beeped again.

“What the hell is that?” asked Sheldon, startled into momentarily forgetting himself. But Cody’s eyes were on Regenthal, who was standing next to the pastor on the stage. He was convinced that the army captain suspected something about himself and Emily, or was at least on his guard about them, and when he saw Brother Jesse’s hand go for his gun, Cody didn’t hesitate. With a smooth motion he was up on the platform in a single leap, the folding chair in his hands, bellowing “Behold the Old Rugged Cross!” which was apropos of nothing and sounded ridiculous, but was the only thing he could think of to say that would let the NVA backup team know they were in trouble. He swung the chair at Regenthal and managed to knock the 9-millimeter aside before it fired, then swung again. Regenthal was fast. He grabbed the chair out of Cody’s hand and hurled it aside; the fight was looking more and more like a pro wrestling ham-it-up. He was two inches taller and a good forty pounds heavier than Cody, all of it muscle, he still had the pistol in his hand, and Cody knew he had one chance consisting of a fraction of a second, which he took without hesitation. He hurtled himself forward and head-butted Regenthal right in the groin with such force that they both went flying off the stage and onto the hard lino floor, Cody coming down on top of Brother Jesse, whose massive frame somewhat cushioned his fall. Cody knew better than to try and grab for the pistol and wrestle for it. The American was stronger than he was, and he would lose any such contest. Instead he leaped up and as Regenthal himself rolled up to his feet, Cody came down onto his back from the rear and gripped him in the wrestling hold known as the full Nelson, arms around his opponent’s chest and hands locked behind his neck, pressing forward on the spinal vertebrae. The hold allowed Cody to exercise a little bit of control as the two of them slipped and skittered over the highly polished floor. He was able to bash Regenthal’s head squarely into a concrete support pillar, which made him bellow with rage and fire off a wild shot from the pistol.

Then Cody felt a series of blows on his own head as the soldier who had been guarding the rear door attacked him from behind, beating him brutally with the barrel of his automatic. Cody hung on grimly and tried to pull the struggling captain around and use him as a shield. As the three of them whirled around the floor, knocking the folding chairs aside, Cody saw that several of the men were trying to subdue Nightshade as well, without much success, as she seemed to have her teeth firmly together in the ear of one of her fellow congregants, who was screaming hysterically. There were spatters of blood flying onto the floor.

The gun crashed into his skull and Cody blacked out for a moment. When he came to he was lying on the floor on his back, and Regenthal was jamming the muzzle of the nine-millimeter into his neck. Emily was being held up by her arms by two of the men, bleeding from her nose and mouth, while several others attempted to stop the flow of blood from the mangled ear of the one who had tackled her. Leonard Sheldon had Nightshade’s Bible, and he had clawed out the black circuit chip. “What kind of blasphemy is this, woman?” he was shouting at Emily. “Have you brought the devil’s works into this house of worship?” In response Nightshade put her full weight onto the shoulders of the men holding her, pulled both feet off the ground and kicked Sheldon in the face, crushing his nose. “Christ’s bleeding balls!” the preacher screamed as he staggered back into one of the chairs, holding his spurting visage.

“Like it says in Scripture, ‘Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!’” Regenthal snarled at Cody.

“That’s Sir Walter Scott, you idiot!” mumbled Cody through his aching jaw. Regenthal lashed the barrel of the gun across Cody’s face.

“Now, son, do you really want to appear before your Maker with silly mockery on your lips?” he asked gently. Sheldon was back up on his feet now, and he was knocking Emily’s head back and forth again and again with his right hand, while trying to stop the blood from his nose with a handkerchief held in his left. As he beat her he ranted and raved in a scattered pastiche of mis-matched verses from Genesis: “And the Lord said unto the woman, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life!”

Suddenly there was a crash and a shout, and a single shot rang out from the doorway of the fellowship hall, followed by a man's voice as strong and as Southern as a rebel yell. "NVA! You gone quote the Word, quote it right, you hog-jawed doodoo bird!" roared the newcomer. "How's this? And all the churches shall know that I am He who searcheth the reins and hearts: and I shall give unto every one of you according to your works! Now every damned one of you blaspheming sons of bitches get down on your knees and get your hands in the air!"

There were some more shots and a short burst of automatic weapons fire, and Regenthal looked up from where he crouched over Cody, distracted just long enough for Cody to grab the nine-millimeter with his right hand and shove the muzzle away, and with his left fist clenched hook an extended middle knuckle up into Regenthal's left eyeball. Brother Jesse screamed in sudden agony and Cody brought his knees up to try and knock him over, twisting the pistol away with his right hand, mindful of how Farmer Brown had been shot in similar circumstances the night before. There was another brief tussle between them, then a shadow fell over the two of them and something slammed into Regenthal and sent him flying into the air. It was a boot, and Cody looked up and saw a lean man in late middle age wearing a billed green cap with an eagle and swastika emblem on it and a tiger-striped camouflaged fatigue shirt, rolled up to the biceps and displaying the prison-tattooed cross on one forearm and Confederate flag on the other. He was leveling a Heckler and Koch submachine gun at Regenthal. "Take him alive!" he shouted to someone Cody couldn't see. The man reached down and pulled Cody to his feet with a strong arm. The black tabs on his collar read "NDF" on the right and on the left were two matching Germanic runes. SS. It had been a swift and brutally efficient operation which would have done Otto Skorzeny proud. Two more SS men with AK-74s were now standing over Regenthal who lay on the floor. One of them had a boot on his gun hand and was leaning on it while Regenthal shrieked. Nearby lay the dead body of the soldier who had been on guard at the rear of the fellowship hall, slumped against the side of the speaker's platform, staring into space, his gun lying by his side. Cody looked across the hall and saw the second sentry lying still on the floor, a pool of blood beneath his head. The NVA troops had cleared a space and had all of the would-be vigilantes lying flat on the floor, their hands behind their back. In addition to the Volunteers from Cody's own brigade, there were a dozen SS men in the fellowship hall, every one of whom seemed to be of gigantic stature and bearded, and many of whom had arms covered with tattoos. They all wore the camouflage jacket and the heavy engineer's boots, and most had the Alpine ski caps, but some were still wearing jeans and there were other sartorial discrepancies. Apparently there hadn't been a complete uniform issue yet even among the Party's elite corps. Cody saw the eagle and swastika patches over each right shirt pocket and he was thrilled to the very core of his being. At last! he thought joyously to himself. We are BACK, Jewboys!

General Frank Barrow strode over to him. "Are you all right, Volunteer Brock?" he asked urgently.

"I'm fine, sir," he said, although his head hurt terribly and his ears were ringing.

"You don't look fine to me," said Barrow. "They split the back of your head open."

"We have a medic with us. Smith!" shouted the SS officer. The SS corpsman came forward with a canvas bag on a strap that bore a red cross.

"Check out Nightshade first," said Cody. "That bastard preacher beat her!"

Barrow looked over to where Pastor Sheldon had been forced down onto his knees on the floor, his hands cuffed behind his back and his broken nose bleeding. Nightshade was behind him, cursing him and kicking him repeatedly in the seat of his pants. "I think she's okay. Is this one Regenthal?"

"Yes, sir," replied Cody. "Sir, were you receiving our transmission? Did you hear what he was saying about there being two factions in the U. S. government and this whole thing being an argument over something to do with Israel?"

"Yes, I heard," said Barrow. "He's all yours, Colonel Wingfield."

Standing by Carter Wingfield was a Volunteer in civilian clothes that Cody had never seen before, a lean and mean-looking sandy-haired young man in jeans and a brown work shirt and a denim jacket and an incongruous tweed pork-pie cap on his head. He was holding a revolver of beautiful, deadly and archaic lines. As the SS medic sat Cody down in a chair and started swabbing his head with alcohol pads, to distract himself from the pain he asked, "What's that you're packing there, comrade?"

"British Webley Mark Six," replied the young man proudly. ".455 caliber, guaranteed to knock down a charging Zulu at fifty yards. This piece is World War One officer's issue. A hundred years old and it's still in as good a firing condition as the day it went into battle at the Somme. It was a present from Carter after a good tickle we had down in Dundee a few years ago. Goes well with the hat, huh? I call this my Michael Collins outfit." Regenthal had by now been handcuffed and dragged to one of the chairs and he stared around him wild-eyed. The SS officer stepped up to him and looked him up and down contemptuously.

"Let me guess," Carter Wingfield said. "Oklahoma? Georgia?"

"Bessemer City, Alabama," muttered Regenthal.

"Yeah, that sounded like Alabama ignorance I heard. Nice and thick. I'm from Roper's Crossroads, South Carolina, down in the Low Country. We're both Southerners, I'm ashamed to say, but I'm glad to say that's all we have in common."

"True," snarled Regenthal, "I am saved, and you are in the devil's darkness." Without a word the young man raised the Webley and fired a single shot into Regenthal's right kneecap. He screamed like an animal. It seemed to Cody that he heard the bone snap.

"For the love of God, why did you shoot me?" Regenthal howled.

"Because I don't like you," replied the Volunteer.

"Shane just got out of Auburn a little while ago, where he spent some time enjoying your Zionist hospitality," explained Wingfield coldly. "He's a little crabby. Although truth to tell, I don't like you very much either. You're a ridge-running bush ape with nothing but pork fat between your ears. You're a disgrace to the South. You personify everything people find stupid and arrogant and ignorant in us. And you don't know your Scriptures worth a damn, or you would know that Christ said Think not that I am come to bring peace upon the earth. I came not to bring peace but a sword. And you know those Jews you love so much? In John 8:44 Jesus said of them, Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. I kind of doubt He would have spoken thus about any group of people his Daddy had chosen for His own. It was Caiaphas and the Jews in the Sanhedrin who demanded Christ's death, even after Pontius Pilate

said I find no evil in this man, and it was the Jews in the Jerusalem mob who cried Give us Barabbas, and it was Ahasuerus the Jew who struck Christ and spat on Him and reviled Him as he walked to Calvary bearing His cross, thereby bringing the curse of God upon all of his tribe and condemning them to wander the earth in shame and revulsion forever. I am really, really getting tired of bird-brained morons like you and that half-assed preacher over there defiling the Christian faith and teaching these Jew lies in place of the genuine Word. Theologically speaking, you don't know shit from shinola. You're just pigs slopping at the trough of the Jews."

"For God's sake, I need a doctor for my leg!" screamed Regenthal wildly.

"What you need is about nine feet of good strong rope, but before you settle up your bill you and me are going off somewhere and we're going to have a quiet word of prayer about some things you've been doing which you hadn't oughta," said Wingfield. "And Shane will come too. We found a chair of yours down in Renton he wants you to sit down in for a spell. But right now, you're going to give me and the General here a name. I want to know who is behind this evangelical death squad idea you were babbling about in here just now, and I don't want to hear any bushwah about factions in government. Who sent you here? Who is behind this?"

"Regenthal, Jesse C, Captain, United States Army, 270-135-0987," moaned the man in the chair.

"Take the other knee, Shane." The young man cocked back the hammer on the Webley.

"Weintraub! It was Howard Weintraub!" howled Regenthal in terror.

"The Secretary of Homeland Security, and slated to be one of the lead Federal negotiators at the Longview conference," said Barrow.

"Yeah, that sounds about right. I wonder if Walter Stanhope knows his partner at the table is doing everything he can to undercut his position?"

"I'm sure you can find the time to inform him of the fact once you get down there, General," laughed Wingfield. He gestured to his two men. "Get his ass out of here. We're going to our new house in Renton. Wrap a towel around that leg or something so he doesn't bleed to death." They dragged the blubbing Regenthal away. "That preacher too," Wingfield called out. "I think he needs some dental work. Hold the rest of these turkeys aside. I'll talk to them myself and try and sort the fools from the rogues."

The medic was shaving away most of the blood-soaked hair on the back of Cody's head with a disposable razor. "A few stitches, but it's not as bad as it looks, troop," he told Cody cheerfully. "Most of the blows seem to have been glancing ones, more on your neck and the lower part of the skull. Nothing seems to be fractured, from what I can feel. I guess you were moving around while you were being hit, right? Scalp wounds bleed like stuck pigs, but as long as there's no concussion you should be okay. You don't feel sleepy or about to pass out, do you?"

"No," replied Cody. "Just like somebody peeled my head like an onion."

"You'll need a few stitches, but you'll live." Nightshade came over to Cody and laid her hand on his shoulder. "Miss, you need to stay with him for a while. If he shows any signs of grogginess, staggering, anything like that, you get him to a proper doctor and hospital ASAP."

"Cody's personal physician lives over on Mercer Island," she said. "I'm sure he'd relish another house call."

"And how are you doing?" the medic asked her. "Looks like you went a few rounds yourself."

"My spiritual adviser knocked one of my teeth out, but I'll make it," she said with a shrug.

"Bullshit. You're hurt. Sit down. As soon as I finish sewing him up, I want to look at you," said Comrade Smith. "Is that an ice machine over there in the corner? Outstanding. Hey, Chris, could you find a bowl or a bucket or something and bring me some of that ice?"

"What the hell made that chip in the Bible start beeping, sir?" Emily asked Barrow. "Do you know?"

"Yes. It was Movement Three Stooges time again. You remember Doc Doom said he got that little circuit out of a videophone at the Radio Shack?" Barrow reminded her.

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, apparently that phone was already activated and had a number assigned to it," said Barrow in some exasperation. "We were listening to Captain America hoot and holler on the laptop in the van, and I was about to order the group to move in anyway, when all of a sudden the damned phone in the laptop rings twice, which must have been the beep you heard on your chip, and then it gets call-forwarded to the computer's speaker. It was a telemarketer for a new drug to enhance my male organ, as he put it."

"You're lucky you're a general now, sir, or she'd have all kinds of fun with that one," said Cody.

"Both of you did a fine job," said Barrow seriously. "I can see now why Bobby Bells thinks the world of you."

"Well, on the upside, I think we can safely say that school days are over for the both of you," said Joe Dortmund. "At this point it's pretty clear that both of you are now so compromised that it wouldn't be a good idea to put you on any more cloak and dagger stuff. There are simply too many people now who know you're with the NVA."

"As much as I'd hate to leave A Company, sir, I'm not known in other parts of the Homeland and I can still work for Threesecon in Portland or Spokane or someplace," pointed out Nightshade. Cody was pleased to hear a note of genuine regret in her voice.

"You could," agreed Barrow, "But, and I hope you won't take offense at this, comrade, I have to admit that I have some qualms about that. I always worried about you. My god, you're what? Only seventeen?"

"Uh, seventeen next month, sir," she said.

"Sixteen years old. Great. We've gotten you beaten up and kidnapped and endangered enough, Emily. The nature of the struggle is changing now and we can afford to start being a little bit less cruelly expedient, I think."

"But sir," protested Cody, "We still have one thing we'd like to take care of regarding our summer school class. The Mitchell Newman project."

"Sounds like a rock group. Give it to Bells," said Barrow. "Don't worry, guys, we still need your talents. You're a couple of sharp kids, and I'm going to need every brain cell I can get on my side down there at that circus of a peace conference. Plus we can use a little more diversity on our team, pardon the expression. I want to take at least five or six female comrades to show the public that the Republic isn't going to be a boys-only club. I'll clear it with Third Section so that Comrade Nightshade goes to Longview with us."

"Make sure you take your duckbilled platypus costume," Cody told her. "You can do your song and dance on worldwide TV."

VII.

“Life is a bitch, and then you die.” – Mitchell Newman

In point of fact, the one-act plays were never performed, nor did the young summer school actors at Hillside High ever get an opportunity to put on *Arsenic and Old Lace*. The drama class turned out to be missing its teacher. Mitch Newman might have been depraved, but he wasn't stupid. He saw President Clinton's speech on television and he read the handwriting on the wall, loud and clear. The high school was closed for the next few days due to the unstable situation, and Newman used that time to turn in his resignation, collect his last paycheck, and clean out his office while there was no one else around except one of the janitors.

“Can't say as I blame you for getting out, Mr. Newman,” said the custodian in overalls who had kindly offered to help Mitch pack his computer and his personal belongings. “Looks like things are really gonna be going to hell in a handbasket up here now. I wonder if I'm gonna have to learn how to speak German? Where ya headed anyway, Mr. N?”

“California,” Newman told him as he shuffled through several manila folders of documents, feeding them into the shredder one by one. “Careful with the computer! Put it in the box really easy. I don't want the hard drive damaged, it's got a lot of important stuff on it. I'm hoping things will have cooled off for me in Hollywood enough now so I can get a studio job again, screenwriting, maybe even some more acting. I suppose I can always go back to teaching down there. Beverly Hills High School wouldn't be too bad a place to end up. I just can't understand how the President could do something like this!” he moaned, still near hysteria over what he saw as the final betrayal of his people by the hated goyim. “I can't understand why this horror won't die! When I was growing up we thought we had won! We thought we were done with all this Nazi crap, that it all ended in 1945! That swastika, that godawful little man with that silly moustache, why won't they stay dead? They just keep coming back, always on our trail hunting us down like some demon Hound of the Baskervilles! Two thousand years we've been suffering!”

“As a great philosopher once said, life is a bitch,” commented the janitor as he eased the computer into the Styrofoam-packed heavy cardboard box.

“Yeah,” responded Newman distractedly. “Life is a bitch, and then you die.”

“And then you die,” agreed the janitor.

The noose of nylon cord floated lazily over Mitchell Newman's head and looped down around his neck, then tightened and bit. For several long minutes Newman gagged and gurgled, kicking and flopping like a fish hauled out of water on the end of a hook and line, clawing at his neck while the close-hugging killer in the janitor's coveralls strangled him gentle and artistic, kicking and knocking over the chair and the wastebasket and the paper shredder. Newman's bowels and bladder relaxed in death and emptied into his jeans, and filled the small cinderblock office with a nauseous stench. After the convulsions stopped and he slumped still and lifeless for several minutes, Bobby Bells released the garotte and let the corpse flop to the floor where it lay in a shit-stained heap. He put the garotte in his overall pocket. “Good night, sweet prince,” he said.

A minute later Bells strolled into the high school parking lot and got into a nondescript Toyota Camry. Eddie Hagen started the car and they left at a sedate pace. “Any problems?” asked Hagen.

“Nah.” As they pulled onto Interstate 5, Bells lit a White Owl and sighed. “You know, Eddie, it occurs to me that what with this peace conference and all, this may well be the last good old-fashioned NVA tickle you and me ever go on. I mean, it's pretty obvious there's going to be more fighting before we win the Republic, but it will be out in the open, more like a regular civil war type campaign. We'll be wearing uniforms and everyone will know who we are and where we are. This may well be the last time you and me go out on a covert mission like this, wearing civilian disguises, hitting 'em and then we disappear back into the underground.”

“Hey, Bob, it's progress,” replied Hagen. “Things don't always stay the same, they change. We move on in life, you know? We been waiting to make this move up for a long time. But I know what you mean. Today will be kind of a nostalgia thing we'll sit around and remember when we're old farts.” They were silent for a moment, and then suddenly and spontaneously, both men burst out into a melody. They rolled down the interstate singing at the top of their voices and passably in tune, Bells flourishing his cigar out the window.

“Thoooose...weeere...the...days, my friend! We thought they'd never end! We'd sing and dance, forever and a day! We'd live the life we choose, we'd fight and never lose! Those were the days, oh yes, those were the days!”

VIII.

“It's the Oxford accent, old girl. It makes me sound intelligent and James Bondish. Up for a spot of the old cloak and dagger, eh what?”

– Nigel Moore

The Northwest Volunteer Army established what amounted to a provisional capital in the Lewis County bandit country, in the twin cities of Chehalis and Centralia, Cody's old home town. It wasn't much of a homecoming for him, since nothing of his childhood really remained there. Two days after the President's speech, around six hundred Volunteers quietly deployed from trucks and buses that rumbled into town in the pre-dawn hours and took over the local government offices, the police stations, and the major utilities to make sure that the water still flowed and the power stayed on. The local FATPO barracks out by the old steam plant was evacuated by helicopter, after John Corbett Morgan and Patrick Brennan moved a pair of 108-mm field artillery pieces that had fallen off a truck at Fort Lewis up to the gate, and made it clear that their presence was no longer required.

Later that afternoon Cody took a detour in a Humvee newly repainted with NVA insignia, and pulled over to the curb at a small house on a back street off Harrison Avenue. It had been the last place he had ever seen his sister Gwen, on the morning *It Takes A Village* came for them. The house was smaller than he remembered, and unpainted. There were children's toys on the small lawn and a battered pickup truck in the driveway. It looked like another poor white family was renting the house from whatever landlord owned it now. A tired-looking woman peeped timidly out of the front window, clearly afraid of the young man across the street in the camouflaged vehicle with the Kalashnikov on the seat beside him. Cody sighed, smiled and the woman and gave her a wave, and drove on.

Other FATPOs around the Homeland did not go quietly, and every day there was skirmishing between Fatties and Federal troops and the growing number of Northwest Volunteers. The Federal cops had won themselves an evil reputation, and now that the lid was off it was time to settle accounts. Hidden guns were being brought out from hiding, by ordinary white citizens who had nothing to do with the NVA, and a lot of sniping and ambushes went on. In some areas there were already reports coming in of white men and women who had been involved in interracial marriages or relationships ending up dead in the night, and local officials who had been a bit too zealously pro-American during the revolt woke up to find their homes burning over their heads. Cody heard rumors of something being organized called Force 101 which was to clean up the Homeland on a more methodical basis, but right now most of this activity appeared to be spontaneous, not carried out by the NVA as such, but by local people who had just plain had enough. It was astounding what the white man was proving capable of once he re-acquired that element of social approval, or at least absence of social disapproval, that appeared to be essential to his psychological makeup.

The Army Council members and other major Party formations remained dispersed across the Homeland, to make sure that a single attack could not wipe out the entire rebellion's command structure, but several major arms of a new administration were established in Chehalis, including the beginning of what amounted to an embryonic civil service. The new bodies included a media group which was already calling itself the Northwest Broadcasting Authority, that took over a local cable and UHF station and began broadcasting the rebels' version of news and events along with anything else white they could find. Cody was amused to turn on the tube one day and find a Brady Bunch re-run.

The rural areas of the new Homeland were not difficult for the rebels to take over. The Pacific Northwest was a huge place, impossible even for a mighty empire like the United States to saturate with soldiers, and it was this size that had given the NVA the vital maneuvering room and had taken the place of the foreign bases which had always been considered necessary for the success of any guerrilla insurgency. "Long ago there were some people who wanted to try and establish a Homeland in New England, or set up little enclaves in the Midwest," Morehouse said once in Cody's hearing. "That never would have worked. All other considerations aside, we had to pick a large area like the Northwest to give us scrapping room. In any smaller the Feds could have concentrated their forces a lot tighter." During the independence struggle, the Federal forces had always been scattered very thinly over the territory which lay outside the main population centers and the interstate highways that connected them. The rebellion had developed into a classic colonial war pattern. The cities and the daytime were under Federal control, but the countryside and the night belonged to the guerrillas. Within a matter of days after Chelsea Clinton's speech, as the writing on the wall was read and understood, large swathes of rural Washington, Oregon, Idaho and western Montana had seen an exodus of American military and paramilitary forces, American law enforcement, and American authority in the form of government officials and bureaucrats. They all seemed suddenly to take sabbaticals to Seattle or Portland or Spokane, anywhere they could get back under the shelter of Federal guns, or else they just left the Homeland altogether. The NVA didn't have enough troops as yet actually to occupy most of this expanse of wilderness and small towns either, but it turned out that it wasn't overly necessary. Once local government and local law enforcement was freed of the Federal monkey on their backs and white people could once again stand up and speak their minds, most rural counties displayed a remarkable degree of sympathy for the coming new régime. Tricolor flags were being raised on flagpoles in front of post offices and municipal buildings, and what remained of the Northwest's non-White population outside the big cities quickly decided that the pastures were definitely greener elsewhere. Within a time so short as to leave everyone gaping in wonder, the fifty-year trend of "the browning of America" was halted and reversed everywhere but in a few metropolitan areas. Even those were now almost lily white in their population after five years of rebellion and bloody attacks against Third Worlders who didn't get the message.

The large cities and military bases were a different kettle of fish as far as the assumption of state power went. Significant armed Federal presence and administration remained firmly ensconced in Seattle, Portland, Tacoma, Spokane, Boise, and a few of the secondary metropolises such as Eugene and Medford and Yakima in the fruit country with its heavy remaining Hispanic population. There were also such large American military bases as Fort Lewis, Washington which were poised like a knife at the NVA's throat. Their removal was one of the things which would have to be negotiated at the Longview conference. In those last days of July, there were repeated clashes across the Homeland between NVA and Federal authorities, as well as sporadic fighting between NVA and loyalist militias or gangs of various kinds. Thanks to the prompt action taken in Bellevue at the Assembly of God, and the groveling and repentant public confession of Captain Jesse Regenthal which was broadcast on television, the wind was pretty much taken out of the sails of the evangelical death squad idea, but there were still some occasional outbreaks of pro-Zionist fervor among fundamentalists. Many of these clashes were moderated and defused by the teams of UN observers who were flown into the area. At the Party's insistence, these teams consisted only of White personnel, especially from Eastern Europe, Russia and Hungary and Romania and Poland. "Places where they know what a Jew is," commented Frank Barrow. With a delicious sense of irony, the NVA Army Council had asked the UN for Serbs and Germans as peacekeepers, but the international body was never strong on humor.

The NVA peace conference delegation's working headquarters was a former antique mall on Pearl Street in Centralia. The large and stately Edwardian building had been found to be owned by Jews in Florida via several holding companies, and accordingly it had been impounded by the rebels. The small shops and display rooms had been cleared out, and a series of elegant little offices and conference rooms and barracks accommodation furnished from the inventory of antiques. The town of Centralia east of Interstate 5 had been declared off limits to American news media, and reporters who occasionally slipped into town and were apprehended were gently but firmly hauled out to the west side of the interstate and booted back into the media colony which had sprung up in the cluster of truckers' motels there. "No rough stuff, as obnoxious as they are," ordered Barrow. "We need to try and cut the hostility level with these people as much as possible."

"They're calling Centralia the Forbidden City now," laughed Emily as she and Cody stood by the TV which had been mounted in the conference room, watching the endless round of cable news. "We're barricaded here in our secret bunker, hatching all kinds of nefarious Nazi plots!"

"Well, we are," said Cody reasonably.

Cody's head injury was healing up nicely, the stitches came out well, and he had hopes that his hair would be sufficiently grown back by the time of the conference so it wouldn't be so noticeable. The upstairs lofts in the former antique emporium were converted to a dormitory for male personnel where Cody and others slept, and a smaller ladies' country where Nightshade and several other female Volunteers had their bunks. The preparations for the beginning of the conference proceeded apace, as did the emergence of the NVA into public view. They learned that the site agreed upon for the conference was the spacious five-star Lewis and Clark Hotel, a resort spa about three miles outside the town of Longview itself. Set on twenty acres of landscaped grounds and built with a luxuriously timbered, hunting-lodge Northwest interior motif, the hotel had once been a watering hole for the west coast's liberal and corporate elite, and it had everything from hot tubs in the suites and four restaurants and pubs to an Olympic-length indoor pool and an eighteen-hole tournament golf course. ("Secretary Weintraub and I can get in a few holes before breakfast," commented Barrow.) Each delegation would be assigned a wing of the hotel, whence officially they were not allowed to cross over into their opponents' territory, while a third wing would be assigned to a contingent of UN peacekeepers from Sweden and American military police from the Presidential guard detail, who would provide a few black faces for the television cameras. The fourth wing would be for specially vetted staff and a selected group of media personalities, raffled off in a kind of lottery to major networks.

"Regarding those MPs, I didn't like the idea of having any niggers around at all, but it's one of those things the Council finally decided not to make an issue out of so we could keep things moving forward." Morehouse told the growing NVA delegation with some concern. "Yeah, I know, we can be sure that at least a few of the MPs are going to be FBI or spooks of various kinds, as well as about half of everyone else there, the staff, you name it. Just be polite to them and keep contact to a minimum. They shouldn't be in our part of the hotel, anyway. But always bear in mind that you will be surrounded by enemies." There was an ongoing discussion via the intermediation of the UN and Red Cross committee as to whether or not the NVA delegation would be allowed to come in armed. "Okay, it's obviously not a friendly gesture to show up with fully automatic weapons and ammo belts criss-crossing our chests," Morehouse reported. "But there's no way in hell we're asking our people to go into the presence of their deadly enemies without at least sidearms. I'll let you know how this one goes." Access in and out would be by an unmarked Russian military helicopter, flown by a crew of Russians who were officially private contractors but were unofficially known to be military. The copter would be on standby and in theory, the NVA delegation could call for it and leave at any time. "If they let you and don't start shooting as you try to leave," added Morehouse.

At their daily meetings, Cody and Nightshade and the rest of the growing delegation received regular briefings on the political situation. Carter Wingfield came down to Chehalis to give them one, and he brought along with him none other than newly-made Lieutenant Nigel Moore, who had been known as Jumping Jack Flash in his Alpha Company days. Moore was now a military intelligence officer. "How did you end up in intelligence?" asked Nightshade.

"It's the Oxford accent, old girl," Moore explained. "It makes me sound intelligent and James Bondish. Up for a spot of the old cloak and dagger, eh what?" Moore was also sporting SS tabs on his collar now, which Cody envied. "Oh, by the way, Cody, I need to mention that before I left Seattle I called on Miss Shipman."

"How's she doing?" asked Cody.

"As well as could be expected. I just wanted to let her know that she hadn't been forgotten in all the sound and fury surrounding recent events."

"And does Kelly think your accent sounds intelligent?" asked Nightshade with a malicious grin.

"Actually, she's a very sharp and self-possessed young lady, she's born up well indeed after her terrible encounter with diversity, and I'm quite impressed with her," replied Moore. "I think what's happened has served as what you Yanks refer to as a wake-up call for the entire family. They were most impressed with our expeditious handling of the Mitchell Newman situation. I believe I was at least able to dissuade her family from immediately fleeing the country, and yes, I suppose my accent did go some way towards convincing the Shipmans that we're not all Daryl and his other brother Daryl from the tall timber."

Wingfield and Moore handled the briefing together. "We were able to wring that character Regenthal dry," Wingfield told the group. "For those of you who don't know, that's the American army officer that Lieutenants Brock and Nightshade helped us catch getting up to no good at a church in Bellevue a week or so back. We also arrested a half-assed preacher named Sheldon, and took them down to the old FATPO facility in Renton. Neither of them liked the available seating arrangements, and they spilled their guts. Literally. They puked in terror, but after that they couldn't tell us everything they knew fast enough. Sheldon was just a common or garden variety Amurrican dumb-ass, but Regenthal turned out to be a mine of information, and putting it all together with what we know from the media and from other sources, here's the scoop. It turns out that Comrade Nightshade was spot on that day when she said that Israel is in trouble. Big trouble. I'll let Lieutenant Moore give you the background, since he's the one with the degree in political science."

"My degree course in the ivied groves of academe was interrupted by Special Branch, actually," said Moore diffidently as he got up at the head of the table. "But in order for us to understand just what is going on in the upper echelons of power, I need to go over some recent history. I'm sure that you all know this, but bear with me. It's relevant. On September 11th, 2001, someone hijacked four passenger aircraft and crashed two of them into the World Trade Center in New York, and one into the Pentagon in Washington. The fourth one crashed in mid-flight, and no one knows for certain what the target was. Muslim extremists were immediately blamed, of course, and it is known that there were nineteen young Muslim men from Egypt and Saudi Arabia on board who appear to have known one another and who might have had something to do with it. And that, comrades, is to this very day all that is known for certain about what happened on September 11th, 2001, or at least all we have been allowed to know. There were indications at the time that the Israeli Mossad may have been guilty of prior knowledge, at the very least. There were a number of little bits and pieces of the puzzle that didn't fit, such as the four Israelis who were arrested on top of a nearby building videotaping the fall of the twin towers and laughing about it. There were also some peculiar attempts by so-called Israeli art students to get into top secret American military installations during the months immediately prior to the attack, and other things. All of this information was immediately suppressed by the Bush government, of course. To this very day, most Americans swallow the idea that 9/11 was some kind of Muslim terrorist thing, because they have

never been told the full story, and it is by now entirely clear that the United States government does not intend that the full story shall ever be told. You can actually go to prison these days if you suggest any Israeli involvement in 9/11. It's now a specifically prohibited hatecrime.

"Jug-Ears used 9/11 as an excuse to invade Afghanistan. Of course it was pure coincidence that Bush's oil cronies wanted to run an oil pipeline through Afghanistan from Soviet central Asia to tanker ports on the Indian Ocean, and the previous Taliban government was balking, or at least asking too high a price. The Americans installed their puppet Karzai, and of course immediately got their pipeline. Then came the invasion of Iraq in March of 2003, which had no foundation whatsoever in anything in the real world, and everything to do with grabbing the largest oil fields in the world outside of Saudi Arabia itself. Now, all of this is actually pretty common knowledge. By now most Americans pretty much accept that this ghastly débacle in the Middle East involves the seizure of the world's major petroleum reserves by the American oil company cartels. That is of course true as far as it goes, but like so much else in geopolitics, there is an even more sinister sub rosa layer to it all. The Middle East mess operates on a number of levels, and of these the Israel level is probably the most important. Another reason that America embarked on this asinine idea of conquering the Middle East was in order to terminate native rule in that part of the world, and impose Western-style democracy by force, as Chelsea Clinton admitted in her speech recently."

"Read install American puppet régimes," put in Wingfield.

"Precisely," agreed Moore. "The object being not only to secure the oil reserves for American petrochemical multinationals, but to preserve the existence of the state of Israel. Originally this was a hidden agenda, but eventually the United States government found that they didn't have to hide it. The fact is that Americans are so bloody stupid that they will swallow pretty much anything that the television tells them to swallow, and when you add this peculiar Protestant evangelical religious cult that worships the Jews as God's Chosen People into the mix, then you have a solid base of popular support for pretty much any atrocity that America wishes to commit in the name of Israel, oil, or bringing on the Rapture. Over the years, United States foreign policy has pretty much been reduced to two simple points: seize every drop of raw petroleum on earth, and at all costs protect the state of Israel from the consequences of its own behavior. The original strategy involved taking out all of Israel's hostile neighbors, beginning with Iraq, and then with Lebanon and Iran and Syria, and then Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The object was first of all to swathe Israel in a protective cocoon of pliable and friendly Zionist puppet states, but secondly to secure the co-operation of the American-installed puppet régimes in those countries for the mass deportation of the indigenous Muslim inhabitants of Palestine, or transfer as it was called. The idea was to load around five million Palestinians onto buses and trucks and cattle cars, take them out into the Jordanian and Iraqi desert, and dump them all, thus creating the so-called Greater Israel. The resistance to this idea turned out to be so fierce, both by the Palestinians themselves and also by the nations of Europe such as France and Germany who suddenly seemed to locate a pair of testicles, that the transfer was only partially successful. But even so, the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who ended up deported to the refugee camps only added to the problem.

"You see, the central difficulty with the whole Zionist experiment has always been that Israel was never viable as an independent country. The Jews of the twentieth century simply didn't belong there any more, and never had anyway, since the Jews of today aren't the Israelites of the Bible at all. I'm not Christian Identity myself, but I have to concede that this one element of their theology is entirely correct. The idea of trying to turn back the clock two thousand years was such an absurd pipe dream that I am still amazed to this day that anyone ever took it seriously. Palestine is a tiny patch of barren desert, with no natural resources of any kind, not like our own rich and wide Homeland which can be quite easily made economically and demographically viable. In addition, the Zionists were never the true pioneers they were made out to be. They weren't even very good farmers on their kibbutzes. To this day, they can't even feed themselves. Throughout the entire history of its existence, Israel has always imported food. Israel has always existed on massive subsidies from the United States and various Jewish communities and Jewish-controlled governments around the world. And it's not just a matter of economics. Mentally and spiritually, Jews cannot exist in an environment all on their own. Parasites can't feed off of other parasites. They must have a host."

"I've been there," spoke up Cody Brock. "Israel is like one big open-air insane asylum. Those people literally run around in the streets screaming and waving their hands in the air, and ramming one another with their cars. They hate each other as badly as they hate the Arabs. It's like locking up five million sewer rats into a basement. They go insane and start chewing on their own tails and eating each other. They have to have the Arabs there. Somebody has to wash their dishes, haul their garbage, dig their ditches and do all the hot work out in the sun while the Jews lounge by their swimming pools. Jews won't do that stuff for themselves. They honestly believe that they are a master race, and that all the goyim in the world were put here to be their slaves."

Moore nodded. "Yes, they more or less admitted that by failing to follow through on the transfer. While the Palestinian population was somewhat reduced by the deportations into the desert that did take place, enough cheap Arab labor remained behind to create a potentially dangerous fifth column. Now we're getting closer to the relevance of all this to our own situation today, here in the Northwest. There's an old saying that if you shoot a tiger, you had better be ready to finish the job. For the past generation, Israel and America have maimed and wounded and tortured the Muslim tiger to the point of madness, but they never quite managed to finish him off. Down through the years, slowly but surely, the United States has been forced to withdraw from most of its Middle Eastern conquests due to a campaign of unremitting guerrilla warfare. The American military were forced out of Lebanon and Syria last year, and earlier this year American rule in Iran finally collapsed. The mullahs are back and they are screaming for Jewish blood. The American forces in Egypt and Saudi are beleaguered and can just barely hang on in the major cities, and the American puppet régimes are on very shaky ground indeed. Iraq is just as bloody and chaotic as it ever was, and some of you may have noticed the military coup in Jordan which overthrew their last little Hashemite king and finally installed a pro-Palestinian government in Amman after generations of toadying to Washington and Tel Aviv."

"Their chickens are finally coming home to roost," said Carter Wingfield. "After the events at the Bellevue Assembly of God, once we knew what to look for, we made an effort to reach out to some of our sources, through our friends in Russia and elsewhere who have contact within the Arab world. What we have learned is that the Muslims are preparing a major onslaught. Within the next year there is

going to be the mightiest military offensive in world history, backed with men and money by every Muslim nation in the world, and especially by those who have recently managed to throw the American monkey off their back and restore native rule to their countries. The goal of this offensive will be to liberate the remaining Muslim lands which are occupied by the United States, and to erase the state of Israel from the map. This will involve millions of troops and jihad guerrillas, and it will have the covert backing at least of the Europeans and the Russians and the Chinese. The U. S. A. and Israel have finally worn out their welcome. The rest of the world has had it with American and Jewish bullshit. They're tired of this mess. They have decided that Israel is a luxury humanity can dispense with, and it's time that American troops came home, one way or the other."

"The Americans and the Israelis are of course perfectly well aware of what is going to happen," said Moore with a smile. "It's impossible to keep something like this a complete secret. And the fact is that there is not one bloody thing they can do about it. They've exhausted all their options. What are they going to do? Drop bombs on defenseless Muslims? They've been slaughtering Muslims by the lorry load for a whole generation now, and all it's done is raise the anger and the hatred to the level of pure madness. Invade everybody in sight again? With what? America has invaded over twenty nations in the past twenty years and the country is exhausted, draft evasion is at an all-time high, the people are sick of this perpetual war, war, war with no end in sight, and with a little bit of help from Operations Applesmash and Pigkill, the United States is now bankrupt. It's finally going to happen. The Beast is about to bleed to death from the million and one little wounds that have been inflicted on it. Well done, lads and lassies!" There was a sudden outburst of cheers and applause from the Volunteers gathered around the mahogany conference table.

"They are going to have to throw every available soldier, every available weapon and every available dollar into one last attempt to pull Israel's chestnuts out of the fire and save the oil empire," said Wingfield. "They're so short on troops and supplies that the Feds had to make a choice. They can either continue fighting an endless civil insurgency here in the Pacific Northwest, or else they can shore up the crumbling empire and create a kind of Fortress Israel to save the Light Unto the Nations. They can't do both, not any more. They chose to save Israel instead of their own country. And the icing on the cake is, most likely even that ain't gonna work. It looks to me like the Jews have finally bought it this time. They've been treating those Palestinian people like dogs for a hundred years, and they're going to find out that dogs can bite."

"So that's why they are negotiating now?" asked Barrow. "These bastards are actually willing to let a part of the territory of the United States go in order to save Israel?"

"You got it," said Wingfield. "It's like the old right-wing conspiracy theorists used to tell us in the grubby little tabloid newspapers most of us got our start on. They really are Israel-Firsters. Of course, there are some people in the U. S government who are fighting tooth and nail against it, headed by Howard Weintraub. He's the hebe who was behind this little attempt to use evangelical yay-hoos as vigilantes to sabotage the Republic before it gets off the ground. You need to keep an eye on the scumsucking kike when you get down to Longview, Frank. He's smart and he's treacherous and he wants all of us dead."

The meeting moved on to other matters. The Political Bureau of the Party put together a basic presentation or statement of intention for the negotiations. "It's not exactly the Declaration of Independence, but it will do," said Morehouse, passing out copies. "We're handing these out by the bushel to the reporters, and for the first time these points are actually being broadcast and printed and discussed in public. There was a period of fifty years where you couldn't even force the most basic of racial concepts past the wall of media silence."

"That's because of these, sir," said Cody, hefting his Kalashnikov where he had leaned it against one of the walls of the conference room. "We have guns in our hands now, and people listen to other people with guns in their hands."

"Anyway, we call these the Twelve Points," said Morehouse. "Cribbed that one from Woodrow Wilson."

Political Bureau of the Northwest Volunteer Army

The Moral and Political Basis for Northwest Independence

1. The United States of America, in its original form as envisioned by the Founding Fathers, was a political entity created by and for white people. The white race made America what it is today. American law and the United States Constitution are derived from Anglo-Saxon common law, going back to the Magna Carta. Such concepts as democracy itself and the rule of law are based upon European thought, not African or Asiatic.
2. The United States of America as it exists today has only the most remote and tenuous historical connection with the country and the system of government which was originally established and envisioned by the Founding Fathers. The United States was never intended by the Founding Fathers to be multi-racial, or multi-cultural, or diverse. It was intended to be a national expression of what was viewed at the time as the Manifest Destiny of the white race. This is made abundantly clear by contemporary documents from the time of the Founding Fathers, in the writings of men such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin. Indeed, the only references to non-whites in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were in passing, where Indians are referred to as enemies of the colonists and where for census and apportionment purposes, blacks were considered to be three-fifths of a man.
3. The present government of the United States of America has become irredeemably corrupt, and its continuation in power is antithetical to the pursuit of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The United States has become tyrannical, poisonous, and deeply repulsive to every concept of human decency. America today is riddled with crime, corruption, poverty, sexual perversion, unemployment, ill health, mistreatment of the elderly, the destruction of the national infrastructure, a dysfunctional educational system, and national malaise and demoralization. America today has been bankrupted and morally poisoned by a series of foreign wars fought on behalf of the Jewish people which are in fact counter to America's interests, wars which have been as pointless as they were immoral. These problems simply did not exist to any significant degree in the past, when the white man was in charge.
4. It is clear beyond any debate, that modifying the racial composition of America away from the dominant white society that it was as it rose to power, towards a mixed, racially diverse society, has been catastrophic, an unmitigated disaster. Diversity does not impart strength; it creates weakness, division, chaos, corruption, and deep social sickness. Diversity has ruined America. Even if all races were exactly the same, if there were no differences whatsoever, the fact that whites created America as we know it today means that we now have the right to demand that at least a portion of what we have created be set aside for our exclusive use. We did not create this great

and wealthy country just to hand it over to an endless flow of mud-colored immigrants who have done nothing to earn what we have made, and who do not belong here at all.

5. For the past century, all peaceful attempts to alter and reverse the racial and social policies of the United States have failed. Petitions have been ignored. The electoral and political process has been undermined and corrupted, and turned into a weapon of genocide against America's white inhabitants. The judiciary has become an instrument of racial and social tyranny. The United States has persistently refused to respond to all peaceful and legal efforts at reform. All peaceful and legal avenues of redress having failed or been closed off, it is therefore not only the moral right, but the profound duty, of all Americans of European descent to take up arms against the United States and apply such force and coercion as may be necessary to compel the government of the United States to change its wicked and destructive behavior, and to punish those who are responsible for such behavior.

6. Based upon the extensive history of the black and mestizo races, it is clear that they are not capable of creating or maintaining an advanced society. It was not Africans who invented such things as the wheel and gunpowder, forged steel, domesticated the horse, sailed the world on voyages of exploration and conquest, invented aviation and charted the mysteries of the human body. It was Europeans. Third World immigration eventually means a Third World country. Racial integration and diversity is like mixing horse manure and ice cream. It does wonders for the manure, but it doesn't do much at all for the ice cream.

7. The loathsome perversion of homosexuality is absolutely unacceptable in any civilized society. It must be exterminated with fire and sword. This is not something that is subject to debate or argument. It is something that decent men simply do.

8. The unspeakable practice of infanticide by abortion is absolutely unacceptable in any civilized society. It must be brought to a halt immediately, and those who are guilty of trafficking in or profiting by this horror must be tried and punished for premeditated murder. This is not something that is subject to debate or argument. It is something that decent men simply do.

9. The moral perversion known as feminism is destructive of the family, which is the basic building block of society, because it teaches the false idea that men and women are somehow competitors and enemies, and that the bearing and rearing of white children is somehow shameful. No more pernicious, poisonous and humanly destructive lie can be imagined. There must be an immediate return to sanity and the nuclear family headed by a married couple, husband and wife, as the basic building block of society.

10. There must be a final solution to the Jewish question.

11. The number of whites, as a percentage of world population, is now down into the single digits and falling fast. There can be no doubt that the white race is in danger of literal, physical extinction. All of the White nations on earth are now accepting large numbers of nonwhite immigrants. The only one of the three major races of earth that is in real danger of extinction is the white race. It is absolutely essential that the white race acquire a Homeland of its own, some place on earth where white children can be born and raised in physical and spiritual safety, and where our numbers may be restored and the threat of racial extinction overcome.

12. History, economics, demographics, geography, and moral justice dictate that this worldwide Homeland for all the Aryan peoples of the world be established in the Pacific Northwest, the land which is hallowed with the blood of martyrs such as Sam and Vicky Weaver, Bob Mathews, Pastor Richard Butler, the Singer family, and now all of the comrades of the Northwest Volunteer Army who have perished during the past five years of armed struggle. While the Northwest Volunteer Army recognizes that we lack the power to overthrow that government completely and to take back our country in its entirety, for the sake of not only our own race but all of humanity, it is essential that the United States and the ruling élite which now controls the United States be clearly defeated in the eyes of the world, and that at least some portion of the North American continent be detached from Federal control and returned to the original white people who created the world as we know it. The coming conference at Longview will have one of two results, either the establishment of the Northwest Republic, or else a return to combat operations against the United States government on the part of the NVA. There is no third alternative.

"Jesus, you're really trying to scare the bastards to death, aren't you, Red?" asked Barrow, looking over the document.

"It ought to give them something to think about," said Morehouse. "We are making it as clear as we possibly can through our own media campaign that this conference is going to produce results, period, end of story."

Another facility which was established at Chehalis was the first basic training depot for new recruits. The NVA commandeered a local high school and turned it into a barracks, and every day Cody saw more and more young people drilling and learning small arms on the athletic fields. It turned out the Bobby Bells's establishment of a recruiting stand at Eastgate Mall had been prophetic. Anywhere in the Homeland where the NVA opened any kind of station or offices, they were immediately swamped with hundreds and then thousands of white men of all ages, and many women as well, who wanted to join the new Republic's military wing. Time and time again the Volunteers heard the same story: "I always wanted to join up with you guys and fight these bastards, I just never knew where to find you." Now that the NVA was making the transition from an underground guerrilla group to an open standing army, there were more volunteers of the small "v" nature than they knew what to do with. Thanks to the generosity of the Russians and the increasing aptitude of the NVA for relieving departing Federal troops and FATPOs of their weapons, there were enough rifles to go around, and Cody grew used to hearing outbursts of shooting from the athletic field at Chehalis High School, which had been turned into a firing range for the boots.

Uniforms and basic supplies were another thing. There was a lot of requisitioning going on. Mindful of Che Guevara's dictum that the guerrilla fighter must never take from the people so much as a button or a spool of thread that he does not pay for, the NVA staged a couple of more or less robberies of banks and casinos, and the Quartermasters were handed wads of cash every morning to buy what they needed from the local Wal-Mart or Safeway or wherever. If Cody could believe the scuttlebutt he heard around the headquarters, the QMs were an amazingly honest lot. As nearly as could be determined by a harassed middle-aged CPA who was now the Republic's official financial oversight officer, and who had an office in the new HQ, almost none of the expropriated funds were unaccounted for. More significant were the numbers of white U. S. military and even FATPOs who were deserting to the side of the NVA, in some cases even bringing with them their American tanks, helicopters, artillery, and other equipment. Many of the new recruits of course already had extensive military experience in the killing fields of Iraq, Iran, and Gaza. The NVA was very rapidly accumulating a hard core cadre

of combat veterans from both its own ranks and those with prior service in the imperial forces, and that core was surrounded by a growing number of young and eager volunteers. The makings of an army were definitely there, and if things on the American side were really in as bad a shape as Carter Wingfield's briefing had claimed, then it was an army that could win. Not that one would know the United States was on the ropes from watching the media. In the remaining interval before the conference opened on August 1st, America and the world seemed to go mad over the news from the Northwest. The television, the newspapers and all of the other media were filled with a raging sound and fury the likes of which the country had never seen before, almost all of it directed with incredible venom at the hapless person of Chelsea Clinton. Pundits screamed abuse at her as if she were Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun's long-lost daughter. Editorials called for her resignation. Black preachers and leftist radicals called for her assassination. Moves were set afoot in Congress for her impeachment. The possibility was discussed at one of the pre-conference briefing sessions for the NVA negotiating team. "Blessed are the peacemakers," commented Red Morehouse dryly. "Impeach, my ass," rumbled the gigantic John Morgan in disgust. "Hell, those yea-saying leeches in Congress impeached her daddy and her mama both, but they didn't have enough guts to kick their asses out of that White House. Not when her daddy got caught stickin' it where he shouldn't, or when her mama got caught ordering people murdered that she didn't like. Wonder if they'll remove Chelsea for the horrible crime of saying our name on TV?" "That will be an interesting world record for the Clinton family," replied Frank Barrow with a laugh. "Father, mother, and daughter all served as president, and all three were unsuccessfully impeached." "But suppose Chelsea is impeached before she can sign off on whatever deal we come up with at Longview, sir?" asked Cody worriedly. "Wouldn't that prevent the conference from going forward, or at least put it on hold?" "Don't worry. Whoever is pushing for this conference would have factored that into consideration," Morehouse assured him. "If the real power structure in the United States didn't want this conference to happen, the whole thing would never have come up. She won't be impeached." Nor was she, although Chelsea did announce several days after her speech that that as a concession to those who were opposed to the whole Longview dog and pony show, she herself would remain aloof and dignified from the entire distasteful proceeding, and she would not take part in the negotiations herself. "Of course, she was never going to be involved in direct negotiations anyway," remarked Major John McCausland as they watched this announcement on the tube. "Mommy wouldn't let her," replied Barrow. "Afraid she might forget herself and misspeak herself like she was actually president." McCausland, an Identity minister of some renown as well as an NVA combat officer, had arrived in Centralia during what was now coming to be referred to as the July Days, the period of about a week after the President's speech when there had been sporadic outbreaks of fighting and mob violence across the Northwest, and the FATPOs had been driven back into their barracks preparatory to their final departure from the scene. He was a heavy-set, gray-haired man with a kind of ponderous dignity about him, and he had elected voluntarily to eschew wearing a uniform for a simple dark suit and tie. McCausland carried a Bible in his briefcase, but he only took it out on breaks when he sat out on a bench in the park across the street, reading it on his own, and he didn't lard his conversation with Scriptural verses, nor did he pass out little Christian comic books or attempt to convert anyone to his own faith. The contrast between him and someone like the flashy, florid and elegantly coiffed Pastor Leonard Sheldon of the Bellevue church was noticeable. Barrow was quietly keeping his eye on McCausland and the Odinst Captain Robert Gair for any signs of conflict, but so far had detected none. Gair was a strapping blond man in his late twenties who smiled a lot, especially when he was killing Jews. He wore the NVA uniform, and he looked good in it. He had a Mjolnir, a Thor's Hammer, on a thin leather cord around his neck, but that was all the overt sign of his religious beliefs that he manifested. When Barrow obliquely mentioned it, Gair replied, "Asatru isn't something you preach. It's something you live." The religious wars were being momentarily held in abeyance. The reactions to the ceasefire and the coming negotiations from the world media outside the United States were even more interesting, because they were far more restrained and balanced. Cody was amazed to see some television commentators from the BBC, Deutsche Welle, and Russian television who could actually devote a few minutes to serious analysis of the events of the past five years. At the beginning of each briefing conference the team, which by now numbered around twenty Volunteers, was shown videotaped film clips on the coverage from all over the globe. "My God, they're actually reading from one of our position papers on the BBC!" exclaimed Cody. "Yes, they can do that in Britain," said Andrei Stepanov from the Political Bureau, who had been included in the Longview delegation after some consideration. It was thought that his presence might remind the Americans that the current Russian premier had interested himself in the Northwest situation, a diplomatic coup of the first order which Stepanov had been instrumental in pulling off. Cody now learned that representatives from the Political Bureau and the Army Council had actually conducted a high-level, top secret meeting with members of the Russian government in Vladivostok in May, which had resulted in the massive shipments of Russian small arms and ammunition the NVA had recently received. Cody was further fascinated to learn tangentially in some of the meetings that the bulk of the weapons had been paid for with quietly donated Arab money, and the remainder with Jewish money extorted from the Northwest "Indian" casinos. Stepanov went on, "In America the FCC still forbids American television from direct broadcast of any words or comments or any speech from any NVA person or other designated racist, or from apologist for terrorism, which is of course whatever the hell the Federal government says it is. That rule is still in effect and we must attempt to negotiate it away or at least work our way around it at Longview."

"If I didn't know that the European media was just as Jew-ridden as our own, I'd almost say some of these foreign commentators actually liked us," said Emily.

"Mmmm, it's not so much that they like us, it's just that they enjoy seeing America finally slip off the high wire," Barrow said. "Let's face it, since the reign of Bush the First, the United States has been cutting a swagger and playing the bully all around the world for a damned long time. America has needed taking down a peg or two for years, and I'm hardly surprised that the world seems to be looking forward to it. Remember, a lot of these countries in Europe have a tradition of nationalism and awareness of the Jewish issue that Americans don't. True, most of their governments and their ruling élites are just as Jew-ridden as our own. But in Europe they at least know what a Jew is, which Americans don't. You might say that the Europeans are just as sick as we are, but at least they know what

disease they've got."

"You guys will need to assign a couple of the team aides to monitoring the news all the time," Morehouse told them. "I know that seems an odd thing to send some of you comrades to a epoch-making event like this just to sit in a hotel room and watch television, but you will need to make comprehensive notes as to what is being said and by whom, and you will need to keep the point negotiators who are actually at the table abreast of all of it. These TV pundits and reporters will be speaking with their masters' voices. We need to know what their masters' voices are saying."

The NVA delegation had been broken down into two groups. These were the points, who would conduct the actual major face-off negotiations as a side—Frank Barrow, Corby Morgan, Andrei Stepanov, John McCausland, and Robert Gair. "Five on five, kind of like two nigger basketball teams," joked Morgan. These would be facing off against the five major enemy negotiators: Secretary of State Stanhope, Homeland Security Secretary Weintraub, Senator Jeanette Galinsky, Air Force General Charles Brubaker, and a last-minute addition whom the PB considered to be a significant and major player, former United States UN representative and American military governor of Iraq and Egypt, Oliver Cabot Lodge.

"There's your real power behind the throne," Morehouse told his point men. "Lodge is the one to watch. Not just big, big money but old Anglo-Zionist money. Yale man, Skull and Bones of course. Boston brahmin of the same kind that instigated the Civil War, and got us into the Spanish American War and World War One when it looked profitable. The same gang of high-nosed suits who could have stopped the Jews from instigating World War Two if they'd wanted to, but who did not because they saw immense profit to be made, and because they hated Adolf Hitler like the fires of hell. Those were some of Lodge's immediate ancestors who did those things, by the by. Works with and for Jews every day of his life, but he cut his eldest son off with a mere paltry million when he married a Jewess. He'll do their hatchet work for them, but his country club is still completely Gentile. Lodge currently holds over a hundred board memberships and chairmanships with Fortune 500 companies. His forte in the Middle East was structuring Arab puppet governments to maximize profits to American business, through making sure that every dollar in those poor benighted countries went into American corporate pockets. He learned Arabic himself to do it. The man is thorough. Lodge unquestionably caused more suffering and harm to those wretched people than Brubaker did with his bombers. This guy is the original buccaneer capitalist. In the seventeenth century he would have been a pirate, and he would have been knighted for his efforts. He has probably earned more money for his class in his own quiet way than any other man in history. My guess is that Stanhope will do most of their talking, Brubaker will bluster, and the Jews will do a lot of screaming and yadda yadda. Listen to what Stanhope says and watch what Lodge does. He will probably sit back and be quiet, mostly listening. When he opens his mouth, pay attention to every word and nuance, because I guarantee you, he is the man with the power."

The rest of the NVA delegation, all promoted to officer rank if they weren't officers already, were officially classed for the record as aides of various kinds. Cody was now a lieutenant who was on the list as aide de camp to General Barrow, giving him a sit-in behind the general at most of the actual negotiating sessions, which was turning Lieutenant Emily Pastras green with envy. She was an administrative aide to the delegation's public relations officer, Captain Jane Chenault. "You get to watch history being made, while I get to sit in a hotel room with a laptop computer and a printer and print off press releases and send other people's e-mails," she grouched. "Beautiful!" But she was mollified when she was taken off to one side by Colonel Daniel "Dangerous Dan" McGrew, who came down from Seattle to see her, and given a special intelligence-related assignment. Cody politely forebore to ask her about it, and she did not discuss it with him beyond telling him, "I'm supposed to seduce the Secretary of State," a line Cody wisely decided to leave alone. Every aide had some kind of unofficial left-hand job. Cody was the Yiddish-speaker, and he was to listen in under any circumstances possible and see if he could catch the Jews in the enemy delegation in what they thought was private nattering. Nightshade had her secret assignment. Lieutenant Olaf Olafsson was to liaise with the Swedish UN peacekeeping team who were theoretically there as guarantors of the peace, although being unarmed there wasn't much they could do should the United States decide to violate its pledged word, a by no means unknown event in history. Lieutenant Phil McMurrough was to keep an eye on all the enemy police and security details and troop presence, noting everything he could about their weapons, placement, movements, etc. in case the negotiations went really bad and there had to be a mass breakout and E & E. Lieutenant Lisa Napolitano was to keep an eye on the comings and goings of the hotel staff and try to make sure that no one was poisoned. Even so, the delegation members were cautioned not to accept any suspicious special gifts of food and eat only at common meals or things that were canned or seal-wrapped. Lieutenant Jack Cannon was to collect and collate all reports, gossip, and information he could about the movements of the enemy delegation, who was meeting with whom behind the main conference's back, who from the outside was meeting with the American representatives. He would be assisted in this through the electronic surveillance derring-do of Lieutenant Stanley Waters, aka Doctor Doom, who would be smuggling in via the delegation's diplomatically protected baggage enough electronic bugging, communications, and computer gear to open his own Radio Shack. Doc Doom's job would be first off to bug everything he could, and secondly to de-bug as much of the Federal surveillance gear as he could.

Emily's immediate ostensible superior was a statuesque and impeccably groomed, late thirty-something blond woman who had been a fairly late addition to the NVA delegation. She had arrived only on the morning of July 30th, in fact. At that day's briefing Morehouse had called her before the group in the antique-bedecked conference room and said, "Comrades, may I introduce Captain Jane Chenault? Comrade Chenault will be acting as our public relations officer during the negotiations, meaning that she stands up in front of the cameras and reads all our official statements and all that kind of thing." Cody had to admit privately that Captain Chenault filled out the khaki uniform shirt much better than Emily. "That is her official role. Unofficially and more importantly, she will be acting as our agitprop and psychological warfare officer. She has a degree in psychology from McGill University in Montreal, and a masters in marketing. She has been working with the Third Section's Agitprop department in one of our covert installations across the border in B. C., and she's the closest thing to a trained publicist we've got. Nor will I deny that part of her presence here has to do with the fact that she's probably the most photogenic spokesperson we could find."

"Yeah, you don't want me giving a press conference and spitting tobacco in the middle of it," agreed John Morgan. "It kinder gets

caught in my beard.”

“Well, Jane’s more than a pretty face, I promise you,” said Morehouse. “She is responsible for most of our internet propaganda, and she’s why it looks so good and says so much in a ten-second pop-up. You need to listen to her on anything regarding image and presentation. I can’t emphasize enough that you’re not only going to be negotiating with a team of enemy government officials, you’re going to be trying to convince an entire nation, and indeed the whole world, that this is the best thing that could happen.”

“Thank you, Colonel Morehouse,” said Jane Chenault. “I’m sorry I’m getting here so late, comrades, but since the President’s speech the RCMP and Canadian military have stepped up their security along the border of the Republic, and I had to walk over near Oroville and then make the necessary connections. What I will be doing is vetting the media image that the NVA delegation to the Longview conference presents to the media. It’s true that this isn’t going to any kind of referendum or popular vote, but whatever treaty or agreement is worked out will presumably have to be confirmed by the United States Senate or perhaps by both houses of Congress, and so to some extent we’re playing to the members of Congress as an audience. As you know, elections haven’t meant much of anything in the United States for a very long time, but the U. S. is still very much a poll-driven and PR-driven society, a marketing-based society if you like, and the American negotiators are going to be responsive to the public mood. That is to say, whatever mood the multi-national corporations who control the media and the government decide to create for the public, eh? I know that the media reaction has thus far been almost completely negative, but I will be very interested to note what kind of spin the corporates put on things as the negotiations progress. In other words, does the power structure in the U. S. A. really want this to happen? If they do, they’ll really be trying to sell it. If not, we should be able to tell from analyzing the media coverage. Spin always comes from the top down.

“Now, all of you are going to be under intense pressure by the enemy media representatives. They are going to try to peel you off from the main body of the delegation, get you off alone somewhere, and they will flatter you and cajole you, try to bribe you, try to trip you up. They want to get you to say things. It’s going to be very hard for you to avoid dropping offhand remarks, eh? Even just to tell the media reptiles to piss off. But you have to resist that temptation, because you never know when even a casual remark will be picked up, and misconstrued, and twisted into something significant that could impact the negotiations. The slightest thing you say could upset the whole apple cart. You must not do any independent media interviews, and you must report all media contacts to me so we can analyze them and see who’s up to what, and how we can put our own spin on it. I’ll confer with General Barrow and we will have daily media briefings for the press contingent, and by that I mean not just briefings for the media, but briefings within the team itself, bringing you up to date on what the media is saying about us and how we need to present ourselves. Most of you comrades have been in combat. I admit, I haven’t, although I have been shot at a few times including on my way down here, if that helps you with my bona fides. But I think most of you will understand that psychological warfare is just as important as actual fighting, and I don’t think it’s too exaggerated to say that this coming battle in Longview will be won largely on psychological grounds.”

After the meeting Barrow called Captain Chenault aside into the broom closet with the Chippendale desk and the rotary fan that was serving as his office. “You’re Canadian, comrade?” asked Barrow.

“Yes, sir,” the woman replied. “I was born and raised in Hull, which is in Ontario, but my husband and I moved to British Columbia when the NVA began its campaign there after 10/22. I knew some people who were involved in what was left of the old Social Credit party, and they were able to steer us to the NVA. I’m actually wanted in Canada for hatespeech and possession of hate literature.”

“That carries life imprisonment in Kingston Prison, now, I believe. But you stayed up there anyway with Agitprop?” asked Barrow.

“It needed doing, and it’s not as if I would have been in any less danger down here, eh?” she said with a shrug and a little laugh.

“You know that the Canadian government is not participating in the peace process?” asked Barrow.

“Yes, sir, I know.”

“You also know that’s going to make it damned near impossible for us to take any part of Canada with us into the Republic? I have to admit, I feel somewhat uncomfortable and ashamed at having you along,” said Barrow. “All I can tell you is that I will do my very level best to bring at least part of Canada with us into the Northwest Republic.”

“Look, General, you have other things to worry about, eh?” she said. “Yes, I hope that you can bring in at least part of Canada, but this whole thing is about the greater good of the white race worldwide. I firmly believe that one day the spark we have lit here in the Northwest will catch fire all over the white world, or what’s left of it, and that someday not just the western provinces but all of my country will be free of Zionist rule.”

“Do all of our Canadian comrades feel like that?”

“No sir,” she admitted. “A good many of them feel very bitter and betrayed.”

“And so they should,” replied Barrow with a heavy sigh. “You understand this thing could get very rough? That the word of the United States isn’t worth a bucket of warm spit, and if they don’t like the way things are going they could simply murder us all out of pure malice?”

“Then I’ll die in my people’s Homeland, sir,” she replied calmly. “That border exists only in people’s minds, and it has ceased to exist in mine.”

Morehouse must have seen Captain Chenault leave Barrow’s tiny office, because when he knocked and came in he began by saying. “In case you’re curious, I don’t know if she’s available, but Dan says she’s not with anyone.”

“Oh?” asked Barrow. “She mentioned her husband.”

“Widow. Her husband was Volunteer Marc Chenault. Killed early on, in an RCMP ambush in some alley in Vancouver. Just thought I’d mention it. How are we shaping up, do you think?” asked Morehouse, taking the seat recently vacated by Jane.

“I’m still not sure I can pull this off, Red,” Barrow confessed. “It’s like I’m going into the lion’s den. Up until now, we’ve been forcing them to play our game. Now we’re going to have to beat them at their own.”

“Yeah, well, it’s not as if genuine statesmanship is something we have any experience with,” said Morehouse glumly. “Back in the days before 10/22, or at least before the Party finally made its appearance on what little political landscape we had, white nationalists always had this terrible habit of running away from politics, I mean the real deal, not those stupid dog and pony shows we had every four

years.”

“All Americans had that habit,” Barrow reminded him. “Politics was so corrupt that whole generations of Americans grew up deliberately avoiding it. We didn’t want to think about it because we knew damned well there was nothing we could do. Government and the state was simply something you avoided as much as you possibly could.”

“Yes, I know, and that was one of the biggest advantages ZOG had over us. Thank God, we intend to establish a republic and not a democracy here in the Northwest. Who was it who said that from democracy steps forth the cruelest of tyrants?”

“De Tocqueville, I think,” said Barrow.

“But there was no excuse for our refusal to become involved in serious politics. It was just plain cowardice on our part, trying to get out of doing the heavy lifting. Plus I think it was an almost ingrained disgust at the whole corrupting, sickening process of democracy. My God, look at the kind of leaders all this wonderful democracy gave us since Abraham Lincoln trashed the Founding Fathers’ old Constitution and butchered half a million Americans to keep the Northern capitalists in power! Since 1865 America has always been led by criminals, incompetents, maniacs, mediocrities, pathological liars and heartless mass murderers. Grant, Cleveland, that drunken buffoon Teddy Roosevelt who was followed by that unspeakable hypocrite Woodrow Wilson who was followed by the greasy thief Harding. That syphilitic monster FDR. Kennedy the would-be Caesar, Jimmy Carter with his skull full of mush, the greedy crazy Bushes and the vicious perverted Clintons. And that’s just the presidents! Never mind all the Aaron Burrs, Boss Tweeds, Boss Prendergasts and Daleys and Willie Browns and Alger Hisses and Jesse Jacksons. How can anyone look at American politics and not vomit?”

Andrei Stepanov walked in on Morehouse in mid-babble. “That was something about Americans that Europeans never understood,” he said. “To us, politics was life’s blood. In our own countries, the hate laws were so Draconian that most of us could be arrested or sent to prison for even so much as mentioning immigration statistics or raising our palms above shoulder height, or singing a proscribed song from our country’s past, or mentioning a prohibited name from among our forefathers. Any serious participation in the political process was always denied to European nationalists after 1945. The best we could do was to create pale imitations, quasi-parties that merely hinted at the true agenda, which didn’t fool anyone in authority, and which were suppressed on a regular basis. Yet here in America, up until 10/22 white nationalists had legal status, at least technically. For decades you could actually get up and say what you wanted to say even if you immediately lost your jobs, and the system was rigged so that no one could hear you anyway. In Europe we would have sold our soul for that kind of opportunity. I think that in Britain and in Germany at least, and also in Eastern Europe, if nationalism had ever been given anything even approaching a level playing field within the political process, without the threat of Red terrorism and government retaliation, then we might not have had to pick up the gun in this country. But Americans were so afraid of politics that they never made anything like full use of legal status while they could. God alone knows what could have been accomplished if everyone had just been willing to stand up, tell the world that they were racists and proud of it, and engage in serious, adult political activity.”

“But we didn’t,” said Barrow with a sigh. “Now none of us knows how to do it at all.”

“We did everything but,” said Morehouse, nodding in agreement. “We took refuge in conspiracy theories, or religion, obscure scholarly anti-Semitism, or survivalism, or crackpot economics, and then when the internet came along we retreated into the cool of our basement rec rooms and the warm glow of our computer monitors, where we could sit hunched over a keyboard in safe anonymity, with a bowl of nachos and a cold brewski by our side, and pretend that we were doing some kind of good. I remember how many people flooded the internet in those days, with grandiose screen names like “AryanWarrior@berserker.com” or stupid rubbish like that. Guys who were pretty clearly janitors or something of the kind in real life, who crapped in their pants in terror that someone might actually find out who they were and come knocking on their door. We leaped on any one of a dozen excuses to avoid the rough and tumble of real politics, the agony of having to get out there, get right up close and personal into the faces of our own people, talk to the people, argue with them, reason with them, refute them, scuffle and fist-fight with them if we had to, and convince them that we are right and the United States is wrong. Our skins were as thin as tissue paper, and we were like neurotic children who couldn’t handle rejection or contradiction without going off into a corner and sulking. We were weaklings and crybabies. Our egos were so fragile we couldn’t stand for anyone to disagree with us and call us names. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, I can understand why we did that. Nothing is more frustrating than constantly having to work with stupid, sleeping people who don’t want to wake up. It’s like trying to drag kids out of bed in the morning to make them go to school, and when you live your whole life like that it can drive you bonkers.

“But the fact is, Frank, that we’re facing the same problem now,” Stepanov said. “At some point in time the Northwest Migration movement must take the leap from being a tiny revolutionary vanguard to being a mass movement.”

“That time is now,” said Morehouse. “We have to obtain the consent of the governed that has already been forfeited by the United States. That means we are going to be forced to get out there, go to ordinary dumb-ass people, and convince them that we are right. Not just beat them into submission. If we try that, then we’ll lose in the long run. Yeah, I’ve heard Bobby Bells expound on his ideas about baseball bats, and up to a point he’s right. We always have to have the baseball bat as a backup if nothing else, because otherwise no one will listen to us at all, and because there comes a time when the deliberate, willful refusal to understand can become criminal in itself, when it threatens the race. But if we are going to create a new society, gentlemen, here in the Northwest, then there is simply no substitute, no short cut, no easy way out. We have to get down in there in the shithole of politics and start shoveling.

“We can’t do this with the Party alone, create a whole new nation. The overwhelming majority of the people are going to have to buy what we’re selling. They’re going to have to want us to rule them. They are going to have to voluntarily participate in the creation of a new order and willingly put up with all the problems and sacrifices that entails. Otherwise even if we do take over, they’ll simply run away back to the same old poisonous American way of life they’ve always known, like a caged lion that escapes will return to his cage, or if he makes it back out into the wild, then he’ll just pace back and forth in a space the same size as his cage used to be. Like a dog returning to his vomit, if you want to get Biblical about it. This is why it is so vitally important that we cannot, must not, dare not appear to be anti-Christian! Whether we like it or not, facts are facts, and the fact is that the majority of people on the North American continent grew up with a thousand and one Christian points of reference in their daily lives which cannot be made to disappear in the twinkling of an eye, or even with the flourish of a gun. Our people think in Christian terms, and while any revolution must necessarily change the

thinking of the people involved in it, it simply is not possible to completely alter the outlook of a whole people and a whole culture overnight.”

“So cutting through all the theoretical crap, Red, what the hell do I do when I get down there?” asked Barrow helplessly.

“Look, you’re smart enough to understand the difference between what’s important and what’s not. You know what we want, what our people must have,” said Red. “You go down there and you don’t come back without it. Your road is straight and clear. How hard can it be to just not step off it no matter what kind of distraction you see over across the mud flats yonder? Every time they come at you demanding that you take something less than white freedom and full independence in an all-white nation of our own, you say no. And you do what no one else has ever been able to do. You make these American bastards hear the word no, and take it for an answer.”

IX.

“You have dragged us here, kicking and screaming. America will never be the same, whatever the result.”

– U. S. Secretary of State Walter Stanhope

On the morning of August 1st, they all donned their new uniforms, or in the case of Pastor McCausland and several others their suits. John Corbett Morgan had even been persuaded to submit to the attentions of a barber, and so he would be attending the conference sans his pony tail and with his sable beard trimmed neatly down to where he no longer entirely resembled Rasputin the Mad Monk. They piled into a large bus and drove out to the Chehalis airfield. While the gigantic, big-bellied copter warmed up on the tarmac, for the first time the entire negotiation team finally came together at the same time, assembled under one roof in an aircraft hangar, for a final briefing.

Red Morehouse, Carter Wingfield, “Dangerous Dan” McGrew of the Third Section, and General Patrick Brennan were there to see them off. “Here’s a little historical note for you, Cody,” said Morehouse as they walked towards the hangar across the airfield in the clear light of a summer morning. “In 1947 a man named Thomas Arnold was flying in a small private plane out of this airfield, on a business trip up to Seattle. It was a clear day and over there near Mount Rainier, he saw six or seven disc-shaped objects flying beside him in the sky, which he duly reported. The media got hold of it, and thus was born the name flying saucers. It was the beginning of the whole UFO phenomenon as we know it. It’s odd that this same little airport in this out of the way little town in Washington state should be the source of a flight that will change history, not once, but twice inside of a century. That’s what metaphysics buffs call synchronicity.” Several long folding tables had been pulled together at one corner of the hangar, and sets of luggage had been laid out, each with a name on them. Each member of the delegation went to his or her luggage and opened up the suitcase to do a final check, finding everything from clean underwear to an extra complete NVA uniform including boots, as well as extra ammunition for the sidearms which the delegates had insisted clearly and forcefully they would carry. Inside each suitcase was a false lining containing some of Doc Doom’s electronic gear, which would be shuffled around as necessary once they got into their wing of the Lewis and Clark Hotel. There were also one briefcase per delegate, containing a full set of the official documents for the conference, and two long plastic garment holders with each set of luggage, one that contained a newly pressed civilian business suit of either male or female cut, and the second that held a set of formal wear, including patent leather shoes, which hopefully matched their measurements given to the new divisional quartermaster. “A tux!” exclaimed Cody. “When am I ever going to wear this damned thing?”

“You can pretend you’re 007 facing down Goldfinger at the casino,” said Morehouse. “Or Goldberger. Remember, it’s shaken, not stirred.”

Nightshade giggled with glee as she held up her own garment holder, with the zipper open. “A formal gown?” she laughed. “Sequins? You’re kidding! I’ve never worn one of these things in my life! And I’d take three steps in these heels and fall flat on my face!”

Barrow smiled at her. “Look, we’re in the big leagues now, the beginning of a new ruling élite even if we’re not comfortable with that reality, and we need to start acquiring the necessary social skills. You can bet that fat Jewess Galinsky is going to show up at any formal events with some Dior creation that costs more than a tool and die maker earns in a year. I hope you rebel ladies will show her up.”

“Captain Chenault and Lieutenant Napolitano, maybe, sir,” replied Emily ruefully. “I’d just look like Olive Oyl.”

“You could always show up dressed as a Ghoulish Girl,” suggested Cody. “Speaking of cocktails, General, I presume the NVA General Order against alcohol consumption is still in force?”

“We’ll be surrounded by enemies who want to kill us, kill our entire race, and do us any imaginable harm they can,” replied Barrow, smiling thinly. “Do you think it’s a good idea to drink around people like that?”

“Point taken, sir.”

“Ginger ale makes a good substitute prop for a drink, and a hotel like that will probably have non-alcoholic beer,” put in Morehouse. “Remember that if you have to mingle and be sociable. We need every edge we can get, guys, and that means we stay sober while hopefully the enemy gets loaded.”

“Hmm, does that mean I can’t take in my plastic milk jug of Harlan county white liquor?” asked Morgan. “I was gone offer some to Howard Weintraub. It’ll knock his ass into eclipse.”

Morehouse decided not to inquire as to whether Morgan was joking, and stepped to a podium at one end of the hangar, gesturing them all to the folding chairs in front of it. “All right, comrades, gather round. You are scheduled to land at the helipad at the Lewis and Clark, built especially for us courtesy of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, at ten o’clock sharp. It is now eight thirty and Captain Chernilov tells me the helicopter flight will take about twenty minutes, so we’ve got about an hour to kill, and I’m going to need all of it. I have been informed by our observers on the ground at Longview that there is already quite a crowd assembled behind the ropes, waiting for your arrival. There are also camera crews from just about every television network, broadcast and cable, in the entire world. The whole world is watching, comrades. Literally. I hope none of you are afflicted with stage fright.”

“Well, sir, Nightshade and I have just come out of summer school drama class,” pointed out Cody.

“Yeah, that’s right,” said Morehouse. “So how are you kids doing?”

“I’m completely petrified,” admitted Cody.

"I'll be okay once I get on the copter and can get hold of an airsick bag," said Emily.

"I think we're all about to turn green, comrades," said Barrow.

"Don't any of you worry," boomed out McCausland. "The Lord has brought you through the fire to this point, and He won't abandon you now. You'll all do fine. Trust me on this."

"Well, the first day isn't too hectic, anyway," said Morehouse, looking over a paper on a clipboard. "I have a copy of the agenda here. It looks pretty simple and straightforward. You land at ten o'clock where it says here you're supposed to be greeted by the American delegation in full, and get formally introduced by the Honorable Seamus O'Connell, who is the Irish ambassador to the United Nations and is acting as protocol officer for the conference, which I am informed in fact means he's a kind of glorified concierge and head waiter. He's the guy you complain to if the TV doesn't work or there's no mint on your pillow. My guess is at least some or possibly all of the five major players on the American team will snub you by not showing up. On day one at least, I strongly advise that you simply ignore the snubs, get settled into your rooms, get unpacked and set up, and see how it plays out. This afternoon at three there is supposed to be a joint opening press conference where you will be baited like bears by the media, since this is the first chance they've had in five years to sling their shit at us directly and not get shot. Don't shoot them, by the way. That's a diplomatic no-no."

"Now, what exactly is the story on the guns, Red?" spoke up Corby Morgan. "They do understand that I'm bringing my Devil's Right Hand? No offense, Reverend McCausland." Morgan slammed the holstered .44 Magnum on his belt.

"We finally just told them that we were free men, that the mark of the free man is to bear arms, and free men do not disarm in the presence of the enemy and the oppressor," said Morehouse. "They grumbled and waffled and bitched, but they have accepted the presence of sidearms. Each of you should have one piece and a back-up." Cody had chosen a Smith and Wesson 1006, a 10-millimeter automatic loading a 9-shot magazine, with the Makarov as his holdout in his suitcase. Nightshade was carrying a Heckler & Koch P9S and a .38 snub in her purse, plus her switchblade up her sleeve in a wrist sheath she'd rigged up. "These weapons are symbolic, an important statement, and they're also for emergency defense in case it really breaks bad and you have to sell your lives dearly. Leave them in the holsters otherwise. I wasn't joking just now. Don't shoot smart-ass reporters or wave the iron around and make the waiters dance, or anything like that. This is supposed to be a peace conference with all that implies. I know shooting people is a habit we've acquired over the past five years, and indeed it's been none too soon that the white man has rediscovered the delights of shooting his enemies. But in this context, gunplay is counterproductive. We insist that you have them not only in case you need them to defend life and limb, but also as a political and philosophical statement of who we are. This is the most important racial mission that any of you will ever be on in your lives. Don't blow it."

"Secure communications?" asked Barrow. "What did Third Section eventually work out on that?"

Dan McGrew spoke up. "We have to assume that every one of you are going to be under electronic and physical surveillance from the moment you step out of the helicopter," he said. "I hope you will be able to evade it and establish at least some unmonitored communication with the Army Council, but we can't count on that. Since it is a given that your phone and internet conversations will be monitored, we're going to have to follow most of what's going on via CNN like the rest of the world. Before you leave I will give General Barrow, and General Barrow only, the name of someone that Third Section has been able to get into the conference site in such a position that they will have at least some access to you, or can obtain such access. It could be anyone, a reporter, a staff member, an American soldier, a member of their delegation, anyone. It goes without saying that if this person is discovered by ZOG, they will be dead within an hour, and more importantly you will lose your only certain link with command. The only reason I am mentioning this person's existence at all is so that everyone in our own delegation understands the necessity of discretion in every single thing that you do. We happen to know that the Federals are aware that such an operative will be at the conference, so you might as well be aware of the fact as well. It's not good when they know something you don't. They appear to have no idea at all who it is, and the FBI is going insane trying to identify him or her. This attempt of theirs to locate the covert agent will be a constant undercurrent running through the entire conference. This means that every single interaction you comrades have with anyone in that hotel, including with one another, will be monitored and analyzed by the enemy. You will be living in a goldfish bowl. The strain of this will be immense, and once the novelty wears off you're going to develop major league cabin fever. Maybe some of you think it's going to be a fun vacation hanging out in a luxury hotel, after the way most of us have been living for the past five years. Disabuse yourselves of that notion. That luxury hotel is a jail and potentially a death trap for you. This is not only the most important mission you will ever undertake, it will be the most stressful."

"Comrades, I can only second what Colonel McGrew has said in the strongest possible terms," said Morehouse. "The walls will have ears and eyes, until such time as Lieutenants Waters and Cannon can get the place reasonably de-bugged, and then they'll find some other way to watch you. That means you weigh every word you say, and when in doubt, say nothing. Do nothing that might reflect adversely on us in the media or provide the enemy with any information or any kind of an opening to do harm. That means among other things that male and female comrades sleep in their own rooms every night, alone."

"Why are you looking at me and Comrade Nightshade when you say that, sir?" asked Cody uneasily.

"Understood, sir," Emily called out.

"What do you mean? There's nothing to understand!" protested Cody. Emily kicked him in the ankle. "Stop that! We're not in church!"

"Right now, I need to speak with the point negotiators privately, as well as Colonel McGrew, Colonel Wingfield, and General Brennan," said Morehouse. "The rest of you hang loose and prepare to embark on the great roller coaster ride in half an hour or so."

The point negotiators and senior officers gathered in what had been the airport manager's office. Morehouse turned on the air conditioner more out of habit than because he believed the place was bugged and got them all sat down around a conference table that filled one wall of the office. "We've got a problem," said Morehouse.

"I ain't surprised. They don't really want us to go down there. What are those Federal sons of bitches up to now?" demanded Morgan roughly.

"They're not up to anything, at least no more so than usual," Morehouse told him. "It's our own idiots who have decided they just can't

wait another day to bring back that good old Movement horse shit like mom used to make.”

“What do you mean, Red?” asked Barrow.

“Religion,” said Morehouse.

Barrow stared at him for a moment in silence, and then buried his face in his hands. “They couldn’t even wait until we got down there?”

“Apparently not,” said Morehouse bitterly.

“Tell me.”

“A double whammy. First off, there was an unauthorized leaflet distribution in Corvallis, Oregon yesterday. A big distribution, fifty thousand or so fliers dropped over the city from an airplane, baiting the local evangelicals, Pentecostals and so on, calling them names, daring them to come out and fight. In this leaflet Jesus Christ was referred to as a dead Jew on a stick, and described as having a homosexual relationship with his disciples.”

“Mother of God!” cried Barrow in horror. “This was an official NVA thing?”

“It was signed by a newly commissioned NVA lieutenant name Gregory Fetterman, and done on his orders and on the Party dime, so yes in that sense it was official, but needless to say it wasn’t authorized by the Army Council or Agitprop,” said McGrew, who was apparently in on the disturbing news. “Lieutenant Fetterman is now Volunteer Fetterman once again, and he’s being transferred, no doubt to nurture a sense of grievance as to how he is being persecuted by the NVA Bible-thumpers and eventually to make more trouble. The hell of it is, he has a good combat record and he’s not a complete fool, apparently. It was excess of zeal.”

“He has dog doo where his brains should be,” said Barrow flatly. “Oh, this is the very way for the new government to win friends and influence people, and convince poor and confused and frightened working class white folks whose churches are their lives that we mean them no harm and that things will be better with us in charge! And he couldn’t even wait until we actually gained the Republic before he leaped into that lunatic slurry pond with both feet?”

“I’ve got some bad news and some good news,” continued Morehouse. “The bad news is that the media got hold of this fiasco.”

“I really, really want to hear the good news,” said Barrow.

“We lucked out. The Commandant of the Corvallis Flying Column, Billy Basquine, was in town. He took one look at that leaflet, called out his boys and gripped everybody concerned. First time one NVA member has been officially arrested by another. In addition, there are several ladies and gents from the Fourth Estate sitting in custody in the newly occupied Corvallis jail right now, and they’re sweating, because Billy has put out the word that if one whisper of that crap gets onto the airwaves and upstages you guys at Longview, they get a bullet in the head. He made sure the newshores made long, tearful calls to their editors and managers to drive home the point. I don’t know if it’s worked, too soon to tell, but if it does work, it has been a very near run thing. If it doesn’t, Basquine will probably shoot the newshores, which will put the ones in Longview in a really favorably disposed mood to your delegation, I can tell you.”

“Beautiful,” said Barrow, slowly shaking his head. “Just fucking beautiful.”

“Ready for the other shoe to drop?” asked Morehouse quietly. “It gets worse.”

“How can it be worse?” wondered Barrow.

“We now have an official Christian fundamentalist faction within the Party, and they are demanding a seat at the negotiating table in Longview,” Morehouse told them. “Apparently Reverend McCausland here isn’t good enough for them.”

“That’s worse,” agreed Barrow.

“May I ask just who it is who takes such an uncharitable view of my ministry?” inquired McCausland politely.

Morehouse pulled a paper out of the stack on the clipboard and handed it to Barrow. “They call themselves the Fifth Monarchy Tendency. You see, since we are a unitary political movement, we can’t have separate parties. There’s only one Party, of course. We just have so-called tendencies within that Party, which is another word for factions and cliques and claques and all the other tag ends of democratic chaos. These guys actually showed a little finesse, unlike Comrade Fetterman and his dopey leaflets falling from the sky. They claim with a certain logic that the best way to counter the threat of pro-Zionist evangelical militias and resistance to the new Republic is to out-Christian and out-Scripture them. This is their position paper. They are demanding that it be one of our featured presentations at the conference and they want one of their people assigned to the delegation at the last minute. He’s standing by in town now and waiting for our call. One Reverend Gareth Burns. Interestingly, he has never been an NVA or Party member, although he did some pretty valuable support work up in B. C. Captain Chenault may know him.”

“Never been a Volunteer yet he wants in on the kill and the cut?” snorted Morgan. “He’s got some damned nerve.”

“Third Section is running a full profile on him now,” reported McGrew, “But apparently his bona fides are good. He’s done prison time under Canada’s hate law for preaching racial separation, You got to respect anyone who made it alive out of Kingston, and understand if he’s maybe a little funny in the head. That place is supposed to be worse than Florence or Auburn or the women’s camp at Pullman.”

“Fifth Monarchy?” mused Barrow, glancing at the document in front of him. “Where have I heard that before?”

“I know them,” said McCausland. “They’re an interesting blast from the past, actually, if you’re into obscure religious movements. That was the name of the most extreme of the Puritans who fought under Oliver Cromwell. That’s about where they are, too, theologically speaking. Back in the seventeenth century. They do not consider Christian Identity to be true Christians, but a mere fly-by-night modern fad from the nineteenth century. John Calvin was wishy-washy, John Knox is more to their taste, and to them the last great mind in theology was Cotton Mather. The passengers on the Mayflower would have hailed them in fellowship.”

“So I see,” said Barrow. “According to this, that’s about how far we’re going back in time. The Northwest Homeland is to be a Christian state, and the Bible is to be the basis of the new society. Every law that is passed has to have a Scriptural cite, chapter and verse. The new youth must not be raised in frivolity, whatever that is. Oh, and we are to have a king.”

“Well, I could go for that, so long as I get to be king,” said Robert Gair.

“No, actually, we are to be ruled by King Jesus, according to this. Oh, I can just see it all now! We get up at the press conference this afternoon and tell everyone, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, please set your watches back three hundred years.’ Dear God in Heaven, no pun

intended! We are on the verge of securing the existence of our people and a future for white children, and these blubber-brained jackasses want to sit there and tell Howard Weintraub and Walter Stanhope all about frivolous youth and King Jesus?"

"What do you want us to do, Frank?" asked Morehouse.

"First off, call Reverend Burns and tell him to stay the hell away from this airport, because if I see him I will probably strangle him with my bare hands," said Barrow. He handed the paper back to Morehouse. "Secondly, tell these people that they can take this nonsense and shove it up their asses, and I see no need for any diplomatic re-wording."

"The Political Bureau will," said Stepanov.

"Red, will the Army Council and the Political Bureau be able to keep these yammerheads out of the media and out of our hair at the conference? How much support do you think they're going to get from the rank and file?"

"I can tell you how much resistance they're going to get from the rank and file," said Captain Gair with a scowl.

"Yeah, and that terrifies me. Red, we must not have any kind of conflict breaking out between Party factions while these negotiations are going on!" pleaded Barrow. "Please, please, tell these assholes like Burns and Fetterman whatever you have to do, lock their asses away if you have to, but in the name of all that is holy, make them shut up!"

"Carter?" asked Red. "You know I mean no offense to your own faith, but can you give me some idea of how much support this faction is likely to get within the Party and the NVA?"

Wingfield sighed, "I don't know, and I don't think that's how the question needs to be phrased. Let's see if we can avoid the whole concept of factionalism. Anybody who knows me knows I was saved long ago by a good preacher and a good woman. You also know I had a daughter killed a while back, and a son-in-law I long ago came to regard as my own blood who was lucky to make it out of Auburn. I want this new country more than I can say, and I want it to be a righteous land that walks in God's ways. But this," he gestured towards the Fifth Monarchy document, "This isn't the way to go about it. Look, let me talk to these people. I speak the language, so to speak."

"Thank you, Carter," said Morehouse with audible relief in his voice.

Barrow turned to them all. "And now I suppose I have to do something I was hoping to avoid. I have to ask you guys point blank: am I going to have to fight against this crap as well as the Federals when we get down to Longview? I mean, we know that the Americans are attempting to use religion to divide and conquer here. Have they succeeded? Have they penetrated this very delegation with this religious horse shit? Are you guys going to fall out and start going at one another with Bibles and hammers right in front of the media and hollering who's a dead Jew on a stick? I can't call off the conference, but I'd like to know. I'd also like to know why in the name of all sanity you people, both groups of you, cannot lay this aside for the common good of our people? Why in the name of God or gods or the Great Pumpkin am I even having to waste time on this, on today of all days, one hour before we confront the enemy of all mankind and try to save our people from extinction? What the fuck is wrong with you?" Barrow raved. "The ship is burning and sinking with our entire race on it, and you won't let us in the lifeboat until we decide how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? Damn you!"

"All Southerners ain't necessarily got religion," said Morgan bleakly. "What I want to know is where was God when the FBI butchered my wife in the King County jail? Never mind. This stuff these Fifth Monarchy whosits are doin' is stupid and verges on goddamned treason, and that damned fool down in Corvallis needs to be dropped out of his own airplane."

"I am National Socialist," said Stepanov with a shrug. "I have no opinion."

"All right, that leaves you two," said Barrow, looking at McCausland and Robert Gair.

"Our Movement has been avoiding the issue for fifty years, sir," explained Gair patiently. "Always we get told not now, not now, later, later, later. We've been patient, but exactly when is later? When do we talk about this and make a collective decision for our race to make a new departure? I'm sorry, but to some of us, to a lot of us, a new spiritual path for the white man is important. Damned important. I have never understood how we are supposed to fight a deadly dangerous enemy who threatens our very being, while at the same time worshipping that enemy as a god. We all know how Christianity has been used against our race as a weapon of corruption and genocide, and Colonel McGrew's daily intelligence briefings are full of incidents where these Bible-thumping dumb-asses are being incited by their preachers to attack us on the ground because they think Jews are some kind of divine messengers or whatever. Captain Chenault is right on with what she said in there in the briefing yesterday. We can't just fight with guns any more, we have to fight with ideas, and it's more crucial now than ever before that we take on the most poisonous and dangerous ideological weapon in the enemy's arsenal, and that's Christianity!"

"And why exactly do you self-proclaimed pagans and atheists persistently refuse to recognize the patently obvious truth, which is that the so-called Christianity taught by these greasy thieving televangelists for the past fifty years is not Christianity at all?" asked McCausland in exasperation. "What part of it isn't simply a money swindle is Zionism wrapped in a quasi-Scriptural disguise that's as phony as a three dollar bill! These damned TV preachers with their private Lear jets and their two thousand dollar suits and their so-called prosperity theology are nothing but con men working for the Jews! They're part of the overall Zionist agenda to co-opt and destroy Western civilization just as much as the Federal Reserve and the United Nations and the Patriot Act ever were! Okay, fine, no argument. Let's string 'em all up. I'll pull on the rope myself. But anyone with the slightest knowledge of history can tell you that this so-called Christianity practiced by the major denominations for the past century is a vile mutation, an abomination that has no more to do with the original faith than it does with time travel! And may I ask, Captain, how many times in the past five years has your life been saved by Christian comrades of the Northwest Volunteer Army? How many Christian families have sheltered you when you were on the run? How many Christians have been tortured in the FATPO barracks and the Federal prisons, sometimes beyond all human comprehension like that poor woman Cathy Frost?"

"Many," said Gair. "No argument there at all from me, sir. Look, nobody I know, nobody sane anyway, wants to ban Christianity or persecute you. Fetterman and his kind are kooks. It's rather the reverse we're worried about. You see what these Fifth Monarchy people are trying to do already, turn the Republic into a theocracy! Yes, I am familiar with the history of Europe under Christianity and a lot of good came from it. I'll give you that hands down. But you can't be trusted with state power, because it's also a historical fact every time

you wind up in a position of power you start burning people at the stake! I don't want to take your faith away from you, but I damned sure am not going to tolerate any attempt by a bunch of ignorant tub-thumping boneheads to take my faith away from me!"

Barrow waved his hands helplessly in the air. "Gentlemen, you do understand, don't you, that if any discussion like this occurs at the Longview conference within range of the Federal listening devices and they pick up on it, we might as well pack the whole thing in and come back empty-handed? If we can't present a united front, they're going to eat us alive. Captain Gair, you ask when will be the time to discuss all this fascinating and vitally important stuff? I can't tell you. I don't know. I can only tell you one thing. It is not...now!" he concluded, slamming his fist on the airport manager's desk for emphasis.

"I think, General, that it would be of some help if we knew exactly where you stand on the religious issue," said Rev. McCausland. "I'm sorry, sir, but I have to agree with Captain Gair about one thing. The undeniable fact is that it is important to many of the people who have laid their lives on the line for the cause of this new country, and it simply cannot be dodged forever in the name of temporary expediency. When does that temporary expediency end? You say not now. But it seems to be stretching out for a very long time. Don't worry, I am not one of these fanatics who thinks that it would be better to remain in Babylon rather than to leave it under a cloud of doctrinal impurity. That's just dumb. But if I am going to go in there today and negotiate a country away from those Jews and their pet swine, then I want to know what kind of country it will be. God forbid I should compare myself with a Scriptural prophet, but am I leading my people into the Promised Land, or is it going to be forty years in the wilderness?"

"You mean you didn't catch the golden calf provision in the draft treaty?" needled Gair.

Barrow clenched his fists together and did his best to avoid cursing, shouting, and turning over the desk in his rage. "Very well, I am going to say some things now which I most likely shouldn't say," he said evenly. "It's not my desire or my intention to offend any of you comrades, but I can't overemphasize how important it is that we get this settled before we go in there into the presence of the enemy, so we can present a united front and win our Homeland. I am familiar with history, and I have the greatest personal respect for the good aspects of Christianity. Even if this weren't the major issue it's becoming, I would never dream of offending any of our Christian comrades or calling Jesus a dead Jew on a stick. That kind of behavior is childish and stupid and rude, and there's no excuse for it no matter what one's personal beliefs on the subject. As to my own views, of course there is a God. All you need to do is look at the way the human body works, or the way the ecological systems of the earth balance, or the structure of a snowflake or a leaf, to know that there is intelligent design in the universe. What God is like I do not pretend to know, and I frankly believe that for human beings, He is unknowable in any real sense, no more than an amoeba can comprehend a galaxy. I do believe that we can discern His intent sometimes if we look hard enough, and that He does occasionally manifest Himself in human affairs in the person of certain very extraordinary men of the degree of Marcus Aurelius, or William Shakespeare, or Adolf Hitler. But this has nothing to do with securing the existence of our people and a future for white children, at least not in the immediate sense. So I repeat. Not now!

"All this having been said, I believe that it is possible and maybe even desirable that many years from now, once we have obtained state power and created an all-white society, and done the thousand and one things that are necessary for us to do in order to insure our racial survival, we might want to address this. Once we have our own stable and prosperous all-white nation, and we can allocate the time on the racial agenda for this issue, and can debate it in an atmosphere of calm and security, then perhaps we should agree to all sit down and examine the role of religion in our people's lives as it pertains to the coming centuries, in the light of scientific knowledge and the expanded consciences which we now have. I do not believe that it is blasphemy to try and perceive God through reason and not just through faith or holy texts. My personal guess would be that when that time comes, we will most likely come to a consensus among ourselves that while the Christian faith is a glorious and indelible part of our past, it is something we have outgrown, as a child outgrows his clothes, and it is time for us to move on. But that is not our concern here, today. We are simply too busy to fuck with this mare's nest right now. The only way that we can or should ever attempt something like that that is as mature adults, in a nation of our own, where we hold state power. We cannot, dare not, must not ignore all the urgent and life-threatening immediate things we have to do in order to stop and have a religious debate. Once again, comrades, I must ask you to lay this aside for the greater good." Barrow sighed and spread his hands. "And that's about the only thing I can say to you without breaking down and shouting myself. The whole issue is basically insoluble but since we're all going to die, we're all going to find out what if anything happens after death. Why, exactly, do we have to sit down and figure this out now, with our debut as a nation onto the world stage forty-five minutes away?"

"You're a bit more long-winded than you think, Frank," said Morehouse. "Our nation's debut onto the world stage is now only about half an hour away."

There was a knock on the door of the office and a young man in uniform stuck his head inside. "Sirs, Captain Chernilov says we need to start boarding now."

Barrow stood up. "Later, gentlemen," he said. "Much later. Now we've got a job to do. Let's go do it." They all stood up and filed out the door. Barrow hung back, his hand on McGrew's arm, and they walked out of the office and across the tarmac together. The delegates were loading the luggage onto the helicopter through the rear door that descended down into a ramp. "I believe you've got a name for me, Colonel?"

Cody and Nightshade were standing outside the hangar on the tarmac, next to Colonel Wingfield's Humvee, and the young Volunteer who had been at the Bellevue church and carried the antique British revolver was with them, his Webley in a holster at his side. A small intense-looking girl with dark brown hair was adjusting Nightshade's uniform, her neckpiece and crossbelt and beret. Barrow recognized the girl Volunteer as Wingfield's driver. "Crossbelt always left waist to right shoulder," she was saying. "Don't put it on backwards, unless you're left-handed, because it's meant to hold up the weight of the gun and holster and stop your belt from sagging. And the insignia on the beret goes over your left eye." She stopped and stood to attention and saluted Barrow smartly. "Good morning, General," she said.

"Morning, C.," replied Barrow, returning the salute. "I heard you were becoming our official female uniform fashionista."

"China's giving me tips on how to wear these duds, sir," said Nightshade. "Especially how to get this dickey or doily thing on over my head without messing up my hair." Barrow noticed that both China and the young man were wearing NDF tabs on their collars.

“You’re not SS yet, Shane?” he asked. “I thought you and C. would have gotten in on the ground floor through Carter.”

“He offered, yes sir, both of us,” said Shane. “But we started out with a pretty tight crew down in Dundee. Been with the same company since 10/22, so we decided we wanted to finish with ‘em.”

Barrow turned to Cody and Nightshade. “Right, you two get on board. Time we got this show on the road.” The two of them walked toward the copter, which was beginning to rev the rotors.

Morehouse strode up to him. “McGrew give you what you needed?”

“Yeah,” said Barrow. “Dammit, Red, I wish you were coming!”

“I wish I was, too. Well, it’s not as if I’ll be on the moon,” said Morehouse. “I’ll be only a cell phone call away, so you can hear my dulcet tones any time you want. It’s just we’ll have to assume we’re being listened to, so don’t be surprised if I launch into a long historical lecture about Andrew Jackson and the central bank. But for now, all I have to say is give ‘em hell, Frank! Good luck!” The two men shook hands, Barrow boarded the copter, the rear ramp raised, and the hopes of an entire people across the globe rose slowly into the clear blue Northwest sky. “Good luck,” whispered Morehouse again, watching the copter disappear to the south.

The copter was a civilian model of the old Soviet Mi-171, adapted for VIP transport, and there were comfortable wide seats like those on a passenger jet. Cody courteously let Emily have the window seat. “What’s the in-flight movie, sir?” he called out to the front of the aircraft.

“Birth of a Nation!” called back Barrow. “Actually, we do kind of have an in-flight movie, since this copter has a TV up here which I will turn on and get—CNN, it looks like. You folks at the back may not be able to see it very well. Comrades, please keep your seatbelts on. This will be a short ride, but for all we know some die-hard loyalist FATPO or some church-going lout who is hearing voices from God in his head may decide to shoot at us in the air, or as we come in to land.”

“I’ll keep an eye out for fighter jets and missile trails,” volunteered Emily, her nose glued to the window.

“That’s a cheerful thought,” said Cody. “You can tell us to all put our heads between our legs and kiss our asses goodbye.” The flight from Chehalis was only twenty minutes, as the Russian captain had predicted, but it seemed to last forever to Cody. No one on board spoke much. Cody could see the golf course at the Lewis and Clark looming on the ground through the window as he looked over Nightshade’s shoulder. The Russian helicopter landed on the hotel lawn, and as they were all watching the CNN news monitor they actually saw themselves drop out of the sky. They could see themselves, their copter sitting on the grass. There was a crowd of what appeared to be easily ten thousand people who were being held back by U. S. Army military police, Washington State Patrol, and men in blue helmets who were presumably UN peacekeepers.

“That’s an awful lot of MPs,” said Morgan suspiciously.

“They’re probably petrified of these sidearms we’re carrying,” said Barrow.

“I can understand why,” chuckled the mountain man. “They’ve been on the receiving end enough times.”

“Okay, now what?” asked Barrow as the copter’s engines switched off. “Jane, you’re our protocol officer.”

Jane Chenault was talking on her cell phone. She hung up and said, “Yes, that was Mr. O’Connell. There’s a couple of problems already.” She stood up “All right, guys, this is our moment, eh? We still have a minute or two before we disembark, while they are rolling out the red carpet, literally. Well, actually, it looks to be some kind of green vinyl, but someone’s being considerate. Either they don’t want us to get our shoes muddy, or else they don’t want us tearing up their golf course. You can see on the TV that pavilion type of open tent they’ve got set up at the edge of the landing pad, like a big awning? That is where we are supposed to be greeted by the American delegation, which in addition to assorted flunkies will be comprised of Secretary of State Stanhope, General Brubaker, and Mr. Lodge. Howard Weintraub and Senator Galinsky are boycotting all functions where any member of the NVA is present other than the direct negotiating sessions themselves. So I guess us girls won’t be able to compare our formal gowns with hers.”

“Which is just fine and dandy by me!” exclaimed Barrow enthusiastically.

“Now, I’m just all torn up inside over that,” said Morgan, shaking his head woefully.

“I must confess, I wish to look at the face of Galinskaya as little as possible,” admitted Stepanov. “It is remarkably ugly, even for a Jewess.”

“That means they will have all the more time to skulk in the corners and plot against us,” warned McCausland grimly.

“Yes, well, we’re also being snubbed in the matter of mood music,” continued Jane Chenault. “The Americans had kindly arranged for the Marine Band to be present, and as we did our little stroll down the catwalk out there they were going to play an orchestrated version of the old Civil War ballad Two Brothers.”

“Thus implying that this is a civil war against fellow Americans who are basically our brothers and not a war against a vile and monstrous tyranny,” said Barrow dryly. “Nice little spin. One for them.”

“Well, apparently, Weintraub got all outraged at the idea of playing tunes for terrorists, and so they scratched the Marine band, and now there’s no music,” said Jane. “I was speaking to Chernilov. This bird has some exterior speakers, big ones, and he has some CDs, but they’re all Russian classical. I think the 1812 Overture cannon passages would be a bit over the top. He’s got the Nutcracker Suite, but do we really want to go face to face with America to the sound of the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies? The only thing Chernilov’s got that he says would be appropriate is something called The Great Gate of Kiev.”

“Ah, Mussorgsky!” said Stepanov. “I know it. It’s perfect for us. Very solemn and dignified.”

“Also very Russian,” said Barrow glumly. “Jane, what do you think? Music or no music?”

“We carry Russian rifles and we arrived here in a Russian copter,” said Jane. “I think they know. I’d say go with the mellows. We also don’t know whether or not they’ve got people planted in the crowd to yell slogans and obscenities and whatnot at us, and generally cut a shine for the TV crews. They used to love to do that before 10/22. We might want some classical music to drown out any clagues. You have to bear in mind that we haven’t done any media interviews up until now and we made the reptiles keep their distance down in Chehalis and Centralia, much to their frustration. So except for a few odd exceptions like Captain DiBella beating that reporter on camera in the Eastgate Mall, the world as a whole has never seen us except as faces on the post office wall. You might say this is our

coming-out party, and they are all out there looking us over as fresh meat after a long hungry spell. From this moment on, in addition to all the government spies, the media are going to be all over us like ugly on an ape, eh? I'd say let's make our entrance to some groovy vibes. It will give them one more fairly harmless thing to yammer about on the cable talk shows."

"I feel like the aliens descending to earth in that old movie about close encounters," Gair said.

"That's how most of these people probably view us," said Barrow. "Jane's right. We've always been the hidden enemy, invisible except for our gun muzzle flashes in the dark. Okay, ponderous Russian entrance theme it is, and I hope Captain Chernilov has good musical taste."

"Right, this ramp is wide enough to we can go down three abreast," said Jane. "General Barrow, you and Commandant Morgan and myself need to step out first, to present contrast. Diversity, if you'll pardon the expression."

"You got the beauty on one side and the beast on the other, Frank," laughed Morgan.

Comrade Chenault lined them all up in front of the rear door. "Now, the salute," Jane said to Barrow. "When you reach General Brubaker, you should give him a snappy military-style salute. Not NS. The object is to see if he returns it. If he doesn't, we'll just ignore it and move on. But if he does that means he acknowledges the NVA as fellow soldiers, so this is an important political statement as well. It may also be a signal of their intentions for the whole conference."

"No Heil Hitler?" asked Barrow.

"Oh, good Lord, no!" said Jane, shocked. "Really, General! You know and I know what that ancient salute of our race means. The overwhelming majority of the billions of people who will be witnessing this around the world do not. Remember, this is an historic event and we only get one take. Please, sir, don't turn it into comic opera!"

"So I shouldn't fart and spit when I shake hands with people?" asked Morgan.

"All right, this is it, comrades," called Barrow. "When the ramp hits the ground just follow us out, we walked down this vinyl pathway they've laid out. Don't try to march in step. We haven't practiced drill and ceremonies, and we'll just end up looking foolish. No goose-stepping or clowning around, just a calm normal walk. If anybody in the crowd yells, ignore them. No yelling back, no giving them the finger, nothing like that. I don't think they're close enough to throw things, but if they do, we just dodge their incoming and get on with this. We meet the Americans, and then...what?" He looked at Jane.

"We get on that electric courtesy van by the marquee, and they take us to our section of the hotel," said Jane. "The Swedish peacekeeping team will follow with our baggage, loaded onto golf carts. We have Mr. O'Connell's promise the bags won't be tampered with. I'm not sure how much weight his word actually carries with the Feds, but I don't think they want to publicly embarrass him. It's finally gotten through their heads that constantly baiting and humiliating Europeans isn't exactly productive."

"Is my beret jaunty-looking enough?" asked Emily.

"It jaunts fine," Cody told her.

Barrow spoke on an intercom. "The pilot says they've got that vinyl walkway rolled out and they're ready. Okay, Captain, let 'er rip."

"Rip?" came a Russian voice on the intercom. "What is rip, please?"

"Atkryti dvyer, Tovarich Capitan, y mozhna mui muzyika Mussorgsky yest? Spasiba!" called Stepanov into the intercom.

There was a sudden, dead silence broken only by the whirring of the electric motor on the door. The last words spoken before the ramp began to lower was when Emily said out loud, "Jesus, if my mom is watching this, she is going to kill me!"

Cody turned to her in amazement. "Where the hell does she think you've been all this time?" he demanded.

"She thinks I'm shackled up in a motel someplace with you, of course," said Emily.

"Well, you are now," returned Cody, as sudden laughter roared through the whole compartment. The result was that when the ramp touched ground and the NVA delegation marched out into the warm sunlight at Longview, they were relaxed and smiling. A red-faced man who looked like a construction worker in a suit met them and introduced himself as Seamus O'Connell, and asked them to follow him. The walk was about thirty yards to the tent, and suddenly the heavy rolling chords of Mussorgsky's Great Gate of Kiev boomed out over the golf course and into the crowd, which had suddenly fallen silent. Here at last before them were the dreaded terrorists of the Northwest Volunteer Army, calm and confident and strolling across the intervening distance like they owned the place. And who was that foxy blonde right at the head of the group? And those other chicks? Didn't the evil Nazis hate women and want to enslave them and turn them into sex toys and breeding stock? The Russian music drowned out the unheard but definitely present sounds of the first stereotype crumbling, not to mention the sound of John Wayne turning in his grave.

Under the marquee stood three men surrounded by a phalanx of flunkies in uniform and out behind them stood a row of television crews, cameras and boom mikes waving in the air. Walter Stanhope was tall and distinguished looking, a dark coiffure tinged elegantly with silver, a silk tie and a tasteful diamond stickpin. His face was studiously blank. Oliver Lodge was a quiet, small man of about fifty, dressed in a suit one had to look at closely in order to appreciate its expensive cut, and he looked like he was waiting in perfect patience for a train that wasn't due for another few minutes, but which he was confident would arrive on time. Brubaker was fidgeting in full Air Force dress uniform that seemed a little too tight. He looked like a scowling bulldog. He clearly wished he was anywhere else on earth. O'Connell made the frosty introductions. "Gentlemen, I'm sure you've studied one another's files, so you know who everyone is," said the Irishman in mellifluous tones. "Now, shake hands for the cameras, and when you come out of your corners, give me a good clean fight."

"Which is better for you, Mr. Stanhope?" asked Barrow. "Do you want me to stick my hand out for the cameras so you can let them see you refuse to shake it, or do you want me to not stick it out so you can moan about my not offering it?" Stanhope's lip curled like he was sucking on a lemon and he stuck out his own hand, which Barrow grasped briefly. Lodge stepped forward and quietly shook Barrow's hand without making a fuss, like they were meeting for a business lunch at Trader Vic's or the Harvard Club.

"This is a bit awkward for us, General Barrow," he said quietly. "None of us ever thought it would come to this. I'm sorry Mr. Weintraub and Senator Galinsky aren't here, but I'm sure you understand how upsetting it is for them. Don't worry, they'll come around."

"I'd rather they didn't," said Barrow. "We don't want them here. We don't want them anywhere." Behind him the Kentuckian stepped forward. "Name's Morgan," he rumbled, low and dangerous. "John C. Port Townsend Flying Column. I don't cal'clate I'll shake hands with you boys just yet. Maybe later on, when we got something to shake on." "Stepanov, Andrei Stavrovich," said the Russian, with a small formal bow. "I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Secretary." "I've heard you are secretly a Russian military officer, sir," Lodge asked him quietly. "Is that correct?" "Actually, Mr. Lodge, before the war I was a copy machine repairman," replied Stepanov. Frank Barrow turned abruptly to General Brubaker, snapped to attention and saluted crisply. Caught off guard, out of sheer lifetime habit, Brubaker returned the salute, and the hovering television cameras caught it clearly. Barrow could even hear a few gasps from the crowd. Brubaker jerked down his hand from his cap visor and practically spluttered in chagrin, but Barrow had already turned away. Wildly he looked around, up and down the line of NVA people filing past, and he fastened on Cody and Nightshade. "My God, how old are you, son?" he demanded. "Old enough to have made sure some of your lot never got any older, sir," replied Cody politely. "And you?" asked Brubaker in astonishment, looking at Emily. "I'll be old enough in a couple of weeks, then you can have my room number, big boy," she simpered. O'Connell overheard them, leaned over, and said "Now, now, me girl, let's leave off playin' the silly buggers until we get to the negotiatin' table." He firmly shepherded both of them towards the courtesy van. It was over before they quite grasped it all, the doors of the van were shut, and they were rolling towards the imposing great hotel. "Good job, Frank!" chortled Morgan. "Wrong-footed the bastards right from the first minute!" The reporters who clustered around the security-cordoned lobby entrance shouting questions at the NVA delegates noticed that they were all laughing as they got off the bus and were swept into the hotel by the Swedish UN troops. That and the amusement which had been captured on video when they first stepped off the copter gained them the nickname on that night's cable shows of "The Laughing Terrorists."

* * *

In the wing of the hotel assigned to the NVA, Captain Chenault had the Swedish peacekeepers line all the baggage up against one wall of the corridor. She addressed the milling crowd. "First, before Mr. O'Connell leaves us, check all your bags and make sure they're all here. Don't open them, just make sure you've got all your luggage and none of it's gone missing between the copter and here." All of the suitcases, briefcases, and garment holders appeared to be accounted for. A man standing beside O'Connell, who appeared to be about to have a nervous breakdown at finding himself surrounded by several dozen gun-toting NVA terrorists, identified himself as Mr. McNamara, the hotel manager. He wished them a pleasant stay at the Lewis and Clark Hotel, and then he fled to the elevators, followed at a more sedate pace by O'Connell. Two of the Swedish peacekeepers, unarmed and wearing blue berets, stood by the elevator doors. "They say O'Connell asked them to keep a guard on the exits and entrances," Chenault told Barrow. "Mmm, that makes sense, for now. Later we'll work out a permanent watch rota of our own. I don't like subcontracting the delegation's security. Now what, Captain, since I guess you're kind of den mother to our band of happy campers?" "All right, happy campers, listen up, eh?" Jane told them. "We are in the South Wing here. The Americans are in the appropriately named West Wing, the peacekeepers and MPs in the North Wing, and the hotel staff and selected media in the East. I don't like that arrangement, because it means you've got reporters across the way who can see into our wing of the hotel, but I prefer that to the enemy himself, either their delegation or their military police. I recommend you keep your windows closed as much as possible, as claustrophobic as that is going to feel. Remember, they've got telephoto lenses. Female personnel especially, make sure your room is secure when you're taking a shower. We don't want any of our alabaster rebel bodies on the front page of the tabloids in every grocery store checkout line in America, now, do we? The management haven't assigned us rooms as such, but they do suggest that our senior people, however we define them, make use of the executive suites at the end of the hall here," continued Jane, consulting a hotel map. "That makes a kind of sense, sir, since those suites have fax machines and computer hookups. Yes, I know they're bugged, but so's the whole hotel, and if we use those hookups for routine traffic that might allay suspicion. There are two bedrooms in each suite, plus a living room, a kitchen, and a workroom or conference room. They're like apartments. The regular rooms are also quite spiffy, eh, but you will notice something: they cannot be locked, and the electronic key card boxes are removed from the door. We insisted on that, to make sure that no Fed could sit down in a security control room somewhere in the hotel and lock us in our rooms with the push of a button. So if you're showering or in the bathroom, make sure you shoot the dead bolt so nobody walks in on you. Now, this wing of the hotel is supposed to be reserved exclusively for our use. We will be doing our own housekeeping and making of beds, etcetera, every morning, and rooms will be inspected by myself or one of the senior officers, to make sure they look like they are inhabited by white people and not niggers from the housing projects. When we leave here, no one is going to be able to say that we damaged anything or stole so much as a wash cloth. There should not be anyone but us up here, and for now a few of the Swedish peacekeepers, until we arrange to get them off the floor and take over our own security, which we're going to insist on. There should never at any time be anyone on the floor except us, and on certain occasions Mr. O'Connell or the manager Mr. McNamara. Anyone who does have some reason to come here will be escorted by a UN peacekeeper, one of the guys in the blue berets. If by any chance you see someone wandering around up here who shouldn't be here, on their own, please detain them with a minimum of violence and come get one of the senior officers."

"One more time, people, do not shoot or beat the crap out of anybody unless they really break bad on you and have no choice," added Barrow. "Anyone who's up here without an escort is probably a reporter who snuck in. Once we make sure he or she isn't an assassin we quietly but firmly put the cat back out."

"Please be extra careful to knock politely before entering the room of any comrade, especially one of the opposite sex," finished up Jane Chenault. "Knock, open the door a bit, and then call and identify yourselves, eh? We're all going to be edgy, surrounded by enemies as we are, and we don't want any gun accidents." Quickly they sorted out a room assignment roster, with the three executive suites going to Barrow and McCausland, the second to Stepanov and Gair, and the third to Jane Chenault and Emily Pastras. John Corbett Morgan

volunteered to take a room at the end of the corridor by the stairs and turn that into a kind of security command post for Lieutenants Cannon and Waters to operate out of.

“Hell, I ain’t no damned executive anyway,” said Morgan with a shrug. “I don’t even know what the hell I’m gone do for a job after the war.”

“I think the Republic can find something for you to do, John,” said McCausland with a chuckle. Captain Chenault assigned Cody a room right next to the suites.

“I’m going to need you on call, Cody,” Barrow told him. “When you’re not listening for Yiddish conversation in the hallways, I am going to need you as a gopher. Okay, group attention!” he spoke up, “Lieutenant Brock is my aide de camp, so you can take anything he says as coming from me. Right now, take your luggage and go to your assigned rooms. Search the whole room from top to bottom, as carefully and as quickly and as silently as possible. Report anything that is clearly wrong or just looks odd or out of place to Lieutenant Cannon. Lieutenant Waters will be by and do a preliminary sweep of each room with his beepy-thingy as soon as he does his own. It is now ten thirty.” He looked at his watch. “According to what I just learned from O’Connell, room service will be up here at twelve noon with lunch for us all, so we’ve got time to secure this floor. The kitchen staff has supposedly been vetted by the UN conference commission and is all white, but for all I know they all may be FBI agents and they may have pissed in the soup and poisoned the peas. Watch what you eat for any signs of tampering. These rooms have microwaves in them, and it may not be a bad idea to eat mostly sealed, prepared or frozen food that we have cooked up ourselves. I don’t think these people would try poisoning or drugging us, but every one of you here knows damned well that they’re capable of anything. Let’s go.”

Cody was rare among Volunteers in that he had stayed in his share of luxury hotels across America and in Israel, when he had been with the Sapirsteins, but he had to admit that this room was probably the swankiest he had ever stayed in. The paneling on the wall was genuine oak, the curtains were real velvet, the carpet was soft and ankle-deep, and the fine picture of the Multnomah Falls on the wall seemed to be an original painting. The king-sized bed had auto-massage, the bathroom had a small jacuzzi as well as the most gleaming and inviting shower he’d ever seen, the small refrigerator was full of soft drinks and microwave snacks, and the mini-bar was well stocked with a selection of beers, liquor miniatures, and mixers. Cody unpacked his suitcase, hung up his spare uniform, his business suit, and his tux, and carefully stashed his holdout gun and extra ammo. The equipment in the lining of his suitcase he left where it was. Doctor Doom would collect it as needed. There was a knock on his door. “Come in!” he called, his hand on the butt of his pistol. It was Lieutenant Lisa Napolitano, a poised and voluptuous Mediterranean beauty who definitely filled out the uniform well. She was carrying a plastic wastebasket from one of the suites.

“Booze patrol,” Napolitano told him. “General says all this liquor goes out of the rooms, not that he doesn’t trust his troops not to forget the regulations, but just to be on the safe side.” She quickly cleaned out the mini-bar of all its alcoholic content, the little bottles of whiskey, gin, and vodka going into the wastebasket, which she took outside and gently dumped onto a housekeeping card she’d found in a closet.

Cody helped her load the beer onto the bottom of the cart. “Gee, you mean we won’t be partying down like we were on spring break?” he asked in disappointment. “I was looking forward to getting you in the hot tub, Lis.”

“Not while Nightshade’s packing that blade of hers, you won’t,” replied Lisa primly.

“God, does everybody in the whole NVA think we’re getting it on?” cried Cody in exasperation. But she was already down the hall, knocking on the next door.

The next visitors were Doctor Doom and Jack Cannon. “Find any creepy-crawlies?” asked Doom.

“No, but I understand the Feds have little micro-cameras that they strap on the backs of mosquitos,” replied Cody.

“Damned near,” agreed Waters. “They actually created a prototype of a real ‘bug,’ a mechanical cockroach that was fiber optic. But whatever it is, if it’s live it’s going to give off energy of some kind. A magnetic field, a microwave, a laser stream, a subsonic, a sine wave, something.” Doc swept the room with a detector of his own design and found nothing. “Not surprising,” he said. “They’ve probably got all their gear switched off now, so it’s not giving off anything. I hope so, or else they’ll see what Jack and me are doing.”

“You saw the brackets for closed-circuit security cameras in the hall?” asked Cannon while he methodically opened Cody’s suitcase and took out a number of small circuit boards and metallic objects, which he placed in his own briefcase “They’ve taken out the cameras, to lull us into thinking we’re not being watched. But I’ll bet you dollars to donuts those circuits are still live, and they’ve just got fiber optics or a concealed microcamera on each wire.”

“My guess is the air vents, the light fixtures, and the television,” said Doc. “Let me check something.” He pulled a small folding tool, opened a screwdriver, bent down to the air conditioner, and opened a side panel. He looked in, drew a small penlight from his pocket and shined it in, and examined the interior of the machine. “Yeah, same as the others,” he said, screwing the panel back in place. “The electric motor that runs the air conditioner has been insulated in a non-factory standard casing of hard rubber instead of common cheapo Mexican steel, and it’s not just to keep the ventilation nice and whisper-soft for the wealthy guests who normally frequent this watering hole. Somebody doesn’t want even the negligible electromagnetic field that the motor generates to get out into the room. That should give me a hint as to what they’re using. Later on I’ll come back and give this room a complete going over.”

“What about phones and computers?” asked Cody.

“Don’t do anything via cell, land line, wireless internet or the hotel cable modem hookups that you don’t want Uncle Slime to know,” replied Doc with a shrug. “There’s so many places those could be tapped that there’s no point in even looking for them. We have our own encryption programs and scrambling gear, and we’ll see how good they are. But ZOG can probably analyze and break them all in time.” He pointed out the window of Cody’s room. “See up there on the roof? This hotel has its own cell site, which is convenient I’m sure for the regular guests, but it makes Federal monitoring of all the traffic a snap. They’re probably sitting off in Washington DC in some windowless corridor office monitoring the satellite feed off that tower. No way to know, no way to stop ‘em.” He grinned at Cody. “Bear in mind these are the best covert surveillance experts alive who are watching us now. They’ve finally done what they couldn’t do during the war. They’ve lured us onto ground of their own choosing, where they can bring all their fancy toys to bear if they want.

We're fish in a barrel here. Don't worry. I've got a few tricks up my sleeve, and I think I can rattle their cage."

"I heard the General say that our best defense against all their bullshit of this kind is just to be who we are," replied Cody. "Look, what are we going to be plotting or conspiring to do? To secure the existence of our people and a future for white children. Everybody already knows that's why we're here, so what if we are overheard?" The phone by the bed rang. Cody picked it up. "Room 224," he said. Barrow's voice spoke. "Cody, come on down to my crib. I need you to do some aide-de-camping. It's beginning." He explained when Cody arrived at his suite. "I just got a call from the Secretary of State, Walter Stanhope. He wants me to come over to his suite for a little pre-discussion chat to break the ice, as he puts it, before the joint press conference this afternoon. Just me and him." Cody noted that all the other negotiators and Captain Chenault were also in the room, so Barrow was keeping no secrets from his team. "I presume this will be their first attempt to bribe me, or split me away from the rest of the delegation. Or maybe rub me out in some kind of 'regrettable incident.' Either way, I can't go completely alone. I don't know whether you'll be allowed to listen in, but in any case I need someone with me."

"Okay, sir, where is the secret meeting to be held and how do we get past the lobby without getting mobbed by media?" asked Cody.

"There are service tunnels below this hotel that connect the various wings, and they've been declared off limits to the media," Barrow told him. "Stanhope is sending one of his people over here to escort us to his suite in the West Wing. He will be accompanied by a UN peacekeeper, as per the rules. He'll take us to Stanhope's suite." There was a knock on the door, and Jane opened it. One of the peacekeepers stepped in, saluted Frank, and said in perfect English, "Sir, Senator Galinsky's personal assistant is here."

"Galinsky?" asked Barrow in surprise. "I thought Galinsky wasn't even acknowledging our existence?"

A lithe and elegant, twenty-something woman with jet black hair and a face seemingly chiseled in white marble stepped into the room. "I'm on Senator Galinsky's staff, yes, but I'm running this particular errand for the Secretary," she said. She was wearing a casual yet businesslike dress and jacket combination that seemed slightly informal in the surrounding uniforms and dark business suits overrunning the hotel. Cody took one look at her and froze. The floor seemed to suddenly heave beneath his feet. She ignored him. "Mr. Barrow?" she said, walking over and extending her hand. "I'm Susan Horowitz, Secretary Stanhope's confidential assistant. If you could come with me, please? And the Secretary mentioned you were bringing one of your bodyguards?"

"That's General Barrow to you," said Cody coldly.

Barrow waved his hand gently. "Cody, we're here and she's here, and I'm sure Ms. Horowitz is capable of understanding the implications of that fact. No need to sweat the small stuff. If she feels she can't acknowledge the legitimacy of our military rank, that's fine." He turned to the woman. "Well, let's go, ma'am, and you can tell your grandchildren how you bravely walked alone into a hotel floor full of Nazis, like Daniel into the lion's den."

"You're very perceptive," she said with a small nod. "I asked to come over here. I wanted to prove I wasn't afraid of you, not least to myself." Without any further conversation they followed Horowitz and the peacekeeper out of the room and down the stairs. At the door to the underground passageway their blue beret was relieved by another, who escorted them the length of the cool, moist concrete passageway past several closed doors. Cody wondered what was behind them. When they reached the end of the tunnel the door opened and a third peacekeeper took over, and escorted them up the stairs to a suite which was somewhat larger but seemed to be a near duplicate of Barrow's. Stanhope was sitting by a laptop computer on a desk in the main living room; as they entered he rose with a smile on his lips and this time extended his hand without being prompted.

"Glad you came, General," he said easily. "Look, the fact is that for the next—well, however long it takes, we're not going to get many chances to talk one on one. This is going to be one of the hardest damned jobs I've ever undertaken, and I'm sure you feel the same way. If you could step into the conference room here with me and give me an hour or so of your time, I'd appreciate it. I think we need to get a feel for one another. Lieutenant, ah..."

"Brock, Mr. Secretary," said Cody.

"Brock, eh? Old New Hampshire name. Your people from New Hampshire? Well, Lieutenant Brock, if you could stay here in the living room? The walls are sound-proofed, so you can watch TV. You folks are all over it, I can assure you. I do ask that you keep the blinds closed and don't go out on the balcony. It really wouldn't be expedient for anyone to know you're here in the West Wing." He turned to the woman and said quietly, "Thank you, Susan. There's no need for you to stay. If you'd like to go down to the cocktail lounge or the press room or somewhere, I'll understand."

"Oh, no, I'll stay, Mr. Secretary," she said with calm assurance. "You might need me for something. I'm not at all afraid."

"Thank you, Susan," said Stanhope, as he shepherded Barrow into the conference room, hand on his shoulder. The door closed.

Cody turned to her. "You should be afraid, you know. How do you know I won't do the same thing to you I did to your father last time I saw him?"

"Oh, now, you know you won't," said Susan with a smile, and she walked over to the kitchenette and started running water into the electric kettle. "I'm going to have some tea. Do you want some, or some coffee? I've heard you people don't drink, like Muslims. You're probably just as boring as they are. All anti-Semites are boring. Jews aren't. That's one of the reasons you hate us so much. We've got Coke and Sprite and other stuff in the fridge."

"I don't want anything from you, or your boss," said Cody. "I always knew your middle name was Susan, but where'd the Horowitz come from?"

"Oh, Cody, you remember Ron! We got engaged months before you left. We had a wonderful wedding, which I am glad to say Daddy got out of the hospital in time to attend, and which I wish you could have attended yourself. Horowitz is my married name. Since his father got us both our jobs, I figured it was diplomatic of me to use it. Also, Leah was a bit too...how shall I put it...?"

"Surely not too Jewish?" asked Cody sarcastically.

"No, just not really GS-17 grade," she replied.

"You're a GS-17?" asked Cody incredulously. "And you're what? Twenty-four?"

"You don't even remember my birthday, nebbich? Just turned twenty-five. And yes, it is a bit unusual for an internship at the Senate to

start at GS-17 and put me right in the middle of a major event like this, but Ron's dad is Connected with a capital C. Joe Horowitz and Jeanette go way back, to the first Clinton administration in fact. Ron got his law degree, and he's now assistant counsel to Senator Galinsky's office. He's back in Washington D. C. This is turning out to be quite a family re-union. I wonder if I called Karen at Berkeley, would they let her come up here and join us? Once more for old times' sake?"

"I don't think I could touch either of you again without vomiting," Cody told her honestly. "Does your husband know what you and Karen did to me?"

"Oh, yes, and he likes me to talk about it," said Leah/Susan. "Describe each session. It really turns him on. He wants to do a threesome with Karen, but that kind of play shouldn't be kept in the family. We're not kids any more."

"Well, I never was family, was I?"

"No, you weren't. It wasn't like you were our real brother, you know. Oy, do you think we're depraved or something?" She made herself a cup of herbal tea and sat down on an armchair. She drew her legs up under her in the peculiarly predatory manner he remembered, she and her sister both. Lounging around the house, by the pool, in the rumpus room, in the TV den, they had been like dual snakes about to strike. "Oh, Cody, look at you in your big bad Nazi costume! Heavens, how silly you look! You're still a little boy in his cowboy suit with his little toy six-guns. A little boy crying for his daddy who is never coming back."

Cody sat down on the sofa. "Now you're trying to provoke me. Why? Really, what makes you think I won't kill you?" he asked, interested. "As it happens, I won't. At least not now. Are you trying to be some kind of Jewish heroine? Maybe you're trying to enrage and incite me into some act of violence against you, so as to wreck the peace negotiations, and that's why you're here. But it won't work. If you don't mind my mixing up old Streisand numbers, there will be a time and a place for us, Leah, because I do indeed remember the way we were. And you and Karen and Larry are going to pay for the way we were. But do you really have the courage to push me over the edge now, and take the consequences? I don't think so, Leah. You love life too much to give it up. People like you hang on to life like a drowning rat. One of the reasons I ended up in the Volunteers was that after living with your family, I just plain didn't give a damn any more. But don't worry. This is too important. To my great chagrin, you're as safe with me right now as if you were in Fort Knox."

"Suppose I pull off my top and my bra right now, run to the balcony and start yelling rape?" she asked in a sultry voice. "There's enough reporters around here to fill an ark."

"That would do it," Cody admitted. "If you do that, I'll shoot you once dead center to put you down, and when you're on the floor I'll give you another couple of rounds in the face to make sure I mess it up good. That will scupper the conference right here, and the war will resume, and if the Americans don't kill me here in this room I'll probably face some kind of court martial from my people or yours, wherein I'll simply tell them what happened, and we'll see how it plays out. Is that what you want, Leah?"

"Take it out," she said, staring at his holster in fascination. "Your gun. I want to see it. Then I'll tell you."

"Jesus, you're turned on, aren't you?" snapped Cody in disgust.

* * *

"Want a drink?" asked Stanhope inside the conference room, gesturing towards the well-stocked mini-bar.

"We don't drink in the NVA," replied Barrow, sitting down at the table. "Regulations. Volunteers are not allowed to consume alcohol, for the duration. I'll take a ginger ale if you've got one"

"An amazingly sensible rule," said Stanhope, handing him a bottle from a recessed fridge and a plastic cup, and setting an ice bucket down on a coaster on the table. "The United States government could do with a bit of abstinence as well, but we seem to be incapable of abstaining from anything."

"Yeah, I've noticed that. Why is that?" asked Barrow.

"When there is no spiritual core remaining, then life becomes all body, all cravings and needs of the flesh," said Stanhope, pouring himself a generous tot of Chivas Regal which Barrow had to admit made his mouth water and awoke the old craving. He made a mental note that he'd need to be on guard against those particular demons from his past. Cleaning out the mini-bars was only a gesture; this place was awash in a sea of whole grain. "So, you're a former cop, I believe? How did you end up in present company? Cynicism aside, one wouldn't think a policeman would be comfortable finding himself among lawbreakers."

"Depends on who makes those laws," said Barrow, sipping his ginger ale. "And who breaks them. When you're on the street and you see that the overwhelming majority of violent criminals you deal with are black or brown, it's kind of hard to keep up the politically correct doublethink. Every major cop shop has a wall of slain officers, and even in a majority white town like Seattle, you notice that most of those officers were killed by non-whites. In my case, I made the silly mistake of believing that the law applied to well-connected black politicians. How did you end up in present company?"

"Oh, I'm not a career diplomat. Frankly, I'm a time-server," said Stanhope. "Are you familiar with the works of Gilbert and Sullivan? H. M.S. Pinafore to be exact? There's a song in there called 'Ruler of the Queen's Navy' which pretty much sums up my career. Stick close to your desk and never go to sea, and you may become the ruler of the Queen's Navy. I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth, went to Yale. Skull and Bones, of course. Two term Congressman from Massachusetts before I went to the Senate, then I ended up turfed out of my Senate seat by a Hispanic woman. I was given State as a consolation prize because no one else wanted it. Hardly surprising since you guys keep killing the holders of my office, but more than that, the role of the State Department has been diminishing for many years and it now exercises virtually no control at all over American foreign policy."

"So why did you take it?" asked Barrow.

"I found to my amazement that at the age of fifty, I had actually developed some ideals," he said. "God knows where they came from. Ideals certainly don't run in my family. My father and my grandfather never believed in anything in their lives, except money. But I grew up and I saw the atrocious mess that preceding generations had made of America, and for some unaccountable reason I felt responsible for it."

"Well, you and your kind are responsible for it. By the way, I understand that all of this may be complete bullshit," said Barrow.

“Yes, it might,” he said. “But it’s interesting bullshit, isn’t it? Did you ever see one of these little bumper stickers that said ‘Life is a play pen and whoever finishes it with the most toys wins?’ There are a lot of people in America who actually believe that, who have been brought up to believe that.”

“And speaking of toys, how many microphones are there in here?” asked Barrow, looking around Stanhope’s suite.

“None, actually, if I can believe the Department of Homeland Security, which is always problematic,” he replied. “Your rooms are bugged as well, of course, and there are fiber-optic cameras hidden in the television sets. I was able to dissuade the DHS from putting cameras in the bathrooms, so hopefully you can at least go to the can and take a shower in privacy.”

“I have no idea or not whether to believe you, but if it’s true, thank you.”

Stanhope swished his drink, downed it like a sailor, and poured himself another. “Yes, you can believe me, on that, anyway. But whether I can believe my own security people is another story. In theory we are alone right now, but I have no idea whether or not anyone is listening. If they are, I can assure you, I’ll hear about it later on, since this is in fact a little unauthorized initiative on my part and some of my colleagues are going to be very browned off about it.” He sat down at the table with the second Scotch, not across from Barrow but at the head of the table next to him. “General Barrow, I will begin by admitting to you something that I would never admit in public, and that is that your terrorist campaign over the past five years has forced us to come here today. In the first place, we’re doing it because the Northwest Volunteer Army has effectively shut down New York and Washington, D.C., and we have discovered that the United States of America simply cannot function without those two cities. We were very foolish to allow all this to get that far, but we did. Secondly, you have created such a loss of income tax revenue that you are running the richest country in the world broke. We can no longer borrow any more money because the International Monetary Fund and other banking institutions have no more to borrow.” “Plus there’s the fact that Israel is about to go down the tubes,” added Barrow.

“Ah, you’ve picked up on that, have you?” said Stanhope, trying not to sound impressed and a little nonplussed. “Clever boys. Been playing footsie with the Arabs as well as the Russkies, have you? But you would, wouldn’t you? We always wondered about that, but we could never catch you at it. Well, I’ll hand it to you. You have dragged us here, kicking and screaming. America will never be the same, whatever the result. The master of the house has been forced to sit down at the same table with his field hands, break bread with them, and treat them as if they were his equals. You have no idea of the hatred and rage that instills in the rulers of a plutocracy, which is what the United States is and always has been. I suppose you know us well enough by now to understand that you will never be forgiven for that, not a hundred years from now. You have my congratulations, sir. You have accomplished an incredible feat and I would be the last to withhold my applause, in private at any rate. That having been said, the first thing I should ask you is what you expect to accomplish at this meeting? You seem to be an intelligent man. You must be, to be sitting where you are. Surely, surely you have not come here under any delusion that you are going to walk out of here with three of the United States of America in your briefcase? Such a thing is literally unthinkable. We couldn’t do that if we wanted to. It’s—well, unthinkable, pardon the repetition. It is literally impossible for us to wrap our minds around any such idea. It’s not on, General Barrow, really it’s not. The one thing that terrifies me is that you and your associates may have committed the most fatal mistake in all of politics and statecraft, that of coming to believe your own propaganda. Is that the case?”

“Trying to see if I’ll blow up and go into a tirade?” asked Barrow with a grin. “You want tirades, Corby Morgan’s your man, although I wouldn’t provoke him into one if I were you. He tends to strangle and bang heads on things while he rants.”

“Yes, so I understand,” said Stanhope, looking irritated. “Why, exactly, would you bring someone like that to a peace conference? You think we can be bullied into giving you what you want?”

“He is here as a kind of watching brief for those among us who don’t really want this conference to take place at all,” said Barrow frankly. “I’m sure you have someone like that on your side, Brubaker or Weintraub. There are a lot of us who have developed a taste for killing our enemies and they don’t want to give it up, even for the main prize itself. You might want to bear that in mind, Mr. Stanhope. The fact is, you have thrown everything but the kitchen sink at us in an effort to stop us, violated every law and Constitutional protection and basic tenet of human decency, and you haven’t done too well.”

“They say every major international treaty negotiation has a ghost at the table,” said Stanhope reflectively.

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” concurred Barrow. “Ours is the Masque of the Red Death, the fact that we have broken your credible monopoly of armed force and you cannot restore it. I assume we’ll be coming in for our fair share of threats in the coming days, and we’re ready for that, but the fact is, Mr. Stanhope, you can’t stop us with force. You’ve tried and you’ve failed. Outlawry, informers, million-dollar rewards, an army of thugs, torture, internment, murder, the bulldozing of homes, the deportation of entire populations to concentration camps in Nevada. Nothing has worked. Just recently you thought you were going to stop us by turning Christian fundamentalists against us and using them as counterrevolutionary shock troops. That has failed as well. Your little Christian militia project, or perhaps I should say Mr. Weintraub’s little Christian militia project, turned out to be a dud. It’s fizzling even as we speak. There have been some incidents, yes, but the fact is that the majority of the people in evangelical churches haven’t been dumb enough to fall for your trap.”

“Yes, I understand you were able to infiltrate one of the cells and that blew the operation prematurely,” said Stanhope with a wry smile of acknowledgement. “And you’re right, that was Howard’s little project, which I never approved, nor was I involved in it. We seem to have consistently misjudged your intelligence capacities.”

“As an interesting aside, the two young people who accomplished that successful mission are in with me in our delegation,” Barrow told him, before he continued. “What are you going to try next? An atomic bomb on Seattle? You’re quite capable of it if you thought it would work, but you know it won’t. Now, I think I’ve strained all the outrage out of my system. Hope so. You sit there and tell me that we can’t have the Republic. All I can say is that you either don’t know us very well, or you’re just fishing. But fine, I’ll play along. There is a lot of detail we’re prepared to be flexible on, but the substance of independence isn’t one of them. We either walk out of here with at least three states in our briefcase, and I’ll be damned hard put to sell only three to the Army Council, or we go back to fighting and probably end up grabbing a great deal more a few years down the road when the United States finally implodes. You don’t think we

can do it? You don't think we're perfectly willing to do it? Well, whenever you want, you can find out. This is your party, and you can pull the plug any time. Now, I know you think you can either dazzle us with brilliance or baffle us with bullshit into accepting some kind of faux Republic or white Puerto Rico or something of the kind, maybe not even that. Fine. We can sit here as long as you like and we can find a new way to say no every day. It's your call how long you want to stretch it out before you either decide to sign off on a white Republic and let us get on with building a new world and new lives, or else we start shooting again."

"You mentioned flexibility," said Stanhope with interest. "Define flexible. Look, please don't take my terminology amiss, but we understand that your dogs are hungry, we're going to have to throw you some bones, and there's going to have to be some meat and juice on them. I think you'll be amazed at what kind of compromise we would be willing to accept, so long as the Union remains intact, as was settled back in 1865. I know you have an officer corps, a leadership group. I'm not trying to bribe you when I say that if we can come to some kind of sensible arrangement here, that group among you has an assured and incredible future. You've demonstrated a kind of dedication, an initiative, adaptability and courage that I wish to hell we could find in our own soldiers and administrators."

"Let me guess. Like the ancient Romans, you want to hire us barbarians to command your armies and fight your battles for you?"

chuckled Barrow. "Uh, not even close, Stanhope. I've been to Iraq once. Didn't like it. Come on, you can't be serious?"

"A conference like this may have certain red lines that simply cannot be crossed, true," said Stanhope. "I've just explained to you what ours are. We're not letting you have your own country to play with. You play too rough. You're not getting Washington and Oregon and Idaho, Barrow, but what you might come away with is a whole new racial dispensation for all your people across North America."

"I can see this is going to take a while," said Barrow with a wry chuckle. "But eventually, one way or the other, you are going to learn to take no for an answer."

They came out of the conference room a few minutes later to find Susan Horowitz still curled up in the armchair with her cup of herbal tea, watching while Cody sat ostentatiously reading a magazine and ignoring her. He got up without a word, ready to accompany Barrow back to their own part of the hotel. "My, this looks frosty," commented Stanhope. "But then I suppose it would be, wouldn't it? Well, at least you're not killing each other."

"The thought did occur to me, sir," said Cody.

"I especially liked the part where he said he'd shoot me a few extra times in the face to mess it up," said Susan archly, rising to her feet.

"All right, Stanhope, now on a dead serious issue," said Barrow, politely but firmly. "Ms. Horowitz here wanted to make a personal point by coming to our part of the hotel, and she made it. I see no need for her to make it again, or for there to be any more petty provocations like this. It's not a good idea, and it could lead to something very serious. Cody is a highly disciplined young man, but there simply isn't any point in putting that kind of strain on him, or any of us." He turned to Ms. Horowitz. "Ma'am, I presume you know history and you are familiar with what's been going on over the past five years. I understand enough about the psychology of your people to understand why you are driven to pick and poke and nip and push, but you had better not do it again, or I will not be responsible for the consequences. If you insist on my spelling it out, then I shall do so. You and all Jews are vermin, and yes, we really do want to kill you. There is such a thing as pushing your luck. You pushed it today and got away with it. The next time you'll probably end up with your elegant neck snapped like a chicken's, and I won't do a damned thing to stop it. This conference is entirely too important to get sidetracked by one arrogant little JAP who is too stupid to understand where she is and who has so far forgotten her racial memories that she no longer recognizes us for who we are. We will find our way back to the South Wing on our own, if you don't mind."

"The feeling is mutual, I assure you," said Susan, her lip twisting. "If you want a helpful hint on keeping the peace, I suggest you don't let your little boy here play with anything sharp." She turned to Cody and said "Kusch mir in tuchis, paskudnik grober jung! Geh red zu der vant!"

"Madele shandeleh, du hat gevehn a kurva in din mamze bauch!" snapped back Cody.

"What the hell did you do that for?" snapped Barrow in a heated whisper as the blue-bereted peacekeeper escorted them back to the South Wing via the tunnel. "Now she knows you speak Yiddish! You were supposed to be our secret weapon on that front!"

"She already knew, sir," said Cody. "I need to talk to you when we get back. Little Swedes have big ears, if our friend here will pardon my saying so."

When they returned to Barrow's suite, they saw that lunch had arrived, in the form of a cart full of fancy deli-style sandwiches and salads on which everyone was munching. "It doesn't appear to have been defiled," admitted Gair, a paper plate of corned beef on rye before him. Barrow gestured for Cody to sit down at the table. He did not ask the other primaries to leave, and Cody noticed that Nightshade and Captain Jane Chenault were in the room as well. He considered asking to speak to Barrow privately, but he decided it was best if nothing was concealed about his past from any of them. Anyone who had lived among Jews was bound to be regarded with at least a small bit of disquiet; Cody understood this, and he had always dealt with the situation through being completely open about everything except the one forbidden subject. Barrow said, "Okay, we're just going to have to not worry about being overheard by the Feds, I guess. You really let the cat out of the bag back there, my son. What the hell was all that about?"

"Sir, I'm sorry, but it seems to be my bad luck always to be running into women from my past," said Cody carefully, glancing at Nightshade. "I know that woman from my days in California. Susan Horowitz is her married name. I knew her as Leah Sapirstein. She was a member of the Jewish family I was sold to. I refuse to use the word sister, or even stepsister. That little exchange was her way of baiting me. She knows I was taught Yiddish in their house and at the yeshiva, and so now the enemy does as well, which pretty much terminates my usefulness on this mission, General. As honored as I am to have come this far with you. I assume there is some way to get out of here via that Russian copter or otherwise, and so in light of this development I request transfer to a combat unit, preferably back to Captain DiBella's command in Seattle."

"Mmmm, hold your horses, son," said Barrow abstractedly. "You're by no means a useless mouth, even if they have twigged to your little secret. Before we go any farther, what exactly did you two say to each other?"

"I don't know if you know anything about Yiddish, but it is reputed to have twice as many curse words and expressions of insult as its

nearest competitor, which is Arabic, and three times more abusive expressions and profane words than Italian. Leah called me a grober jung, which literally means rude boy, but it's very disrespectful and insulting, and then she told me to go talk to the wall, which is a slang expression for kids sent to stand in a corner, but used on adults it is a very nasty way of calling someone completely worthless and contemptible. In return I called her a madele shandeleh, a shameful girl, only it's rather stronger than that, and told her she'd been a whore in her mother's belly."

"Your home life with these people must have been really sweet," commented Captain Gair.

"How exactly did this woman end up here?" asked Barrow. "Did she tell you? Is it just coincidence or do you think she might be stalking you or something of the kind because of the incident with your stepfather?"

"My guess, sir, is that she's stalking Secretary Stanhope," replied Cody. "Most likely she's already got him. I think she's Hadass."

"What?" asked Barrow. "Who?"

"Hadass," repeated Cody.

"It's the Hebrew name for Queen Esther in the Bible," said McCausland. "Only Queen Esther wasn't exactly a queen, if you get my drift."

"I guess you'd better fill me in on what you mean by that, Lieutenant," said Barrow.

"Everywhere the Jews have gone throughout history, General, one thing they've always done is to groom a certain number of their most beautiful, educated, and intelligent girls as high-class tarts," explained Cody. "They identify the most powerful Gentile leaders in their host society, noblemen and kings and churchmen in the Middle Ages, politicians and billionaires and intelligentsia today, and they more or less pimp these girls out to them. Among the Jews themselves it's no secret that this happens. These women are called Hadass, after the Bible story, and this practice or institution of concubinage to powerful goyim is called Hadassah. Yeah, I know, there's a Jewish women's charity by that name. I've never denied they occasionally have a sense of humor.

"But it's more than simple pandering. The Jews are long term planners; when they corrupt someone they want to make damned sure he stays corrupted. These women are not so much spies or provocateurs, although often enough they do fulfill that function. Their purpose is to make these powerful Gentile men like Jews. You got some hot little Hebrew number in your bed rocking your world at night, you're naturally disposed to give her people a break in the way of business during the day. Sometimes these are lifelong relationships, and sometimes the Gentile leaders actually marry these Jewish women. This goes way back. The Emperor Nero had Poppaea, which is why the Christians got tossed to the lions down at the Colosseum and the Jews didn't. The Viking chieftain Ragnar Lodbrok had Meera, which is how the Jews established a brief commercial monopoly in Scandinavia when Christian missionaries were still killed on sight. Richard the Lionhearted had a Hadass, whose name I forget, which was how the Jews became what was called King's Persons and the royal tax collectors. Richard went off on Crusade and left England in the hands of his Jews, which was why so many people supported his brother Prince John in his attempts to usurp the throne."

"You weren't in any of Red Morehouse's history classes, were you?" asked Barrow in bemusement.

"No, sir. I just hung around in the downtown library in Seattle to stay out of the cold, back when I was a street kid. Anyway, sometimes these women run through a whole string of high-class lovers, a good example being Sarah Bernhardt in the nineteenth century, who gave the Prince of Wales such a fine time of it that he became irretrievably pro-French in everything and so was instrumental in starting Europe down the road to World War One. So forth and so on. These bitches have done incredible damage down through the ages. The classic example is the old Soviet Union, where every single major Gentile Bolshevik under Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev had either a Jewish wife or long-term mistress. Stalin himself spent the last twenty years of his life shackled up with Rosa Kaganovich, Lazar the Butcher's sister. In America we had a brief glimpse of Hadassah with the Monica Lewinsky episode under Clinton the First. Everyone wondered why Monica's father didn't come after Clinton with a shotgun for debauching his daughter, or at least criticize Clinton publicly. They didn't realize that Hadassah is an ancient Jewish tradition and it's considered an honor to have a Hadass in the family. Doctor Lewinsky was proud as punch of his little girl. He should have been. There's every chance she put Clinton in the mood to betray the Palestinians at the 2000 Camp David summit, which brought on the second intifada and endless bloodshed."

"Ooo-kaaay," said Barrow slowly. "And you think this Horowitz woman is Stanhope's Hadass?"

"She's on Senator Galinsky's staff, so what's she doing running Stanhope's errands and hanging around his hotel suite?" returned Cody.

"Her husband is conveniently absent in D. C. and probably knows damned well what she's doing, and even glories in it. The Americans must surely understand how potentially sensitive every Jewish participant in this conference is. The Jews would definitely want someone next to Stanhope during negotiations of this nature, and they must have pulled some pretty powerful strings to get the Horowitzes on board."

"Stanhope's married," pointed out McCausland with disgust. "Not that that means anything any more these days."

"And if you're right, her husband is going along with this?" asked Gair incredulously. "Pimping out his own wife? Talk about your indecent proposals!"

"I know it's hard to understand, but these people are actually proud of the women who do this," Cody said again patiently. "To a Jew, the preservation of Jewish life and power is the highest of all mitzvahs or holy acts. It's called pikuach nefesh in Hebrew, and in the Talmud the rabbis all agree that saving Jewish life justifies any sin or crime whatsoever, and there is no sin and great virtue attached to it. Anyway, if I'm right, sir, you need to bear in mind who's most likely whispering in Stanhope's ear at night, and also picking up on virtually everything via pillow talk and transmitting the information to points unknown."

"Well, in that case your being recognized wasn't a total waste, and who knows? Your language skills may yet be of some use," said Barrow philosophically. "Look, we're going to face setbacks every day here. Give me one of those plates, and you get one too, Cody. What's this, a sub? Hmm, this is pretty good grub, I admit. Better than living off canned goods and fast food like most of us have been doing. Look, do you figure this girl's presence here along with yourself is just a coincidence?"

"I honestly don't know, sir," said Cody, who'd selected a kielbasa and potato salad. "But you should also bear in mind the media will probably bring out that business of me spiking Larry Sapirstein before I ran away and came home."

“Well, if that’s going to happen, they’ll probably lay it on you at this press conference at three,” said Jane Chenault. “Just be prepared to give them a short and snappy answer.”

“I wouldn’t worry about it,” said Barrow. “I mean, it’s not like every one of us here isn’t wanted for something.”

“Besides, according to what I’ve seen on CNN so far, we’re now the Laughing Terrorists,” said Jane.

“Yeah, well he who laughs last, laughs best,” said Barrow. “All right, Cody, we’ll keep an eye on this Horowitz woman. And your request for a transfer is denied. You can still be useful, and besides, if I sent you away it would break poor Emily’s heart.”

Cody threw his hands in the air. “Why is it that this entire outfit seems to think there is something going on between me and Lieutenant Pastras?” he raved. “Jesus, you’d think we’d have other things to occupy our minds than schoolyard gossip!”

“They’re just jealous, honey pie,” said Nightshade.

“Jane, what’s your take on this press conference this afternoon?” asked Barrow.

“At least half of the questions will be put into the mouths of the reporters by the government, or possibly by one of the competing factions in the government,” said Chenault. “We should be able to learn a good deal about the way the wind is blowing from the questions.” While she spoke, Barrow was writing out a note addressed to Doctor Doom on a yellow legal pad that read Stanhope says TVs wired. This may be reliable, maybe not, check closely anyway. He tore off the note and handed it to one of the aides, pointing at the door, and the Volunteer left to deliver it. “But we’re also going to get a lot of silliness. This is the first real press conference the NVA as such has ever held, not counting a few interviews that reporters did with individual officers and people who served as unofficial spokesmen, some of them in prison, and of course that one famous interview the Old Man gave wherein he slipped out the order to attack the IRS and stop Federal tax collection. Some of these so-called journalists are just one cut above supermarket tabloid level.”

“They must have bribed and cajoled mightily to get passes to this conference,” said Gair.

“Not really, Captain,” said Chenault. “The fact is that the lower end of tabloid journalism has a truly mass audience, one that the American government can’t afford to ignore and has assiduously cultivated for years. For every reader of the New York Times or Newsweek, there are a thousand who read the National Inquirer waiting in the checkout line at the supermarket. And don’t even get me started on TV talk shows. You can expect some really dumb questions, gentlemen.”

“Frankly, with this crowd, I’d be surprised if I got an intelligent one,” said Barrow.

The press conference was held in the largest meeting room in the hotel, just off the lobby, and it was packed with media and cameras, standing room only. Tables had been pulled together along one end, and the delegation primaries from each side were seated in one long row, with the NVA on the audience’s left and the Americans to the right, each with a microphone. Howard Weintraub and Senator Jeanette Galinsky had decided to join their colleagues on the United States delegation, and they sat stone-faced, staring into the assembled reporters and TV cameras, pointedly not looking at the Jerry Rebs to their right.

Cody, Nightshade, Jane Chenault, and others stood behind the seated NVA negotiators while blank-faced men in suits, possibly FBI or DHS agents, and one or two in military uniforms stood behind the Americans. Significantly, Cody saw Susan Horowitz, or Leah Sapirstein as he still thought of her, sitting behind Secretary of State Stanhope in her own chair, almost concealed in the crowd, but still there. She did not look at him. He leaned over and whispered “Hadass,” and Barrow nodded. Seamus O’Connell of Ireland sat in the middle, at the center of the table, separating the two sides, and acting as master of ceremonies with effortless aplomb, as if he wasn’t surrounded by people who wanted to tear each other limb from limb. He laid down the ground rules; he was to call on various journalists and TV people from a pre-selected roster, questions were to be directed to specific delegates, and he sincerely hoped that a certain basic level of civility and decorum could be maintained. Then he sighed. “Well, ladies and gents, we’re off to the races. I’ve drawn your names from a hat, and first shot goes to Ms. Anne Malvoy from Fox News.”

“The official government network. Surprise, surprise!” muttered Barrow.

Malvoy, a brassy and well-known anchorwoman whose talk show was even more stridently pro-government than was usual for Fox stood up and asked, “Mr. Stanhope, could we get a more definitive statement from you as to why the President herself is not present at this historic and to many of us still inexplicable conference?”

“President Clinton felt that her personal attendance at this preliminary stage would have been premature and an unnecessary distraction from the many other duties of her office,” said Stanhope smoothly.

“Does that mean that the President will be attending the conference and participating in the discussions at a later date?” persisted Anne Malvoy.

“If she feels it to be appropriate, I assume she will let us know,” Stanhope batted back.

“Interesting they started out with a swipe at Chelsea,” said Stepanov, leaning over and speaking to Barrow in a low voice. “Fox News is virtually the Pravda of America, and has been for a generation. Someone high up seems disinclined to let the Clintons distance themselves from these proceedings. I wonder who, and why?”

“Mr. Roger Bailey, from the Atlanta Constitution,” said O’Connell.

Bailey, the only black face in the crowd besides several of the American military police, got up and said, “Mr. Weintraub, can you assure the African American community that this conference will make us safer, and that the long string of racially motivated murders and acts of terrorism directed against people of color not just in the Northwest but in places like Washington D. C. and New York City will finally be brought to an end?”

“Definitely,” said Weintraub crisply. “This conference is a major step in restoring law and order, but it certainly isn’t the only one we will be engaging in. We’re bringing this whole grotesque Northwest zoo to an end, one way or the other. You can count on that.”

“Baaaaa!” John Morgan bleated at him like a goat.

“Bluff,” whispered Stepanov. “He’s half out of his mind with rage and confusion. He’s a rat, he’s cornered, and he’s squealing.”

“Ms. Janet Flyte from the Christian Science Monitor,” said O’Connell hastily, in an effort to cut off any more barnyard calls from Morgan. A middle-aged woman with a dark short haircut stood up.

“General Brubaker and Mr. Weintraub as well, we have had a number of reports of American military personnel and the Federal Anti-

Terrorist Police voluntarily confining themselves to their barracks, and in some cases apparently abandoning their facilities in more rural and remote areas of the Pacific Northwest, facilities which have been taken over by white supremacist insurgents who are now using them as bases of operation to terrorize loyal Americans and drive them out of their homes. Are these positions going to be re-occupied by Federal authorities, and action taken to preserve life and property while the conference is taking place?"

"It is true that we are using the ceasefire to re-align and re-position our forces in some areas, to conform with military and law enforcement requirements," harrumphed Brubaker uncomfortably. "That is to be expected, and there's nothing unusual per se in the fact that there is military movement and re-positioning. I might add that I object to your use of the term insurgents. These are common criminals, nothing more."

"We are also aware of some of the incidents you refer to, Ms. Flyte," said Weintraub. "The Department of Homeland Security is assessing these incidents on an individual basis and we will take action as we deem appropriate."

Morgan seemed about to make a retort, but Barrow silenced him with a gesture. Barrow leaned over and whispered to him, "Let them rabbit on. The more we listen the more we learn."

"I guess we're just potted plants, sittin' here," grumbled Morgan. "Don't look like they're gone ask us anything."

Morgan was immediately proven wrong by the next question, from Maria Scopes of CNN. "Uh, Mr. Stepanov, is it? You are a Russian, are you not? Why exactly are you in the United States committing violent acts of insurrection against the country that welcomed you?"

"I was born in Siberia, yes," replied Stepanov. "I am fighting against a government, madam, not a country, and a particularly unpleasant and oppressive government at that. My place of birth does not signify, because my race is my nation, and I am fighting to create a Homeland for all of my people from every corner of the globe. Racism is the purest form of patriotism."

"Are you here on behalf of the Russian government?" shouted someone in the crowd.

"I am here on behalf of history," returned Stepanov.

"Wait your turn, ladies and gents, please!" admonished O'Connell. "Mr. Meriwether from CBS News, please." Meriwether was a well-known foreign correspondent, bearded and Hemingway-esque. He stood up and boomed out,

"Robert Gair, did you assassinate the governor of Oregon with a rifle grenade two months ago?" he demanded.

"Sure did!" replied Gair cheerfully.

Meriwether turned to Weintraub. "Mr. Weintraub, you are this nation's top law enforcement officer! This man just confessed to a terrorist murder on worldwide television! Are you going to do nothing to apprehend him? And why the hell are these people being allowed to carry guns?" he demanded. Weintraub turned green and looked about to gibber.

"I will tell you what we told the representatives of the government before we came here," spoke up Barrow firmly. "Throughout all of recorded history, the mark of the freeman, of the citizen, of the responsible male adult, has been the keeping and bearing of arms. We are free men, every bit the equal of any man or woman on the opposite side of this table or in this audience, and we will not attend or participate in a conference such as this under any implied lesser status. We carry weapons because that is what free Aryan men do. It's a White thing. Dig it."

"Mr. Meriwether, you're embarrassing Mr. Weintraub," said O'Connell firmly. "There are countless examples throughout the last century of yesterday's terrorist becoming today's statesman and politician. When I first entered Dail Eireann as a young wide boy, I had to sit next to Gerry Adams, who in addition to being a mass murderer was just about the most unpleasant bloke personally I have ever met. I put with Adams and his I.R.A. louts, and you can put up with these ladies and gents so appropriately attired in brown shirts. It's necessary."

Jane Chenault leaned down and whispered to Barrow, who spoke up. "Mr. Meriwether, I understand that you are a reporter and that a situation of this nature is of interest to you and your audience. But I don't really think a long digression into our multifarious colorful careers here and now would be helpful. So I'll tell you what. Later on if you like you can sit down and have a private interview with Captain Gair and he can tell you all about the various body parts he's sent flying, including Governor Delmar's. Would that be satisfactory?" Meriwether grinned and having gotten his scoop and his sound byte, sat down. Next up was Richard Pell from the Associated Press.

"General Barrow, are you people really serious about this all-white apartheid nation carved out of Washington and Idaho?"

"Not at all," replied Barrow cheerfully. "We've been killing people and blowing up things for the past five years just for the hell of it."

"That's a silly answer!" snapped Pell.

"It was a silly question, sir. I tell you what, let me save you fine folks from the Fourth Estate a lot of time and give you enough for a dozen sound bytes. I was going to save this for our first conference meeting tomorrow, but I see no reason why the whole world shouldn't hear what I have to say." Frank Barrow got up and addressed the American delegation down the table. "I think that in all fairness to those who have died on both sides of this war over the past five years, I need to tell you people flat out, from the beginning, that if you think we're going to walk out of here with something besides an independent, sovereign Aryan Republic in these briefcases, then not only are you completely mistaken, but it's clear that you know us so little that there is no point in continuing these discussions. We might as well close up shop right now and get back to slaughtering one another, until you guys get ready to get serious. I know that in your minds you have some idea that you will be able to buy us off with money or with shiny toys, or else you think we're so dumb that you're going to be able to run rings around us and swindle us out of the prize. Fair enough. I suppose you wouldn't be who and what you are, if you didn't try. Deception and contempt for white people is in your very blood. You think you're going to palm us off with some kind of dominion or territorial status, turn the Northwest into some kind of white Puerto Rico or some nonsense like that. That's not going to happen. If you don't understand that, then you don't know anything at all about us.

"We began this rebellion to be free of you, free of your government, free of your capitalism, free of your filth and your sexual perversions, free of your Jews, free of your soulless greed, free of everything that you are. We do not want to be you any more. We do not want to be Americans any more. Manifest destiny might have been a good idea once, when that destiny was in control of the white men who made this continent. But it's no longer valid. America was once the shining city on the hill, but you people have turned it into

the world's largest experiment in landfill. Well, all that's over now. We dawdled and screwed around for three generations after the end of World War Two, and there is a price to be paid for that cowardice and foolishness on our part. The price is that we can't take all of our country back. But we're damned well going to take some of it back. If you want to put this Biblically, long ago you took from us the birthright of our race, and in return all we got was a mess of pottage called democracy, and Ronald McDonald. Fine. Well, now you're going to give Esau back what you stole from him. One last thing. Just remember as we progress, that it was you who called this pow-wow and not us. We were ready to keep on fighting for the next thirty years when you contacted us in June. We're ready to do it now." Barrow sat down.

"You don't seriously imagine that you have defeated the United States of America with your vicious little terrorist campaign?" demanded Brubaker with a sneer.

"I don't care what you want to call it," said Barrow. "The fact is that when all is said and done, you are here talking to us, and you called the meeting, not us. You can rationalize it all you want, and I have no doubt that American historians will spend the next hundred years rationalizing and explaining it all away. It is pointless to try and threaten us. The greatest glory of the past five years is that we are no longer afraid of you, because we have now seen that American bureaucrats and American cops and American assholes bleed just like anybody else." He turned to O'Connell and said, "I'm sorry, I didn't intend to launch into a speech, but I really do think it will save everyone some time if I make clear what our position is."

"I don't think we need to dignify that disgraceful tirade with an answer!" spluttered Weintraub.

"Ignore it all you want, Christ-killer!" thundered McCausland. "Swagger and strut and cut a caper all you want in front of your tame jackals here! But the Lord has lifted his hand once again in the affairs of men, and He has brought us here to extract from you another payment on your eternal debt, the holy blood that was spilled on Calvary!"

"We did not kill your God!" shrieked Weintraub hysterically. "God damn Mel Gibson! You have seen that filthy movie, haven't you? I thought we'd melted down every copy!"

O'Connell stood up. "Gentlemen, please! You're not at the bloody hog market in Dingle, so yer not! Now sit down, the both of yez!"

When things had subsided he said, "Now let's at least be civil shall we? Mr. Ramirez from the Los Angeles Times, please."

McCausland spoke low to Barrow "Look, I'm sorry, Frank, I know you don't want religion injected, but Christ-killer always gives them the heebie-jeebies, and it's such darned fun to watch them flip their sheeny-beanie!"

"This is going to be a dog's dinner!" moaned Barrow.

Ramirez from the L. A. Times got up and asked his question. "Mr. Stanhope, would you comment on the recent talks held between government officials, senior members of Congress, and representatives of Frente de La Raza regarding the establishment of an autonomous Hispanic territory in the southwestern United States? Is this conference here at Longview the precursor to the break-up of the North American continent into separate ethnic and racial enclaves?"

There was sudden dead silence from the American side of the bench and from the assembled media. "That's the first I've heard of any such talks," said Barrow. He called over to Stanhope, and he was heard all over the room. "What, you're giving the spics their own country in North America, but the white man can't have one, too?"

Stanhope leaned over, and quietly said, "No comment. I think this would be a good point at which to bring this press conference to a conclusion." And without another word the whole American delegation got up and walked out.

"Well, ah, I suppose that's it, then," said Ambassador O'Connell, clearly nonplussed. "Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your..."

"The Americans may be done, Mr. O'Connell," said Barrow, "But I see no reason why we should be. I'm sure these folks have a lot more questions they'd like to ask the NVA representatives."

"Yeah," boomed out Morgan. "Hell, let those sorry assholes walk out. We're not like them. We ain't afraid of questions. Ask us anything you want. Just so long as you understand that you might not like the answers you git."

So for the next hour, the rebels fielded the reporters' questions, and it turned into something like "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the Northwest Volunteer Army But Were Afraid To Ask." By vacating the conference in confusion, the Americans had managed to leave their opponents a clear field, and Barrow made the most of it. Every NVA Volunteer at the conference was asked at least one question. Cody was glad that Doctor Doom and Jack Cannon weren't present, but were upstairs going about their de-bugging, lest someone get curious about what they were there for. The journalists' questions ranged from weighty points of political and racial principle and National Socialist ideology, to trivial and nosy personal queries from the tabloids, such as when one geek from a supermarket rag asked Jane Chenault what her measurements were, to which she replied "With or without the kevlar?" and then batted him aside. Nightshade was asked again how old she was, and she simply shrugged and told them, without any wisecracks, which impressed Cody. The same reporter asked Cody the same question. "I just recently turned eighteen," he told them. "Which makes me old enough to be drafted into the United States Army and be sent overseas to fight and kill people who have never done me any harm, by the way, so I can't really see what the issue is with our ages. America thinks we're old enough to bleed and old enough to butcher for them. The way I see it, if the state considers itself qualified to decide for me who I am to risk my life and limb for, I'm old enough to decide for myself. Comrade Pastras and I have simply decided to stay here in our own land and fight against people who have done us wrong."

"Yeah? What wrong did America ever do to you, boy?" jeered the nationally known anchorman of a network true crime show.

"Well, to begin with, America destroyed my family," replied Cody calmly. "America sent my father to prison for the so-called crime of defending himself against an anthropoid who should not have been anywhere on this continent to begin with. What kind of state unleashes hordes of wild animals on the nation, and then punishes people for protecting themselves, or for so much as daring to say out loud that these are wild animals and unfit for human society? America abducted my sister and sold her into a form of slavery. I have no idea where she is today. America sold me to a family of vicious Jewish perverts who made what was left of my childhood an endless nightmare from which I could never awake until I finally struck back, and at long last made one of those people pay for their vileness, as I will someday make all of them pay. But I like to think that even had I not personally been victimized by America, I would still have had the perception to understand its evil and the courage to take up arms against it. I hope so, anyway."

“How many white kids your age feel the way you do about racial minorities, hating people because of their religion or the color of their skin?” called out one of the liberal female reporters.

“As usual, I notice that the issue of what these colored people do has disappeared from the question,” noted Cody. “We don’t have a problem with the color of anyone’s skin, we have a problem with their behavior. The first thing a white child notices on the playground is that the worst bullies, the stupidest and dirtiest and meanest violent kids are always black and brown. From middle school on, the drug dealers and vandals and gang bangers are all black or Hispanic, and the bad white kids are mostly stupid whiggers who are trying to act black because they see the niggers getting away with murder. White kids aren’t stupid, and they have eyes. They understand that they are forbidden to speak out loud of what they see and of what they go through in the educational system thanks to forced diversity, and they know perfectly well that the bulk of what they’re learning is crap. But I think you’ll find that now the threat of punishment has been removed, and they can hold up their heads and speak their minds, your kids will tell you some things you don’t want to hear. Leaving aside your misuse of the term hate, we don’t hate anyone, as you put it, because of who or what they are. We hate them because of what they do.”

“The great thing about these kids is that they’re pretty typical Volunteers. We are a very youthful movement,” put in Barrow. “One of the major accomplishments of the Northwest Imperative is that we have been able to motivate young white people, and give them a sense of their racial identity and some personal goal in life besides racking up the highest score on some computer game or seeing how drunk they can get. For many years, the racial right in this country was nothing more than a bunch of sad old men with big bellies who spent their time mailing each other news clippings telling one another how bad things were. For a long time the Northwest Migration consisted of nothing other than the Old Man sending out e-mails ranting and raving into the void of cyberspace.”

“Then what changed?” asked one of the reporters.

“I don’t know, exactly,” admitted Barrow honestly. “It’s something of a mystery. A few years ago, somehow we all just got it, finally. All of a sudden, for some reason that no one has ever been able to explain, one day white people decided to quit screwing around. They started actually listening to what the Old Man was saying instead of just reading his e-mails and deleting them along with the porno spams and Viagra ads. Instead of just reading his little photocopied newsletters and then throwing them in the wastebasket or putting them away to gather dust in a drawer for the next twenty years, until the wife found them and threw them out, all of a sudden white males actually began to act on what he was saying. Instead of sending him a ten-dollar tip every now and then for being entertaining like he was some kind of court jester, all of a sudden he had men coming forward offering him serious material support in money, in plant, in land, and in logistics to capitalize and structure a bona fide political and social movement. I’ve heard the Old Man was living in a homeless shelter, but he still managed to keep a post office box open in Olympia, and one day he opened an envelope and found his first five-figure contribution check. He was so stunned that he fainted right in the post office. Above all, people started Coming Home, migrating here to the Northwest, physically coming here from all over the world. The old-timers tell me that through some incomprehensible mental and spiritual process, suddenly white men got up one morning, went out to the garage and started cleaning out the junk, packing the U-Hauls, and heading out on the interstate.”

“It’s called a miracle, General,” asserted McCausland confidently. “At the very last moment, God finally awoke His sleeping children and bade them to leave the fleshpots of Egypt and Come Home to the Promised Land.”

“That may well be, Pastor,” conceded Barrow. “God, the gods, the Force, the Great Pumpkin, some kind of cosmic alignment, some kind of historically inevitable mass time bomb going off in thousands of white minds—I don’t pretend to understand it. But it happened. Suddenly we all just got it. The few people who had taken the gap before and were already living here in the Northwest looked up, and they saw those moving vans and those out-of-state license plates coming over the hill. The cavalry had arrived. Almost too late, but they arrived. With the influx of new racial residents, we were able to create the Party on a just barely adequate foundation of money and manpower, and begin the process of converting native-born Northwesters like myself to the cause of independence. It couldn’t have been done without those first incoming white migrants. I think it’s fair to say that the bulk of the NVA were actually born here in the Northwest, but on our own, without those racial settlers from the rest of the country and the rest of the world, the whole thing would never have got off the ground. I mean, who locally would have joined one middle-aged man sitting alone in a boarding house with nothing but a computer? What the hell did he have to recruit with? Was he supposed to stand on a street corner waving a sign all on his own, like some fruitcake? But the influx of White racial migration gave the Old Man the resources both human and material that he needed to bring the Party into existence, and the rest is history, as they say.”

The high point came when James Keller, a senior editor for Time magazine finally asked the question, “General Barrow, this may be a bit esoteric, but you have said that you are a National Socialist, a Nazi. What, exactly, does that mean? I don’t mean Hitler and the Third Reich and World War Two and all that. What I’m asking is, what does it mean to be you? Do you understand what I’m asking?”

“I think so,” said Barrow with a nod. He took a deep breath. “A National Socialist is someone who accepts the burden of history. Look, cutting through all the sound and fury, I think everyone in this room knows that the Party’s analysis of the present world situation is accurate. The issue boils down to this: a hundred years from now, are there going to be any more people on this continent who look like most of us do here in this room? The question is brutal in its simplicity. The white man: yea or nay? Will we as a race continue to exist? The Western world has reached a turning point, by the steep stages of a crisis mounting for generations, a crisis brought on us through our own weakness and cowardice and sloth. We as a people must acquire the will to survive the crisis of civilization, where that will is elsewhere divided, wavering, or absent. At issue is whether our sick and weakened society, which we call Western civilization and which is the sole product of the Aryan race, can in its extremity still call up men and women whose faith in it is so great that they will voluntarily abandon those things which men hold good, including life, in order to defend it.

“A National Socialist accepts this challenge, this burden, this destiny. Above all things, National Socialism means duty. Duty to one’s self, to be true to one’s racial destiny. In this soft and supine era, most White men run away from duty, will do anything to avoid it, for it is difficult and demanding and interferes with their television. We are the ones who don’t run away. We are the ones who take upon ourselves the burden of deciding in what form human destiny will be shaped. To be a National Socialist means taking on not only

responsibility but moral authority, the right to determine the fate of others, and that is a terrible duty to assume, one which frightens and horrifies most modern men. To be a National Socialist entails the courage to determine that this society is sick beyond saving, and that mercy itself requires its swift extinction. To be a National Socialist requires cultivating the character, the intelligence and the moral strength to recognize the true issues at stake for our race and our civilization in the face of overwhelming opposition. There are some things in life that just plain have to be done. You don't argue about them, you don't debate over them, you don't try to justify them. You simply do them and you don't talk about it afterwards. We are the men and women who do what has to be done to secure the existence of our people and a future for white children. That is who we are, and that is why we are here."

Barrow brought the conference to a close after about an hour. "I think you've got enough to keep your talking heads babbling for quite a while," he told the disappointed media sharks. He led the NVA delegation out, and on the elevator back up to the second floor he turned to Stepanov. "Right, I'm calling Red as soon as I get back upstairs. Bugged phones or not, we need to know as much as we can about this Southwest Mexican independence thing. It's gone out over the air already, and the whole country saw how it freaked out Stanhope and his droids, so we won't be letting any big secrets out by letting the enemy know we're curious as to what's going on." Back in the suite, he dialed an agreed-upon number that would re-route the call to wherever Morehouse was, partially through an internet connection, which would make it difficult if not impossible for the Feds monitoring cell site transmissions to pinpoint the location of the recipient. He got Morehouse on the cell phone. "I'm taking you up on your suggestion, Red," he said. "I miss you so much, I just had to hear your dulcet tones again right away. Did you see the press conference?"

"Yes, and the Council is asking me to convey my congratulations," said Morehouse "You all did very well."

"Did you catch that business about negotiations with the FdLR that sent the Americans scurrying?"

"I did indeed. Looks like there's other pots boiling on the American stove besides us! I think we just found another key to this whole business. It's not only Israel!" said Morehouse.

"Okay, I don't know anything at all about this. If the Mexicans are agitating for their own piece of the American pie and getting close to getting it, I need as full a briefing as you can give us," said Barrow. "Bearing in mind the nature of these phones, I'll leave it up to your vast ingenuity how you get us the information."

"Let me ask the birdies," said Morehouse. "Anything else you can tell me about what's going on down there, again bearing in mind the phone problem?"

"Had a brief private meeting with Stanhope, which I mention on the phone because it's pretty much impossible to conceal anything that goes on in here," Barrow told him. "Nothing of note, at least I didn't detect anything. I think he just wanted to sound me out and see whether I've got horns and a tail. One thing, though. He seems to have this luscious leggy intern of the Hebrew persuasion hanging all over him, most likely doing the old Monica Lewinsky trick of an evening."

"Ah, yes, Hadassah. I'm not surprised. Well, it's not as if Stanhope would ever be on our side in any case, but maybe he's more pragmatic than we think, and that would worry them. I find it interesting that the Jews are sufficiently concerned about him to make sure he has his kosher cuddle toy when he's tucked in at night. That also indicates to me they're anticipating a long conference. Think you can rough it for a couple of months?"

Barrow looked around him at the luxurious carpet, the purring air conditioner, the deep plush chairs and sofa, and the basket of fresh fruit on the table. "We'll manage," he said.

X.

"Lady, read my lips. We do not give a damn if you or anyone else is offended by anything we say or do." – John Corbett Morgan
After the raucous and rowdy press conference, the opening session of the negotiations the next day was almost anti-climactic. It more or less set the tone for the coming weeks.

Five days a week, the NVA delegation got their wakeup calls from the desk at six in the morning, switched on the coffeemakers in the mini-bars for their morning caffeine blast, showered and shaved and cleaned their rooms, made their beds with fresh sheets provided by housekeeping, and put on their daily fresh dry-cleaned and pressed uniforms which had been delivered the night before and scanned for bugs by Doctor Doom. They delivered their non-political personal trash to the elevator on a housekeeping cart, which was collected by a UN peacekeeper in a blue beret and taken away, no doubt to be pawed over by the FBI garbologists. Emily told Cody she was going to put some empty condom wrappers in her trash, and she was shushed and scolded by Captain Chenault, who told her not to fuck around in any sense of the term. At seven thirty they all trooped down to the Sockeye Grill, which was the restaurant Barrow and Jane Chenault had selected for their use, where a generous buffet containing every breakfast food known to man was laid out for them. When pressed, America could still put on the dog in the luxury and conspicuous consumption departments, even if millions of poor and elderly people across the country were sitting down to a breakfast of powdered egg substitute and cat food.

The American staff, military, and any delegates who weren't having room service delivered to their suites congregated in the Pump Room, gleaming with gold and polished oak and red leather upholstery, for their own equally sumptuous breakfast buffet. Reporters were staked out in the Cascade Lounge, where the buffet was supplemented with a bar that was open twenty-four hours a day and led to episodes of drunken brawling, sexual pawing and slurping in corners, stewed skinny-dipping in the pools and fountains and the water trap on the golf course, vandalism and vomit among the Fourth Estate. Bibulous antics among the media personnel gave the peacekeepers and MPs their only real problems; they actually set aside one of the offices on the ground floor as a drunk tank for reporters.

Each faction used separate stairs and elevators, and admission to the three restaurants and to the hotel floors was only for those with the appropriate color-coded ID cards: red, white and blue for American delegation, shocking pink for the media, and blue, white, and green for the NVA. For some reason those blue, white and green ID cards clipped to their uniform shirt pockets or worn on chains around the Volunteers' necks seemed to irritate the American negotiators and the media more than almost anything else, with their implied equality. There were constant needling references to the green,, white and blue IDs from both sources and in media commentaries on the

conference. The Swedish blue berets acted as escorts and traffic cops to keep the reporters away and avoid any accidental clashes and possible firefights in the lobby during transit. Everyone was nervous about the iron on the Volunteers' hips. There were constant demands for the NVA delegates to be disarmed, and finally Barrow had to issue a direct order that any attempt to take away a Volunteer's sidearm was to be regarded as an abrogation of the ceasefire and resisted with deadly force.

Breakfast took about forty-five minutes, and then the NVA went back upstairs and gathered in several team briefings to plan the day's activity. At ten o'clock sharp, the NVA negotiating team for the day entered the hotel's main conference room, briefcases and laptops in hand, from one entrance, and the Americans entered from another. Prior to 10/22, before booming bombs and flying bullets had rendered the climate in Washington state unfriendly for capitalism, the Lewis and Clark had made a point of attracting major players in the corporate world for meetings, conventions, and retreats. The conference room was large and comfortable, equipped with every business and personal convenience including private rest rooms. These had been made unisex, one assigned to the NVA and one to the United States, to prevent any friction through casual contact in the can. Little flip-tags could be turned from the inside to show whether or not each john was currently occupied by male or female personnel of either faction. Looming over the long mahogany table was a large satellite television screen for video conferencing. On various occasions in the following weeks everyone from Red Morehouse, to members of the Army Council disguised in balaclavas, to the Canadian prime minister and the Secretary General of the U. N. dropped in to make a virtual appearance.

There were also frequent observers in the sessions themselves from a wide variety of international bodies and governments, including one session attended by Premier Komarovsky while on a state visit to America. Komarovsky and his entourage came and said little, pointedly avoiding the NVA delegation whom everyone knew that Russia was secretly aiding, although they did manage to clean the hotel out of vodka. Only two people were not present in the flesh or electronically. President Chelsea Clinton's face and voice were never seen on the screen, and neither was the Old Man, despite repeated demands by the NVA and despite the ease with which a satellite feed could have been arranged from his prison cell in Florence. "They're holding him out to us like some kind of grand prize, in exchange for concessions, and then at the last minute they snatch him away," growled Barrow with a curse, on more than one occasion. The negotiating sessions took place on weekdays from ten o'clock until one o'clock, with a two hour lunch break which the team took back in the Sockeye Grill, and then the meetings resumed again at three for two more hours until five o'clock. After five everyone knocked off and went back up to their rooms to get stuck in on the day's accumulation of paperwork, writing of position papers, studying subcommittee minutes, writing press releases and sometimes doing media interviews, monitoring the news, and endless discussion and analysis of the day's session. Supper was eaten when and as people got hungry, either down in the Sockeye on an a la carte basis, or else if there was a strategy session going hot and heavy, they ordered room service.

Barrow tentatively grew to trust the room service and kitchen staff as time went by, and there was no sign of poison or drugs or excrement in the food. "They're rooting for us in the kitchen," Lisa Napolitano reported. "Apparently the Zoggies are real assholes, rude and complaining, always finding fault with the food and the service, demanding specially cooked meals, so forth and so on. Plus they've got a rabbi down there and a special chef doing kosher meals for Galinsky and Weintraub and the Horowitzes, and the other observant Jews, and the rabbi has to inspect and sign off on the whole kitchen every day to make sure it's pure and suitable to cook for the Chosen Ones, so that really frosts everybody's cookies on top of everything else."

"I always figured they'd take the kosher food racket too far," said McCausland complacently.

"The media people are even worse, always drunk and feeling up the wait staff of both sexes. We never complain and we compliment them on their food and their service, plus that thousand a week in tips General Barrow has me slip the kitchen staff and our generous tipping policy in the Sockeye has done wonders. If I were Senator Galinsky or Mr. Weintraub, I'd be more worried about finding something unpleasant in the food than I think we should be."

Weekends were free, although that term was a misnomer, because every member of the team was always busy working on something to do with the conference or with presenting the Republic's position to the people of the world through media manipulation. On their part, the American primaries generally left Longview on the weekends and flew back to Washington D.C. or wherever the mood struck them. On Sunday mornings would come the cable talk shows, where one or more of them would appear cursing and reviling the NVA delegates for intransigence, incompetence, ignorance and wicked racism in general. That meant that Sunday afternoons were generally spent in retaliation by the NVA primaries, who did interviews with the reporters who showed themselves the least hostile and whose coverage most closely approached some kind of balance.

Oddly enough, the one among them who shone in this regard and who began to generate a kind of fan club among the reporters and viewers was John Corbett Morgan. When he wasn't threatening bodily violence in the conference room, Morgan turned out to be a natural born media talent with a natural camera presence, a folksy raconteur with a pithy turn of phrase and a sharp country comment on every situation. An evil Jed Clampett, one of the talking heads called him. "Hell, who knows?" chuckled Morgan. "I may go into politics once we get the Republic."

The Sunday afternoon media counterstrikes in turn generally led to chilly Monday mornings which lapsed into recrimination and abuse over what had been said on television by both sides the previous day. It became very hard to get anything done at all on a Monday, since Mondays were all about the Sunday news shows. Finally, in September Seamus O'Connell was able to persuade the American delegate to stay the hell off the tube, and the NVA agreed to follow suit, which calmed things down a bit.

The five primary Northwest American Republic negotiators were accompanied into the conference room by one aide each who sat behind their principal at small desks, and took notes, monitored the news or did quick research on laptops as needed, as well as running any errands outside the room that needed running. In theory, they were the only ones who were supposed to leave the room during a formal session, but at one point or another during the sessions virtually everyone except Stanhope, Barrow, and Oliver Lodge blew up and stormed out, including the moderator O'Connell, who once got so disgusted he cursed them all in Irish, went into the Cascade Lounge, demanded Guinness and Bushmills, and ended up saying some embarrassing things of his own to the comment-hungry media, to the effect that it would be to the ultimate benefit of humanity if the entire North American continent burned to the ground.

Cody sat behind General Barrow. Reverend McCausland was accompanied by his wife Mabel, a quiet and neat woman whom Cody hadn't even realized was part of the delegation until he'd seen her get onto the copter that morning at Chehalis and later seen her in the suite she shared with Barrow and her husband. She never said anything except to whisper to her husband maybe once during each session. The other three NVA primaries had a different aide every day so that everyone in the delegation would get a chance to sit in on the sessions, so sometimes Cody got to sit next to Nightshade, and they passed notes like kids in school. On one occasion Howard Weintraub was ranting on about something and he saw one of their notes and demanded that O'Connell confiscate it and read it out loud. With a shrug, Cody passed the note down and O'Connell examined it and read it out to the assembled conference and into the minutes of the meeting.

Emily had written Howie's fly is open and Cody had scrawled back, Dead birds don't fall out of the nest.

The Americans were accompanied by their own aides, usually a military officer for Brubaker, for Galinsky a goat-faced woman with a moustache described as her "domestic partner," and several secretaries and suits took turns backing Lodge and Weintraub. Susan Horowitz, as Leah now called herself, always sat behind Secretary of State Stanhope with a yellow legal pad on her knee, expensively dressed to the nines and looking like she'd just come from the hairdresser, calm and cool and efficient and a little amused, taking the occasional note and showing a lot of leg. She and Cody ignored one another. All of the NVA delegates were in uniform except for the McCauslands. Mabel McCausland was invariably dressed neat as a pin as if for church; Major McCausland again chose to wear a rumpled suit and carried no briefcase, just his Bible under his arm. "I have to admit, sir, the sight of that Bible freaks them out," admitted Gair. "I think they're scared you'll start preaching."

"If they only knew, they'd be scared he'd start singing," replied Mabel McCausland. It seemed to Cody that was the longest sentence he'd ever heard her utter.

On weekdays the sessions would almost always begin with some complaint or other by the Americans about the behavior of the NVA and/or NDF during the previous twenty-four hours, involving alleged ceasefire violations, unkind remarks by NVA people around the Homeland, acts of violence against non-whites, loyalists, race-mixers, and homosexuals, and the Party's habit of creeping annexation of real estate. On morning of August the second, as they sat down across from one another for the first time, Barrow was surprised to hear Weintraub open with a formal protest over the fact that the fledgeling Northwest Broadcasting Authority's television station in Centralia was running old episodes of Amos and Andy from the 1950s which they'd found somewhere. "That's the uppermost thing on your minds as we begin an historic event like this?" Barrow asked in amazement. "You're upset about our telling nigger jokes?"

"All right, that's another thing we need to get clear," snapped Jeanette Galinsky. "There are to be no racial slurs used in this room. You're not in some redneck honky-tonk in Alabama! During these meetings you people are to conduct yourselves in a courteous and civilized manner!"

"Yes, Mommy Dearest," said Robert Gair contritely, and from then on Senator Galinsky had her official nickname.

"You mean ah cain't call you a plug-ugly kike bitch?" asked John Morgan innocently.

"Who the hell do you think you are, talking to me like that, you goniff! You shlumpf!" screamed the Galinsky woman. "I am a United States Senator!"

"John, I take Mommy Dearest's point," said Barrow. "No racial slurs Plug ugly bitch is quite sufficient. And don't shlumpf, sit up straight!" Things deteriorated from that point, and it took O'Connell an hour to get things back on track.

That first day, and almost every day thereafter, the sessions periodically degenerated into carping sessions over the NVA's use of so-called ethnic and racial slurs, which Barrow insisted on as a point of principle. At a news conference he said, "For years now white men and some women as well have been fired from their jobs, have had their children taken away and their families destroyed, have gone to prison and been tortured and murdered simply for telling a racial or ethnic joke, or for displaying a Confederate flag or a Tricolor bumper sticker on their car," he explained to the media in an impromptu session outside the conference room on one occasion. "ZOG has always sought to control white people's thoughts in Orwellian fashion, by punishing the speaking aloud of certain words and ideas. The purpose of hate speech laws is to make white people so afraid that they might accidentally utter forbidden racial speech, that they censor themselves in their own minds from so much as thinking forbidden racial thoughts. No more! From now on we call a spade a spade, literally. In the novel 1984, Winston Smith wrote in his journal that freedom means the right to say out loud that two plus two equals four. As odd as it may sound, a large part of what we have been fighting for over the past five years has been for the right to say nigger."

"But that word is offensive to African-Americans!" wailed a woman reporter in stunned disbelief.

"Screw African-Americans," said Barrow succinctly, causing gasps of horror at his blasphemy.

"Lady, read my lips," spoke up Morgan, who was standing beside Barrow on this occasion. "We do not give a damn if you or anyone else is offended by anything we say or do. I want to say nigger, I'm damned well gone say nigger! As long as I am carrying this iron on my hip and I am willing and able to use it to defend myself and my right to think and to speak as I choose against those who would deprive me of that right, I'm gone say nigger all I want!" Agitated media reporters that night recounted disturbing reports from all over North America of white people breaking out in spontaneous cheers breaking out in bars and other places where these words were broadcast on television.

The tone of the main meetings ranged from the icily correct to practically barroom brawl. O'Connell attended the sessions as nominal chair, and made valiant but usually ineffective attempts to control and direct them, and stifle the more dangerous shouting matches before guns were drawn. These usually took place between John Corbett Morgan and Howard Weintraub, each whom clearly wanted the other dead, but sometimes between Morgan and Brubaker, McCausland and Weintraub over Biblical subjects, Gair and Brubaker, and once Stepanov and Weintraub both blew up and cursed and railed at one another in Russian. Jeanette Galinsky had for some reason developed an almost frantic aversion to Jane Chenault, who did the daily media briefings for the NVA delegation, and went out of her way to call her the shiksa and "Blondie." The rest of the delegation retaliated by making sure the media got hold of "Mommy Dearest," to her fury. Galinsky and Barrow had a couple of extremely cold and nasty exchanges, but the Senator seemed completely terrified of

Morgan, and of Andrei Stepanov as well, which was odd because Stepanov was generally the most Continental and courtly courteous of the NVA team. “Genetic memory of Cossacks,” said Stepanov with a shrug.

Whenever Emily Pastras was present in the conference room, Cody kept catching Susan Horowitz giving her a calculating once-over, and that bothered him. He mentioned this and Nightshade told him “Yeah, I picked up on it. She takes this running joke about us being a hot item seriously. She’s going to try something, and when she does I’ll cut her.”

“Well, I don’t know why she...” fumbled Cody.

“I can guess,” said Emily, looking at him. “Forget about it. Now’s not the time and place.” Cody agreed and changed the subject.

One major thing that was accomplished during the first week was the creation of the subcommittees, the important ones being the territorial and border committee and the prisoner release committee. Cody wasn’t on either one, but Jane Chenault was on prisoners with a special brief to get as many Canadians sprung as she could, and Barrow himself headed the boundary committee on the Northwest side, so Cody got to sit in on that one, which was actually much more productive and civil than the main conference since the American delegates were Stanhope and Lodge, both of who were firm and slippery negotiators but who at least didn’t rant and rave, and who took the matter seriously. To Barrow’s relief and astonishment, it was Stanhope who said, “Let’s start from the premise that we’re not going to worry about the outcome of the substantive negotiations or what form of autonomy might apply in the parts of the United States we’ll be discussing. Let’s quantify rather than argue about how many terrorists can dance on the head of a pine in Spokane and how many in Redding, California. I think it’s obvious, General Barrow, that you will want as much land as possible, while we wish to concede as little as possible. That being taken as a given, let’s see what we can come up with as if we’re performing some academic exercise in demographic economy or political science.”

“I’m amazed at how easy the border subcommittee is going,” Barrow reported to one of the delegation’s internal briefings, shaking his head in wonder. “I can’t understand it. I thought that this would be the main show itself, that they’d be argue and reject and quibble until the cows come home, that every square foot of land would be like pulling teeth. But they didn’t bat an eye about the three basic states, they graciously accepted our concession of Alaska and threw us Wyoming as a consolation prize!”

“You ever been to Wyoming, sir?” asked Gair.

“Now we’re bobbing and weaving over how much of Montana and northern California we get,” said Barrow, shaking his head. “I think Jeff Anderson is right. This has to be some kind of gull! They have to have something up their sleeve.”

“Any progress at all on freeing any of Canada, sir?” asked Jane Chenault.

Barrow sighed. “Jane, I’m more sorry than I can say, but no. They won’t even discuss it. They say they haven’t got the authority to negotiate away someone else’s country, and I have to admit, they have a point. The Canadian government just refused yet again, point blank, to send even so much as an observer here, much less a plenipotentiary. Looks like that one glimpse of the Prime Minister on the big screen telling us to piss off is about all we’re going to get. Comrade, the best I can tell you is that our neighbor to the north goes on this new country’s permanent to-do list and someday Canada will be free as well as us. But it doesn’t look like it’s going to happen here.”

Cody Brock was assigned to the standards subcommittee, which consisted of himself, Olaf Olafsson and Lisa Napolitano, and some American bureaucrats whose main object seemed to be that the Northwest Republic didn’t go onto the metric system. “That’s actually more important than it sounds,” explained Red Morehouse to Cody in a phone briefing. “It’s an economic issue. Who will the Republic be importing most of its technical and mechanical goods from, the United States or Europe?”

“Well, hopefully, we’ll be manufacturing them, not importing them,” replied Cody.

“I agree, but let’s not mention that to the Americans, shall we?”

“What should we push for, sir?” asked Cody. “As much as you can tell me on these phones?”

“We’re going to be getting a lot of new arrivals from Europe, fleeing their own unrestricted Third World immigration,” said Morehouse.

“We already are, in fact, mostly young men who want to fight. The NDF has two fledgeling German divisions now and one British, including a corps each of ANZACs and South Africans, and the French-speaking Charlemagne Division is on the drawing board. My inclination is hold out for as much metric as you can get, but let them talk you back to miles instead of kilometers and Fahrenheit instead of Celsius, which is a better temperature scale anyway. This is so they can show some gain to match against our holding out on the substantive issues. It’s a sideshow. But I think it’s a damned good sign that they even want a standards agreement. It shows they’re serious and they’re envisioning trade and economic relations with a new nation.”

In between the arguments, Barrow and Stanhope and occasionally Barrow and Oliver Lodge actually managed to conduct a passably civil dialog on substantive issues, but not one very long on progress. Morehouse had been correct in his assessment of Oliver Lodge. When the man of big business did speak he did so quietly, briefly, and to the point, and all the others shut up and deferred to him.

“They’re stalling for time,” Barrow told Morehouse in a phone conversation made through a scrambling attachment Doc Doom had cooked up, which they hoped worked. “That’s the only way I can figure it. But why? Time is on our side. Every day the NDF assumes command in more and more of the Pacific Northwest and the Homeland becomes more and more of a reality on the ground. What the hell are they playing at? Why don’t they wind it up, one way or the other?”

“Could it be you’re reading too much into them?” asked Morehouse. “Could it be that the United States really honestly does not have a plan for a situation like this? I’ve always believed that we always overestimated ZOG’s competency. Frank, these people have always thought maybe ten minutes ahead, on a good day. Their entire style of government has been crisis management, staggering from crisis to crisis. Maybe they’ve finally reached a crisis that they just plain don’t know how to handle, and they’re just keeping the balls in the air waiting for the flying saucers to come down out of the sky and land on the White House lawn.”

What the sessions boiled down to was the Americans trying to browbeat, seduce, or bullshit the NVA into making concessions on just about every front having to do with the substance of political and economic independence, and Barrow shooting them down every time and countering with demands for more prisoner release. Completely off his own bat, and drawing on his best legalese from his police and house-buying days, the night before coming down to Longview Barrow had drawn up a simple six-point document, which he had

cleared with Morehouse beforehand:

Agreement for Disengagement, Mutual Recognition, and Non-Belligerence Between the United States of America and the Northwest American Republic

1. The following plenipotentiary treaty between the United States of America and the Northwest American Republic shall be legally binding on both participatory governments, from the date of signature by the delegations assembled at Longview, Washington, and unless and until full ratification by the participatory governments is specifically denied or rejected, shall have the force of international law.
2. The United States of America shall recognize the Northwest American Republic as a fully independent and sovereign nation, to be reserved specifically for the habitation, protection and interest of the non-Jewish, Caucasian peoples of the world, of the race historically known as Aryan or Indo-European, and shall respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty thereof.
3. The United States of America shall withdraw all military, paramilitary, law enforcement, administrative and governmental forces from the territory of the Northwest American Republic, within fourteen (14) days of the signing of this instrument, said territory to be determined by the duly assigned subcommittee of the conference now convened at Longview, Washington.
4. The signatory parties shall agree that no indemnification or compensation for loss and damages sustained by any and all persons or institutions during the hostilities leading to the independence of the Northwest American Republic shall be demanded, paid, or discussed save by a joint commission of the two participatory governments to be convened at a later date mutually agreed upon.
5. The participatory parties agree within one (1) year of the signing of this instrument to establish a Border Commission to determine the final and recognized boundaries and frontiers of the Northwest American Republic.
6. The respective military and paramilitary forces of the two participatory governments shall maintain a complete ceasefire during the withdrawal phase of this agreement, and shall refrain from any and all acts of hostility towards one another during the period preceding ratification thereof.

At the bottom of this document were signature blocks for the five NVA primary negotiators and the five primary American negotiators. Barrow had Emily print this document out in two copies on nice heavy, creamy parchment and encased in a couple of document holders, one copy for them and one for the Americans, and all of the NVA negotiators signed both copies of the impromptu treaty and had the hotel's notary affix her seal to each signature. Then Barrow periodically shoved the papers under the Americans' noses and demanded they sign, to which they reacted like vampires confronted with a crucifix.

A major problem was none of the NVA people being able to set foot outside the South Wing without getting mobbed by reporters wanting comments on everything, inside information on what was going on in the conference meetings, and in-depth interviews of the "Portrait of a Hater" kind. The stress and the cabin fever started to grow almost immediately. Barrow told his people, "Look, comrades, we're shut in together and as comfortable as these surroundings are, we're going to start getting on one another's nerves. Be aware of it, be aware of what's causing it, learn not to sweat the little stuff, and let's make an agreement not to start snapping and crabbing at one another. This is a great adventure and something you're going to tell your grandchildren about. Make a decision that you're going to enjoy it!"

In August, when the weather was still warm, the hotel agreed to work out a schedule with the peacekeepers between the two sides governing the use of the facilities such as the golf course, the tennis courts, the fitness room and sauna, and the outdoor and indoor swimming pools, but the media proved impossible to restrain or interdict, stalking the NVA delegates with telephoto lenses and trying to phone them and sneak into the rooms. On several occasions reporters were nearly shot by Volunteers on guard duty on their floor, and on one occasion Doctor Doom, of all people, lost his temper with one blowsy news-hen and jabbed her with a homemade electric cattle prod of his own design he had taken to carrying. One supermarket tabloid paid a paparazzi photographer \$100,000 for a surreptitious picture of Jane Chenault in a swimsuit by the supposedly closed outdoor pool, which the photographer had admittedly taken at some risk to life and limb. "That's twice my Domestic Terrorist bounty, eh!" she protested indignantly, waving the offending newspaper in a team meeting.

"Uh, it gets worse, Jane," said Barrow sympathetically. "According to a talk I had with Red this morning, a national so-called sophisticated men's magazine is offering \$250,000 for pictures of you or Lisa or Emily in the nude."

"Yeeewww!" said Cody, staring at Nightshade in disgust and receiving a one-finger salute in return.

"Not me?" asked Mabel McCausland. "I don't know whether to be pleased or insulted."

"My understanding is that the offer applies as well Ms. Horowitz and some of the American secretaries, and the female hotel staff. They want to do a spread called Ladies of Longview."

"For \$250,000 Leah will strip off in a heartbeat," said Cody sourly.

Corby Morgan was scowling in rage. "Frank, you sure it wouldn't be a good idea to just say to hell with all this, and go back to blowing these bastards' brains out?"

"I think this may go beyond ordinary tabloid sleaze," Barrow told them. "It may be some kind of government plot to cause us embarrassment, throw us off, make us lose our cool. I think a lot of you gals, and I am going to be very, very angry indeed if any of you are humiliated in such a manner. John C., I think we can find some way to make it clear to those reptiles that these particular ladies of Longview have a lot of friends on the outside, and if anything of the kind happens the parties responsible aren't going to be around long enough to spend that two hundred and fifty Gs."

"I'm on it," said Morgan.

"Do you think they'd go so far as to bug our bathrooms and showers, sir?" asked Jane Chenault wearily.

"Stanhope and Lodge assure me privately that the bathrooms aren't bugged or monitored, that their people do have that much decency," replied Barrow. "Do they? I don't know. We've been fighting these people for five years, they are capable of murder and torture in every form, and I have never noted any particular signs of any decency at all. I don't think they'd stick at watching us on the crapper. But to be frank, other than trust in Doctor Doom's electronic wizardry, there's just not too much we can do about it."

Whether Nightshade was present or not in the sessions, if Cody had his laptop, which he usually did, they spent a lot of time instant messaging one another. The Federals never objected to this practice, so the two of them assumed that the IMs were bugged and made it a point to include various scatological and libelous comments about the enemy negotiators. Cody and Nightshade were actually well known around the hotel, because to their chagrin, the media picked up on the two of them almost immediately. It seemed that FBI intelligence had finally caught up with them, put two and two together regarding Emily's alleged kidnapping on Capitol Hill in June, updated their files, and passed the information on to their tame journalists. A week after the conference began Cody and Emily came into the morning briefing and found everyone poring over copies of the latest Newsweek magazine. "Hey, Em, you're a cover girl now!" a grinning Doc Doom told her. There was with a blowup photo of the two of them in uniform on the cover of the magazine, taken with a telephoto lens as they debarked down the helicopter ramp on the first day, with the headline "THE NVA'S KILLER KIDZ." Inside, the cover story was headed "NATURAL BORN KILLERS" with more photos of them from the press conference, labeled Deadly Nightshade and Wild Bill. "Wild Bill?" asked Lieutenant Waters.

"It's better than Raging Psychopath from the Hills," said Morgan sulkily, looking at his own photo in the same issue.

"That's actually my name," said Cody. "William Cody Brock. My Dad liked cowboys. Wait until they pick up on Doctor Doom."

"I'd rather they didn't," said Barrow in some irritation. "Doc needs to stay beneath the radar."

The main story in Newsweek featured a not wholly inaccurate account of the Country Joe Krajewski hit, a somewhat less accurate retelling of the events in Eastgate mall, and an almost totally fabricated account of Cody's stabbing of Larry Sapirstein. It also mentioned that Emily Pastras's grandmother had been euthanized under the Senior Citizens' Quality of Life Act. "This is like Mark Twain said. I could go over this story with a divining rod and never find myself. No doubt I have Leah-Susan to thank for this," sighed Cody. He turned to Nightshade. "I'm sorry, comrade. Looks like you got caught in a shitstorm aimed at me."

"Well, Mom had to find out sometime," said Emily with a shrug. "I suppose I'd better call her."

"Uh, yeah, I think so," agreed Cody. When Emily went out of the room to use the phone in the hall, he followed her. "Em, I didn't know about your grandmother. I'm sorry."

"Hey, I told you once, I have a story like everyone else," she said with a shrug.

"Look, I don't want to pry and it's none of my business, but how did that happen?" asked Cody. "You guys were rich, right?"

"After my father died, I had a stepfather too, for about a year," said Emily in a dead voice.

"Jew?"

"No. Just a sorry white bastard, and no he didn't do to me what I think those Jew girls did to you. He wasn't into nookie, he was into money. Grandma got a big chunk of my father's estate and stepdaddy wanted to speed up the process of my mother inheriting it. We could never prove anything, but Grandma went into the hospital for hip surgery and forty-eight hours later a certain Doctor Singh gives her the hot shot. They said it was a mistake in the paperwork, the silly doc was new in the country and had trouble with his English, so he mistook her for some old woman who was a charity patient on the next ward, the one he was supposed to kill. An error I presume he rectified. We got a really nice letter of apology from the hospital. My Mom found some funny calls on stepdaddy's cell phone bill to Singh's private number on the two days in question. She's not a total idiot. She threw the son of a bitch out and told him if he kicked up a fuss she'd call the cops and the news media. Exit stepdaddy."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be," she said, looking at him. "When I knew Grandma was gone, that this horrible unfeeling monster had simply ground up her bones like she was so much garbage, that was when I knew the world had to change. I did an archive search on the internet until I found a seven year-old Party e-mail address in an old chat room that by accident more than anything else was still valid. By the grace of God I was able to hook up with the NVA, Deadly Nightshade was born, and the rest, as they say, is history."

The NVA delegation weren't imprisoned. There was in fact a trickle of travel back and forth between the Volunteers in the hotel and the outside world, via special helicopter runs under the aegis of the UN peacekeepers. Barrow was allowed to send messengers out, and also to receive couriers from the Army Council. About two weeks after the press conference wherein the Los Angeles Times reporter had let the Aztlan cat out of the bag, they received a visit from now Captain Nigel Moore of SS military intelligence. The NVA delegates had taken to holding conferences in the capacious bathrooms of the suites, trusting at least to a limited degree in the Secretary of State's promise that they were not electronically monitored, since they didn't really have any other choice. After Moore's arrival the primaries assembled for one of these special hot tub sessions, and Cody was allowed to squeeze in. Captain Moore gave his presentation standing in the shower, to a packed john.

"Right," said Moore, "Here's what we've been able to piece together. As most of you are probably aware, the Mexicans have been trying to get the American Southwest back ever since the end of the Mexican-American war of the 1840s. For almost a century it never went anywhere, despite a few incidents such as Pancho Villa raiding into Texas and New Mexico, so forth and so on. But then in the 1950s, American agriculture began to be transformed, from white-owned family farms and ranches into what is now known as agribusiness, and that created a huge demand for cheap labor at the very moment when the American economy was improving and the availability of the old-style poor white Okies who used to pick all the fruit and the lettuce and whatnot dried up. Understandable, I suppose. No one wants their kids to be doing stoop labor in the fields when they could be going to college on the GI bill and working in an air-conditioned office, but since somebody has to do the stooping, it created the beginning of the immigration crisis.

"You all know what happened over the next seventy years, as the United States ceased to enforce its immigration laws and large parts of the North American continent became part of the Third World due to massive and unchecked immigration. The bulk of that immigration was Hispanic and mestizo, the Feds stopped even trying to send them back, the cities became huge barrios, and by modern times huge sections of the Southwest had become de facto part of Mexico, with the added advantage of American welfare benefits. The political move for a separate Hispanic nation in the Southwest was an entirely logical outgrowth of this capitalist policy, and it actually pre-dates our own independence movement here in the Northwest. The Mexicans call the territory that they claim Aztlan, since according to their legends the Aztecs were originally a nomadic people who came from that part of North America. The Aztlan movement has been

increasing in strength and influence for many years, especially since Hispanic politicians began to get elected and essentially take over first local and then state-level governments and the judiciary in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and especially California, as well as the southern half of Florida. Spanish has replaced English as the primary language in most of those areas now, the language of the courts and legal documents, the street signs, so forth and so on. The Frente de La Raza eventually became an umbrella group for all the various disparate elements that wanted independence from the United States under some kind of condominium arrangement which would still give them access to the American welfare and medical systems.”

“They want to have their cake and eat it too,” said Barrow.

“Precisely,” agreed Jack Flash. “And they may well get it. Actually, a system of the sort has long since been put in place since Bush the First, under the guise of NAFTA. Mexicans have been for all practical purposes a kind of honorary American since the 1980s. But in the past five years, with white men actually fighting for a nation of their own in the Northwest, the demand for a Hispanic nation in the Southwest has reached a point where ZOG simply can’t ignore it any more. From what we can gather, their own demographics and economics people told the Federal government a long time ago that the Hispanification of the Southwest had progressed beyond the point where it could be reversed, and that some kind of formalization of the Hispanic character of at least five states was inevitable.

“The Federal government reacted in the same way they always react to bad news. At first they classified all the reports top secret and hid them away. Then when the evidence of the Southwest’s changing demographics became too public to ignore and they could no longer bury the issue, they tried to spin it and co-opt the Mexicans into the system by giving them an increasingly large slice of the American pie, which worked for a time. Then we came along, and at some point it became obvious that the Northwest insurrection could not be suppressed either, and that one way or the other, the hated gringos were going to get a slice of America back. Needless to say, the spics have now ratcheted up their own demands for independence from Washington, D.C. although not from the Federal gravy train, using the FdLR as the political vehicle. Apparently the rumors of this coming conference here at Longview were afloat some months around the water coolers in D.C. before we ever knew of it. Several months ago, a coalition of Hispanic politicians more or less forced their way into the appropriate offices and told the Federals flat out that if the evil gringos of the Northwest got a country of their own in North America, then they were damned well getting a country of their own. Now, bear in mind that we’ve been forced to patch all this out with a great deal of speculation, once we were tipped off by that odd question from Ramirez.”

“You know, I think that may be one of the reasons why we’re getting this odd deer in the headlights reaction from the Americans,” said Barrow. “Crunch time has finally come, and the United States is getting hit from all sides. I honestly don’t think they can wrap their minds around human beings who are motivated by anything other than their own self-interest. It’s like we really don’t speak the same language.”

“So all of this affects us how?” prompted McCausland.

“The corporate faction within the American power structure has apparently decided that it is time to cut their losses and come to some sort of economic and business arrangement with both white and Hispanic separatism, so long as the multinationals continue to exercise looting rights over both the Southwest and Northwest. Their dedication to the old manifest destiny idea as to how the North American continent absolutely must be united under one empire has been replaced by economic multi-nationalism. Hillary Clinton wants one more stint in the White House, and she has negotiated a deal with them. She will instruct her daughter to sign off on whatever treaty comes out of this conference, and go along with the creation of some kind of Hispanic NAFTAland or whatever in the Southwest as well, in exchange for a Supreme Court decision declaring the Twenty-Fourth Amendment to the Constitution invalid.

“She already has a Congressional resolution to that effect, but since she doesn’t want to go through the Constitutionally mandated process of approval by the states, so she wants a Supreme Court declaration as well as an additional fig-leaf when she goes for a third term. This decision will be rendered on a test case she has had one of her flunkies file in New York state, and which is now working its way through the judicial system. That will allow her to run again, and with conservative white votes and conservative Hispanic votes as well eliminated, she’s pretty much certain to win. In essence, the red-stater corpos have agreed to cut their own electoral base out from under them in order to save money, and Hillary is on board as well because she would rather preside over a rump segment of the U.S.A. one more time than finally admit the Baby Boomers’ time has passed. Which is one of the more peculiar episodes I’ve come across in a lifetime of studying political science, but it seems to me that everyone in power has pretty much decided that the old ways are obsolete and it’s time to flush them anyway. However, for obvious reasons, this deal is a bit too cynical for public consumption and she doesn’t want it coming out, hence their consternation when that Spanish reporter asked the question in the press conference.”

“So, you’re telling us that both factions have come here to Longview with the full intention of actually letting us go?” asked Barrow incredulously.

“Oh, it’s much more complex than that,” said Moore. “For one thing, the Zionist faction of the American power structure is fighting the breakup of the continent tooth and nail, as witness Mr. Weintraub’s unilateral attempt to create Biblical death squads as a counterrevolutionary force against us. For another thing, even the corpos and Hillary have no intention at all of letting us go in the economic sense. They fully intend to hang onto our Northwest timber, our minerals and ore deposits, what coal and petroleum we have, our cattle and wheat and protein crops, our commercial fishing, our rivers with their hydroelectric potential, our manufacturing and industry, our deep water ports and our water resources that they want to transfer to the parched Southwest that the Mexicans have ruined. Alaska has oil, and there’s no way in hell we’re getting that. But it never rains, but it pours. In addition to all of the problems involved in the breaking up of the continental empire, they face cataclysm overseas.”

“Israel is about to go down,” said Barrow.

“Israel is about to go down,” agreed Moore. “There’s no doubt. The Arab armies are massing once again. This time they’re trained and battle-hardened by three generations of war, they’re armed with everything up to and including nuclear weapons, there are millions of them, and this time the rest of the world has decided at long last to stand aside and let nature take its course regarding the great Zionist experiment. The only hope for Israel’s survival is a full court press American military intervention, with American ground troops taking on the entire Muslim world and maybe in the end the Russians and Chinese as well. The Protestant evangelicals may yet get their

Armageddon, only it won't make Jesus come back, no disrespect, Major McCausland. Depending on how deeply America gets involved, it will only unleash hell on earth. We need to get out of it."

"No offense taken, Captain" said McCausland. "Christian Identity has always taken the view that the Armageddon referred to in the Bible was symbolic for the destruction of the Adamic race, the white peoples of the earth, by the forces of Satan, the Jews."

"Red state or blue state, the Zionists have an iron grip on both. The great Middle Eastern oil empire begun under Bush Two has turned out to be a disaster, economic and social and military, and the Jews are using every trick in their playbook to hang onto their effective control of America's Israel First foreign policy. Controlling interests in major corporations, interlocking directorates on every board, control of the media, control of Congress, infiltration of the intelligence agencies and every level of government, control of the money supply through the Federal Reserve, Late Great Planet Earthery among the peasantry's evangelical sects, and in some cases good old-fashioned sexual entrapment of key American influentials through a regiment of Monica Lewinskys and Susan Horowitzes. Plus naked violence of the kind Mr. Regenthal and his little chapel were planning. The Jews are frantic, and I imagine men like Oliver Lodge and Walter Stanhope are pulling their hair out in private. They are watching the whole world they have grown up in and served all their lives fall apart before their very eyes."

"So, Captain, if I understand what you're saying here....?" said Barrow slowly.

"I am saying, General, that the United States of America is reeling, on the ropes, on the verge of collapse," said Moore with a grin. "This is their last attempt to salvage something out of a situation that has been rendered completely untenable. Oh, I'm sure they still have some nasty tricks up their sleeves, but anything they threaten is just bluff. You comrades can get our Republic, if you will simply stay strong, keep your eye on the prize, and continue saying no until they hear it and accept it."

Moore had to go back to Olympia that night, but before he left he had a quick supper in the Sockeye Grill with Cody and Nightshade and brought them up to date on their old company. He also told them "I'm happy to be able to report that Kelly Shipman and her family appear to have decided to remain in the Republic." Cody picked up on the fact that this meant Moore had seen Kelly recently, but he didn't pursue the matter.

August became September. While the Song of the Jabberwock went on and on in the corridors of the Lewis and Clark Hotel, outside the conference in the real world, the Party and the newly christened Northwest Defense Force were quickly and efficiently assembling the form and apparatus of the coming state. Barrow and Morehouse estimated that at any given moment during the War of Independence, there had been possibly two thousand Volunteers on active service throughout the Homeland and elsewhere, with maybe twice as many supporting personnel, active sympathizers, and assets. This force of around six thousand irregulars had effectively tied down and baffled over a million Federal troops, Marines, FBI, FATPOs, Homeland Security operatives, Secret Service, National Guard, state police and Highway Patrol, local police, prison guards, bureaucrats and administrators, and forced the government that employed them to the conference table. In the purely military sense, the accomplishment of the NVA was stunning and impressive.

Within the first month of open recruiting for the Northwest Defense Force, there were fifty thousand men and women under arms in the fledgeling Republic's forces. Barracks, training depots, and fortified positions were springing up all over the Northwest, often side by side and riding herd on the Federals in their own installations, including a ring of rebel positions in the streets, buildings, and woodlands around Fort Lewis. By the end of September there were a hundred thousand NDF troops and a newly born navy and air force. The navy consisted of yachts and fishing vessels and tugboats hastily armed and transformed into gunboats and torpedo boats, with homemade weaponry almost as dangerous to the sailors as their opponents. The air force was a motley of chopped aircraft ranging from captured American helicopter gunships, to jet airliners converted into bombers, to small private planes with machine guns rigged to fire through their propellers like World War One biplanes. There was also one B-52 which was seized by a team of SS commandos, plus a squadron of microlights attached to infantry units and used for close-in reconnaissance. Given the chance to do so with the full social approval which his twentieth century-bred psyche craved above all else, the white man was once again responding to the ancient call to arms. The pioneers had done their job.

Civil administration was appearing in most of the small towns and counties outside the six or seven main metropolitan areas still held by the Americans. Local police in hundreds and then thousands were changing sides and putting on the khaki uniform of the new Northwest Civil Guard, a nationwide paramilitary police force designated to handle routine law enforcement, crime detection, and community protection duties. Many of the men who a month before had been on the opposite side and potential targets for NVA bombs and bullets were now taking the oath of loyalty to the Republic and going back on their old beats. Tricolor flags now flew over police stations, fire stations, city halls, post offices, and government offices. Black-robed Federal and state judges, the few who were left, were fleeing from the Pacific Northwest like rats leaving a sinking ship, and they were being replaced on their benches by locally elected members of the community who sat on the bench dressed like everyone else and who knew little of law but much of justice. In some cases these new judges had nothing in front of them but the Bible and/or a copy of the old United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Founding Fathers' version, yet they managed just fine and to the satisfaction of the communities they served.

Courthouses were cleaned out, and massive bonfires of old tax records, civil lawsuits, and criminal cases involving the oppression of the weak by the strong went up in smoke and flame to the starry Northwest sky. Lawyers were being hunted down and killed like plague rats. Prisons were broken open, including the hellhole at Walla Walla. Cody was notified that his father had been freed, but reluctantly decided that he did not want to call him or conduct a conversation with him on a telephone circuit that was certainly tapped by the Federals. "That's my private business," he told Barrow when the latter offered to arrange a phone conference. "ZOG had already had entirely too much to do with my family and I'm not letting them have anything more to do with me and mine. We've waited for ten years and we can wait a bit longer, so I can meet my dad when we are both free men."

Land was being re-distributed out of the hands of the multi-national corporations and developers and being returned to farmers, foreclosed homes returned to their owners, and confiscated wealth in every form returned to the people who had created it. Nursing homes full of sick and elderly white people were opened, and their tormented residents heaped up with blankets, medicine, clothing, decent mattresses and mountains of delicious real food instead of the slop they had been fed by America, as local residents formed

volunteer duty rosters to care for them while the Nigerian and Filipino orderlies who had tortured and abused their elderly white patients were chased down the street and lynched, or else taken for rides out into the woods from which they never returned.

The ceasefire was a joke. Every day there were shooting incidents between Federal forces and the NDF or between the impromptu local militias which had sprung up to take back what was theirs. Some of these amounted to Iraq-style pitched battles with mortars and artillery and tanks. On the Labor Day weekend the NDF moved in on Seattle, a few thousand men commanded by General Robert DiBella of the newly established Army of the Puget Sound. In five days of pitched fighting the rebels drove the Federals into four major pockets around the city from which they were evacuated by helicopter to Fort Lewis. The city which had once convicted the men of the Order was now Aryan, and the Republic established a temporary capital in Olympia, by way of thumbing their noses at the American garrison in Fort Lewis.

Portland was a different story. It was the only major pocket of American control where the former rulers seemed determined to make a stand of it. The city there was more compact and had always been more tightly controlled by the Federals. By concentrating all of the remaining FATPO forces there as well as Ranger and Marine units, and setting up mini-posts on a block by block basis to virtually lock down the whole town, the intransigent American commander, USMC General Delmar Partman, was able to force the NDF out of the city by the first week in September. The rebels withdrew north of the Columbia River, and the newly-designated First Corps of Army of the Columbia commanded by SS General Carter Wingfield began to concentrate in Vancouver, Washington. A Second Corps commanded by Generals Billy Basquine and Phil McDevitt moved up from southern Oregon and northern California, and positioned itself in the environs of Salem. Both corps were small, enthusiastic with sky-high morale, sketchily uniformed, hastily trained and patchily armed. Some units were carrying the Russian Kalashnikov and some captured American M-16s. They were light on armor and heavy weapons. On the evening of September the tenth, the first cool night that heralded the coming autumn, the NVA delegates at Longview gathered on their balconies and looked to the southeast, where they heard low rumbling like thunder and flashes of light low in the sky like some subdued aurora borealis. "Those are 155-millimeters coming from Portland," said Barrow grimly. "CNN says that Partman has decided he wants to get our people to move back from the north bank of the river. Our own intelligence tells me that Partman has repeatedly demanded permission to blow up the interstate highway bridges that cross the Columbia River, but the White House won't let him do it. That would cut off Washington from the rest of the west coast, which might help us instead of them, and besides, they still don't want to admit that this is a full-scale war now."

Yet the negotiations at Longview still dragged on, with the daily quibbling over minor incidents on the outside that neither side really had any control over, the constant hair-splitting over things like the metric system and customs and tariffs, the slow release of prisoners that was like pulling teeth. The Americans had finally countered the N.A.R. delegation's simple six-point program with a lengthy printed draft of their own comprising one hundred and forty separate articles, and enough preambles, codicils, commentaries and fine print to choke a horse.

On the night of October the twenty-first, the eve of the anniversary of the Coeur d'Alene uprising five years before, Barrow was poring over this document trying to make some sense out of it. It was around midnight, and there was one of the many ongoing bull sessions among the delegates taking place in his suite. The air conditioner was rumbling on low below the window, but this far into autumn it was functioning as a heater and blowing warm air. "I don't get these people, I really don't," said Barrow, throwing down the multi-page American draft proposal. "I honestly can't tell if they really have a plan, if they're deliberately playing for time, or whether they're just totally clueless and stalling because it's the only thing they can think of to do. What the hell is so hard about 'You have fourteen days to get the hell out and leave us alone thereafter?' We speak English to them and they respond with gibberish. You guys have looked this mess over?" he asked, pointing to the document. They all nodded wearily.

"It took them two months to come up with even this much?" asked Gair plaintively. They had now been in the Lewis and Clark Hotel for two and a half months, and most of them had not been off the hotel grounds during that time. Luxury accommodation or not, it was getting very old. Exciting events were taking place outside the conference that everyone wanted to be part of, and the strain was starting to tell. On several occasions Barrow had been compelled to bring the negotiating sessions to a close prematurely, because he had spotted the warning signs and he was afraid John Corbett Morgan was going to kill someone, most likely Weintraub.

"It's just a goddamned stall," said Morgan. "They ain't got nothing in their hand and they just want to keep on bluffing and bluffing and hope something will turn up that helps them out."

"No," said McCausland meditatively. "I don't get that feel. These are subtle people, comrades, subtle as the serpent. They do nothing without reason. There's something in there in that sea of sand. Something they want. But what?"

"I think I may know, sir." The door opened and Nightshade entered the room. Cody noticed she was wearing a gray sweat suit and sweat band on her head and her battered old running shoes instead of her uniform. She pointed to the walls and cupped her hand to her ear.

"Doc Doom did a sweep today, and he swears its clean since Jack caught that one peacekeeper they'd bribed coming in here," said Barrow. "He's got some kind of device attached to the electric motor in the HVAC unit that he says throws off some kind of subsonic tone that will mess up any convectional mikes, which is why we're running the heater. Say what you need to say, just discreetly, if you get my drift."

"Check out Articles 83 through 85, sir," she said. "I'm not sure what, but there's something buried in there they're hoping we don't notice."

"Okay, so exactly what are sections 83 through 85?" asked Barrow. "Let's take a look." He pored over the document on the table before him until he found the relevant sections, then he read them. After he read them he started cursing in a low and dispassionate monotone.

"Oh, yeah. Suddenly I see why our Mr. Lodge is so keen on this new proposal of theirs. I think the dog has finally shown his teeth and gone for the bone, comrades. Sections 83, 84, and 85 deal with what most people would consider to be dry economic issues. Section 83 creates a so-called free trade condominium between the Republic and the United States, which denies the Republic the right to impose any export or import tariff on goods moving between the two countries, whereas the United States may impose tariffs and customs on non-U. S. goods coming in and Republic exports going out. In essence, as far as actual trade goes, we would still be part of the United

States, and the Americans get a blank check on all our natural resources, including the right to ship them out of the country regardless of whether we need 'em or not, and probably use our own materials against us in some way."

"It was the South objecting to that very arrangement with regard to cotton exports and European manufactured imports that actually caused the Civil War, never mind all that bullshit about slavery," pointed out Stepanov. "It would appear that the buccaneer capitalists of Boston have learned nothing in the past two hundred years."

"Section 84 has to do with corporate law," continued a bemused Barrow, "We're supposed to recognize American corporations as legal entities, safeguard their property, and give them the same tax breaks and the same rights they have in the U.S., in other words virtual immunity from the law or regulation by the Aryan state."

"So we're supposed to be just like some South American banana republic?" asked Gair, scandalized. "Hell, I imagine one of those corporations will be even be United Fruit, looking to take our apples and blueberries!"

"Article 85 is the real kicker," Barrow told them "It deals with so-called currency union. Stripped of all its verbiage, if we sign this thing the Republic gives up the right to issue our own money, we specifically renounce the gold standard and any kind of trade credit system not utilized by the United States, and we agree to use the U. S. dollar as our currency, i.e. those private Federal Reserve notes issued by the Jews. Essentially what these articles do is reduce us to an economic colony of the United States, no better off and most likely a good deal worse off that we were before. We are even obligated to pay back all outstanding Federal loans and treasury bills and bond issues, so forth and so on. The kikes have walked off with the money years ago, and we have to pay off their paper? We start our existence as a nation carrying trillions dollars in usury debt to the international bankers? No, no, no, no. Not happening, hebes!"

"A sovereign Aryan nation is supposed to allow the Federal Reserve to create and control our money supply?" asked Gair incredulously. "My God, the Federal Reserve is the first thing a neophyte right-wing crank of old used to learn about when he officially entered the lunatic fringe. What breathtaking arrogance!"

"This is Lodge, of course," said Stepanov. "This will be his input. I think you need to see him privately tomorrow, Frank. They've jerked us around long enough. Now we know what they want. They think they'll give us our flag and our own little puppet government while they take everything of value in the Northwest as they have always done. I would be willing to wager that if we agreed to these stipulations of his in some kind of side treaty or addendum, hopefully secret, we would get their signatures on our own six points and be out of here by tomorrow night with the Republic in our pockets."

"You're seriously suggesting that we agree to let these corporate Jews in all but name use our new country as a teat to be milked?" demanded Gair.

"No, I am suggesting that we make such an agreement to bring this overly long process to an end, get on with the building of a new all-white world, and then when time and place shall serve we tear it up and throw it in their faces," said Stepanov. "We slap any customs dues we want on anything we want, we kick their kosher corporations out of the Northwest and we print a hundred billion of our own dollars with Adolf Hitler's picture on every banknote, and back every penny of it in precious metal even if we have to really kidnap Jews and pull out their gold fillings! These pushcart-peddling swindlers have lied to our people how many times down through the past two thousand years? Surely we are morally justified in turning the tables on them just this once?"

"Which would then give them every valid excuse to say we'd broken our word and tear up the main treaty as well," pointed out Barrow. "Do you seriously think they intend to honor it any longer than is convenient for them, no matter what they promise?" demanded Stepanov. "Do you think that as soon as the pressure is off, the United States won't be back in here, invading us, trying to take our country back and enslave us again as soon as they think they can win?"

"Granted," said Barrow. "I already know that the very first thing we're going to have to do is to build a military to defend what we've won, and that for the next two generations at least every able-bodied man will have to spend a large part of his adult life in the army just to keep these monkeys off our backs. I think we all understand that what we're negotiating here isn't a treaty, it's merely a truce that the Americans are giving us because they have no choice, and that they will hate us forever for forcing them to do so. But I don't want our country to be born in an act of deceit, my friends. Remember the words of Marcus Aurelius. If it is not true, do not say it. If it is not right, do not do it. Yes, these people will break their word at the first expedient moment. Well, we're not Jews. We're better men than they are, and we're damned well going to act like it! I think you're right, Lodge is the man to see. So far I've kept to the diplomatic protocols and not tried to get any of them off in a corner besides that one meeting with Stanhope the day we arrived. I'm going to go outside the box tomorrow and ask to see Lodge alone." Nightshade leaned down and whispered in Barrow's ear for about ten seconds. He nodded and tore a strip of paper off a yellow legal pad and began scribbling on it.

"I agree," said McCausland. "The Republic must be founded in righteousness."

"Suppose we split the difference, General?" asked Gair. "No phoney treaties or lies, but hey, this is supposed to be a conference of diplomats, so why not be diplomatic? Tell Lodge we understand his concerns and that us poor ignorant rednecks just ain't got no idea how to run an economy, like we didn't have the example of the Third Reich in front of us for a blueprint, and we're going to need the help of him and his Boston Brahmin buddies on the board of directors, but can't we talk about all that later because we sure are getting tired of this hotel food and we'd all like to go home, right? Blah, blah, blah, you get the idea. See if you can swing Lodge around to our side by promising him a pig in a poke. Okay, maybe that's not up to Marcus Aurelius standards, but you can't deal with Jews without at least a little deception"

"There is the old saying about using a long spoon if you must sup with the devil," agreed McCausland.

Barrow handed the note to Emily, who walked up to Cody and gave it to him. He looked at what Barrow had written. It said Go with Nightshade and do what she says. She leaned over and whispered, "Go change into civvies, something light and disposable like this if you've got it. Then meet me in the smoke hole." Cody got up, went into his own bedroom, and changed out of his uniform into an old pair of jeans, a T-shirt, and a well-worn pair of Doc Martens he'd kept from his street kid days on Pioneer Square. He tore up the note and flushed it, stuck his backup pistol in the clip holster in his back, then walked out of the room through the NVA people who were still discussing Barrow's projected economic throwdown with Oliver Lodge. All of them had seen Barrow write the note and now saw Cody

leave, and all of them studiously ignored it. He went out to what had become an unofficial outdoor smoking area for those who shared rooms with non-smokers, a couple of chairs set against the wall by the vending machines on the outdoor landing. Nightshade was there puffing away. He saluted her. "Lieutenant Brock reporting for duty, ma'am. Smoking now? Those things will kill you."

"Yeah, well, you get to inhale," she said, standing up and tossing the cigarette. She pulled him against her and shoved him against the wall. She pushed her face into his and kissed him.

"Are you nuts?" he whispered. "There's no place more exposed and more likely we're under surveillance than here! We're in full view of that corner room in the East Wing and you know damned well that media wing or not the Feds have an eye and an ear in there!"

"Yes, idiot child, I know, which is why we're out here, so they get a good look at us," she whispered back into his ear, gently biting it. "Come on, grab my butt and act like you're into the wild thing! I know what I'm doing!" Cody slid one hand under her sweat shirt and cupped her head and bunched her hair in his other.

"Ooh baby, ooh baby, so forth and so on," he said while she nuzzled him, his hand on her head making it look even more from a distance like they were making out.

"Okay, I need your help on something, and I warn you this may be kind of rough for you," she said in a low voice. "You know I talked to McGrew before we left Centralia and he gave me a job to do? I was doing it, and there's been a little glitch."

"How little?" he said, kissing her closed eyes and tongue-lapping her ear.

"I'm going to show you. We're going to give each other a couple of hickey, then we're going back inside so Federal surveillance assumes we're going to hit the sack in one of the rooms. That tabloid shit helps, since everyone thinks we're Bonnie and Clyde already. Then I'm going to take you somewhere."

"All of this assuming Doc is right and the floor is clear of cameras and the Feds don't see us running around out of the sack," Cody reminded her. "Moan, gasp, oog and aarg, etcetera."

"While you're under there, you know that bra isn't glued on," she said.

"Whatever camera they've got recording us can't see what I do under your sweat shirt," he said, crushing her to him.

"Screw the camera," she asked. "Hickey time!"

"Do we really have to get that realistic?" he complained. Apparently they did. After the said lip action she giggled fulsomely, took him by the hand, and dragged him back inside.

"Okay, whoever was watching, be they Feeb or reporter, will figure that we're now looking for an empty room," she said. "Joking aside, they won't expect to see us out and about for a while, and we can account for a couple of hours or more of absence if we have to. Come on." She led him down to one end of the corridor and into what looked like an old laundry room, lined with stainless steel rod shelving and various sanitary and housekeeping supplies. She turned on the overhead light and went to the end of the room, where she pulled aside one of the shelving units, which rolled quietly on oiled casters, exposing a plywood door panel about five by five with a padlock on it. Nightshade took out a key, unlocked the padlock and slipped it through the hasp, then took out a thin solid washer and slipped it carefully through the crack in the door about two inches from the top right hand corner. "This is just a tad tricky," she said, slowly pulling the door open. Then she pulled from her pocket a thick wad of a putty or gum-like substance and clamped it down on the washer. It stuck and held the washer in place. "The Feds aren't completely dumb. The FBI figured we might want to go exploring in the shafts and vents, and so they put a photoelectric silent alarm on this door. Even the slight change in light that would come from opening the door in the dark would set it off, but Doc tried this washer and Playclay trick and his meter thingie didn't read, so let's hope it's worked again, and they don't know we've opened this door." Inside the door was what appeared to be a steel dumbwaiter.

"Okay, I gather we're descending to the depths in this," said Cody, looking inside. "But won't the electric motor make noise or set off some kind of alarm?"

"No, we're not going up or down in it, because you can't operate it from inside the elevator," she said. "It wasn't meant to haul people. Look, let me first tell you what I've been doing. That day back when we left Centralia, you heard McGrew say there was one of our Third Section agents here in the hotel?"

"And you're in contact with that agent?" asked Cody.

"Bingo!" she said. "And Lisa said you were just another pretty face! For various reasons, it's proven impossible for that agent and General Barrow to get together and confer, even for a few moments, and the phones and the internet are out, so I've been acting as go-between. That hasn't been easy, since I have even less excuse for being seen with him or her, and I wanted to see if there was some way I could move around unseen like a rat in the wainscot."

"Wainscot?" asked Cody.

"My grandmother was English and she used to read me Beatrix Potter stories, before they gave her the hot shot. This hotel was built back in the 1950s, and it had one of the first examples of central air conditioning and heating in the Northwest. Nice, roomy ventilation ducts, or at least roomy for a skinny broad like me. My first inclination was just to do the old human fly trick and explore the ventilators as best I could, see if they're alarmed, so forth and so on, and see if there was any way I could move around the hotel unobserved that way. I'm glad I didn't mess around in the ducts, because that individual whose name I didn't mention told us that the main vents and the interstitial areas where the fans and heaters access the outside are all alarmed with motion sensors. Like I said, the Feds aren't dumb, and they don't want anybody crawling around in there.

"But there's one thing they missed. Back when the hotel was first built, they also had some of the first automatic dishwashers, but in the Fifties those were big machines that made a lot of noise, and so they installed the dishwashers down in the basement. Each floor had a couple of dumbwaiter access doors for room leftovers, as well as the dining room, and the big banquet room. These things carried dirty dishes down to the basement where they were unloaded and packed into the washers, and then stacked and sent back up when they were clean. Those shafts were later closed up when the basement dishwashers were removed, but they're still there, and they are accessible by a couple of service hatches like this one. The doors are alarmed, but not the shafts themselves, because the FBI were rushed, or lazy, or

maybe it was just affirmative action incompetence. But these lifts are hydraulic, and so they're movable by hand." She pushed the dumbwaiter up and then grasped the bottom of it and lifted it up, slowly but without too much effort, leaving an open shaft with a cable. "I'm able to get down in the old dishwasher room, which by lovely coincidence is now stacked high with old mattresses, and that makes it easy to drop down. The dumbwaiter shafts have ladder rungs in one side of the wall for service personnel, and you can push the lift up or pull it down after you as you climb up and down." She took out a flashlight from its hiding place and flashed it in, showing him the inset rungs bolted along the shaft. "It's a piece of cake. So I put on my cat burglar outfit, not to be confused with my duckbill platypus costume, and I was able to lower myself down to the basement. Originally I just wanted to see if I could somehow move around the hotel via these dumbwaiter shafts, and I can, a bit. I can get into the West Wing, for example, if I have to, and that means so can others of us, if need be. But this led to something else. There was a vent connecting that old dishwasher room down there and their little war room next door."

"War room?" asked Cody.

"Our friend tipped me that the American delegation has taken to going down into the basement and whispering around a guttering candle in the hours of darkness, when the powers of evil are exalted, and the demon Hound stalks the moor."

"Your grandmother read you Conan Doyle as well, did she?" asked Cody.

"No, dummy, that was Mrs. Jensen's English class at Hillside! You had her as well."

"Why the hell didn't they just have their bull sessions in one of their suites like we do?" wondered Cody.

She shrugged. "Hell if I know. Apparently they're just as paranoid about us as we are about them. Our source tells us Doc Doom has them all in a tizzy because he's been able to really clean out our floor of all their surveillance crap, and they don't know what's going on. They think we're bugging them now, so they go down there and conspire in a hole. Anyway, I've been able to climb up on top of those dusty mattresses and lie there next to the ventilator and listen very nicely. I couldn't use a mike or a recorder, because Doc told me that anything electrical might set off some kind of alarm, but I can pretty well hear what's going on. I've been down there six times in the past two weeks, including tonight, which was when I overheard them discussing those economic ambush clauses they slipped into their treaty proposals. Plus a lot of other stuff I can't tell you about, but which has been passed on in code to the Army Council, which code they hopefully haven't broken. No problems until tonight just as I was leaving."

"And what was that problem?" asked Cody.

"Come on, I'll show you," she said. "Hold the flashlight for me." She climbed into the shaft, grasping the rungs, and he held the light and watched her clamber down into the darkness like a monkey. It was only one floor so it wasn't very far down, and he saw her hold up her hand, and he dropped her the flashlight. Then he eased into the shaft and climbed down carefully himself, feeling for each rung with his Doc Martens. The former dishwasher room was a large cinderblock chamber piled with musty-smelling mattresses and box springs, nor was it totally in darkness. A single forty-watt bulb glowed over the doorway, which presumably was one of those that led into the outside corridor along which he and Barrow had traveled to meet with Walter Stanhope on the day of their arrival. Cody could see the air vent high in the far wall, and the pile of mattresses where Emily told him she listened to the Americans and their plotting. "That's the ventilator to the next room," she said, pointing up to one wall. "It's dark now. They're not in there." She led him over to one corner where there was a single mattress on the floor, covered with old dirty sheets and mattress covers. She shifted the dusty cloth mound aside and flashed the light, and Cody saw that there was someone lying on the mattress.

It was Susan Horowitz, the woman whom he had known for years as Leah Sapirstein. She was dressed in a casual pants suit, pearl earrings gleaming against olive neck, jet black hair spread in a fan out on the dirty mattress, chin jutting high and left, neck snapped cleanly. Her eyes were blank and her mouth was open. The smell and the stained legs indicated that her bowels and bladder had emptied into her trousers as she died. "Well, isn't this another fine mess you've gotten us into, Ollie!" he said, shaking his head.

"She walked in on me," said Nightshade. "I gave her a kung fu neck twist I saw in a movie, and damn if it didn't work. I don't think she was looking for me specifically, I think she was sneaking in here to listen in on what was going on in the next room just like me." She slid a metal cylinder out of Susan's pocket. "This is some kind of high end recording or transmitting device. Fortunately it doesn't seem to have been on when she came in. My guess is she was working for someone. Mossad?"

"Quite possibly," agreed Cody. "Hadassahs often wear more than one hat. The Sapirsteins go to Israel almost every year and she could well have been recruited there. Hell, maybe they all were."

"Look, Cody, I know you hate the Sapirsteins, but this woman was technically your sister for a while," said Emily quietly. "I couldn't let her reveal that we'd found their secret meeting place and lose the listening post. I had no choice, but I'm sorry. She was part of your life and I took her away."

"A bad part. Don't sweat it. I won't." He looked dispassionately at his stepsister's corpse. "You're right, I did have Jensen for English Lit. Take thy fortune; thou find'st to be too busy is some danger. Hamlet, act three, scene four."

Nightshade snorted, "Yah, well, if you're Hamlet, I'm Ophelia. Rosemary's for remembrance, I'll wear my rue with a difference, hey nonny nonny and I'll go jump in the lake. Now, the reason I brought you down here was to ask you something."

"What's that?" asked Cody.

"Have you ever cut up a body?"

"No," he replied thoughtfully. "Damn, where's Bobby Bells when you need him? I missed that class back in A Company. Bells chopped up a couple, I know. But I'll tell you what I didn't miss, and that was Bells' ongoing rap on modern forensics and how not to get your ass jammed up by some CSI bimbo who thinks she's Agent Scully. You left something of yourself on her, fibers or skin or hair, you couldn't help it, and needless to say you just had to cack a kike right in the middle of a small army of FBI agents and cops!"

"But that is not the end of my derring-do. With you two's past history, you know that you're the first one they'll come looking for when she's missed? For all we know she may be missed already, if only in Secretary Stanhope's bed."

"Yeah, I picked up on that," he said dryly.

"They give those forensics classes in Threesecc too. Look, as a starting point, let's agree that she can't be found anywhere in our part of

the hotel or connected with us at all, right?"

"Agreed," said Cody.

"That leaves us two choices," said Nightshade. "One, we dump her in the American part of the hotel or in the kitchen, someplace like that, and then act innocent. With this girl's apparently well known kinks and maybe her working for Israel as well, we won't necessarily be the only suspects. The second choice is that she just disappears, which is the best way, because then it's all up in the air and the impact on the conference isn't anywhere near as bad. Hey, maybe the slut ran off to Vegas with an MP or something, who knows? That won't fool the Feebs for long, but as long as they merely suspect, it won't become that big an issue. They find a body, and the whole conference has problems."

"Mmmm, agreed," said Cody. "But that means we have to either destroy her, or stash her. This is a five star hotel, but I don't think they've got vats of acid anywhere for the convenience of homicidal guests. You know anything about the furnaces?"

"I checked them out in my nocturnal wanderings, yes," said Nightshade in a low tone. "They're down the hall, which is patrolled by peacekeepers. Propane, but no access we could use to stuff a body into the flames, and if we even tried to open the boilers we might break a line, get a gas leak, and end up sitting on the moon along with the rest of the hotel. There's all kinds of places around the grounds we could bury her, if we had time and a nice foggy night, but the hotel is chock-a-block, and even if we could get her outside we'd be seen by somebody in sixty seconds and probably end up with our picture on the front page of the National Inquirer hauling a dead body around. We can't bury her in here because the floor is concrete. We can't leave her in here under some mattresses or in the old dishwasher well, because the Americans meet next door almost every night, and after a couple of days she's going to get ripe enough for somebody to get a whiff through the ventilator. Plus the peacekeepers do check this room periodically. I've had to duck out of sight a couple of times. Even hefting her out of here up one of those dumbwaiter shafts is going to be hard to do, at least hard to do quietly, which is one reason I called you in to help."

"One reason?" asked Cody.

"Well, there was also our slurp session out by the vending machines," said Nightshade. "A girl needs some romance in her life. What about cutting her up?" she asked again. "There's a maintenance room down the hall with tools, including some hacksaws and hatchets, and some heavy-duty garbage bags. It would be a bit tricky getting in and out with the blue berets around and about, but because they go up and down periodically the corridor doesn't have motion detectors, so we might could get in and get some stuff and get back here. We can do the job down in that well where the dishwasher was. It's got drains in it."

"Mmmmm, hold off on the hatchet, Carrie Nation," said Cody, sitting down on a mattress and putting his chin on his hand in thought. "I'm not sure subdivision is the way to go here, and I'm not just being squeamish. For one thing, neither of us have ever dismembered a human being before, and I don't think it's a job we want to try for the first time in the dark with only a flashlight and working under a time constraint. We wouldn't be able to do much of a cleanup job down here in the dark, and the minute some Federal CSI dweeb throws his black light in there, up comes the bloodstains. For another thing, if we want to make her disappear, we're multiplying our problem if we cut her up, because instead of one body we then have to make eight or ten separate parcels disappear, plus the mess involved in dissecting her. They find one bag of giblets, and the whole game is up. No, we need to stash the whole body someplace where it won't be detected by sight or smell. Getting back to Hamlet, we don't want anyone nosing her as they go into the lobby, or finding her dead body under the bed like this was some tourist motel in Florida."

"Wherever we put her, it's going to have to be up one of those old service shafts," said Nightshade. "Hence my need for a good strong set of male shoulders. We couldn't get from the door to one end of that corridor or the other without a Swede in a blue beret spotting us."

"Okay, where do the shafts go?" asked Cody.

"One over there goes up to the kitchen, one over there goes to the Pump Room, there's the one we came down to our floor, and one around the corner goes up to the West Wing," said Nightshade. "I'd say stash her in a ventilator duct, but not only would that blow the aroma of rotting Jew all over the hotel in a couple of days, but there's those damned motion detectors the FBI put in there."

"Okay, the one up to the kitchen, where does it come out?" asked Cody.

"A kind of alcove. You're thinking stash her in a freezer? I thought of that. Number one, the kitchen has security cameras, although no motion detectors, to stop the staff from stealing food, I guess. Great country where people have to steal food, eh? Les Misérables and white people are all Jean Valjean."

"Yeah, well, we're sitting in a whole hotel full of Inspector Javerts. Enough with the literary allusions, dammit! We need to dump this stiff!"

Emily continued, "Number two, that kitchen is crowded all day long, and people go in and out of the freezers all the time. In fact," she looked at her watch by the flashlight, "In another couple of hours the first shift crew will show up to start fixing breakfast for us hard-working diplomats. We need to figure out what to do, and go on and do it."

"Actually, I was wondering what they had up there by way of meat grinders and slicers?" mused Cody. "Would they really notice a few more packs of frozen cold cuts or a couple more sides hanging in a corner in the walk-in?"

"Yeew! Now that's not merely silly, it's gross!" she exclaimed.

"I once saw a loading dock out back there. Where is the door to that?"

"To the right from the dumbwaiter shaft," said Nightshade. "You may be onto something there. If I remember correctly, that's about the only blind spot in the kitchen, blocked from the cameras by the head chef's little office. I did some sneaking around in there when I first found these shafts, but I had to watch those panning CCTVs."

"Is the door alarmed?" he asked.

"I think so, yes," she answered.

"Crap! There goes my idea of putting her in the dumpster," sighed Cody.

"Or...the trash compactor!" said Nightshade in sudden excitement. "Cody, they've got one of those big, long container type trash

compactors! Once it gets full a truck comes along, hooks up, hauls it away and another truck backs an empty container in and drops it off! We're using up so much food and generating so much kitchen garbage that they do this every day, and the truck comes and replaces the compactor at about four in the morning or so! If we can just get her out there on the dock, all we have to do is get her kosher carcass inside the compactor and it will be smushed flat and hauled away to a landfill! Brilliant!"

"Past an alarmed door that will go off if we open it," said Cody. "Well, no use just sitting here. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Show me the shaft and I'll go up and take a look. Is the dumbwaiter door padlocked from the outside?"

"No, they still use the kitchen dumbwaiter sometimes, so it's not locked, and there's no alarm on the door. FBI seems to have missed that one, too. When you get up there just push the elevator up far enough and push on the door." A minute later Cody carefully eased himself out into the large and modern kitchen. It was dimly lit and smelled of fresh-mopped floor, and several unseen electrical things hummed discordantly. There was the freezer and what appeared to be a newly-built small cubbyhole office, and there were no closed circuit cameras that he could see. Evidently this small area was indeed a blind spot. He slipped down the right-hand corridor to where several large plastic wheeled garbage tips stood by a wide double door. He carefully examined the door and found that it was indeed alarmed. He also saw that there was an alarm switch, no doubt intended for the mutual convenience of security guards and late workers, and that it was in the "off" position. He was back down in the basement a minute later.

"I can't believe our luck!" he said excitedly. "The door alarm has a manual switch and whoever was out there last forgot to turn it on! And whoever's running security board upstairs must not have noticed, or else they just don't give a damn! God, are these Feds incompetent or what?"

"Well, we've been here ten weeks, and while there's been a lot of yelling in the conference session and a lot of drunk reporters, it's actually been pretty sedate. We haven't killed anybody before tonight, so they probably just got slack. You know, I've noticed that ever since white people started standing up for themselves and fighting back, little things like that happen," commented Nightshade. "Other Volunteers have mentioned it as well. Our luck as a people seems to have changed. Any time we need that fall of the dice, that toss of a coin, all other things being equal it seems to go our way. Fortune really does favor the brave, I guess. Right, enough midnight metaphysics. Let's get Susie Q. recycled. What are those?"

"Supersize garbage bags I grabbed from a shelf in from the kitchen," said Cody. "That way if she's found, hopefully they'll think she was done in the kitchen and divert their attention away from this room." They wrapped Susan's body in the garbage bags by sliding one over her feet and another over her head, then repeating the process for a double-bagging. Before they did so, Nightshade asked, "Do you think we should take that recorder thing? Doc might be able to figure out how it works, what she was doing and who she was working for."

"Negative," said Cody. "They find one item of hers on any of us, we have problems." They lashed the garbage bags around her body with her own belt and then slid the whole body into a king-sized mattress cover big enough to act like a sack and give them something to grasp as carrying handles. "Okay, now comes the hard part. Sure there's no way we can risk using that dumbwaiter?" They picked up Susan's corpse and carried her over to the shaft. "This is going to be a bitch," said Cody, staring up into the darkness. "One of us is going to have to stand up there and pull and one of us stay down here and lift and push."

Nightshade sighed. "We could probably manhandle her up the rungs with you pushing and me pulling, but I'm starting to get worried about time. Look, I'll go up and get out into the kitchen, then I'll push the car down as far as I can and you haul the dumbwaiter lift down, put her in it, turn this dial to K and hit the blue button. Our luck has held so far. Let's just hope nobody hears or else they think it's kitchen crew if they do."

"Does the damned thing even work?" asked Cody.

"We're going to find out," she said. "If it does, I'll pull her out and you make sure it's turned off and then come up by the rungs." The procedure she described was clumsy, but it worked. The dumbwaiter whirred and groaned but it had been greased recently, and it hauled Susan's body up to the kitchen without making all that much noise. By the time Cody got up onto the rungs and pushed the car up with his arm, Emily had the mattress cover off and on the floor, and they lifted the black plastic-wrapped package and its gruesome contents into one of the heavy gray plastic garbage tips. They pushed the tip to the door, checked to see that the alarm was indeed off, opened it and chocked both doors open with little rubber wedges that appeared to be there for that very purpose. Outside, a gibbous autumn moon shone down, low in the sky. "Perfect weather for skulduggery. Come out with me and be prepared to do another cuddle if we see a camera or a guard," Emily said. "We'll tell them we're determined to do it in every room in the hotel, including on the conference room table." Cody stepped outside and looked around.

"Damn, it's gotten colder," he said. "I wouldn't mind getting my hands under your bra right now." The trash compactor loomed before them at the edge of the dock, which in turn was at the bottom of a ramp somewhat recessed into the building. Cody didn't see anyone. He propped open the trash compactor's top cover with a broom handle leaning up against it, evidently for that very purpose. "Hey, this is a recycling receptacle," he said. "I don't know if we're supposed to put organic material in here."

"As long as it's not plastic or steel," she said. "Our JAP is neither. I think she'll smush up into jelly real good." Between them they hauled out the tip and dumped the body in. The trash compactor was half full of cardboard and paper waste, much of it gooey and soggy with food and food byproducts. It was a large steel container, and Cody jumped down inside it. "Give me the flashlight," he said. He cleared out a space as far up in the container as he could, dragged his former sister's body forward, and buried her in cartons and paper wrapping and glop, so that the black plastic bags could not be seen. Then Nightshade leaned down, held out her hand and helped pull him out.

"Do you think we dare push our luck and start it up and compact that all that crap?" she asked.

"We can't," said Cody. "There's an ignition key somewhere inside the office that goes in that switch, and we don't have time to find it, plus the noise would certainly attract one of the MP security patrols. Lucky we're down in this trough between the buildings. This should work, if our luck holds. The morning crew will dump all kinds of breakfast refuse in here, it will still be dark, and somebody will run a crush before the truck comes to haul this one away. But we need to get the hell out of here." They snuck back inside, pulling the tip

after them, and closed the door. Nightshade picked the mattress cover off the floor and dropped it down the shaft, then they were inside and back down into the basement. Within several more minutes they were back up in the South Wing janitorial closet, and after a quick peep into the corridor down the hall and back into Barrow's executive suite. Cody smelled like garbage. Barrow and Jane Chenault were sitting on the sofa side by side, watching CNN. He looked up at them.

"Everything all right?" he asked.

"Fine, sir," said Cody, although he was by no means sure it was fine or even if Barrow knew exactly what had happened. There was still a lot that could go wrong.

"I heard a rumor that the Americans are going to stage some kind of incident tomorrow, sir," said Nightshade. "They're going to pretend to be very upset over something. More so than usual."

"Yeah, well, they get upset over a lot of things. Nothing we can do about it," replied Barrow with a shrug, cupping his hand to his ear. He had never fully believed that as good as Doc Doom was with electronic gadgetry, he had managed to clear the entire floor of listening devices. He had a yellow legal pad in his hand and wrote, How bad will it get?

Nightshade said, "God, that Paulus Ingrams is the ugliest coon on TV!" She wrote With luck they won't find her.

Barrow stared at the screen. "We've let them drag this out too long. They're talking and talking and saying nothing, and I'm tired of it. We've been stuck in this hotel so long we're starting to eat one another like mice in a cage. I'm going to talk to Lodge tomorrow and tell him that. We need to wind this up, one way or the other."

XI.

"A National Socialist is someone who wants to save his race. A conservative is someone who wants to save his money."

– Commander George Lincoln Rockwell

Barrow and Oliver Lodge met alone in Lodge's suite at eight o'clock next morning. Lodge had a room service breakfast for two laid out. Barrow noticed that even this early, the international executive was wearing a suit and tie. "Help yourself," Lodge said. "I've always liked breakfast meetings. I have found that men tend to think more clearly and sharply in the early hours. Oh, one thing before we tuck in. This is a damned nuisance and an imposition, but the head of our FBI security detail has asked me to ask you if you have any idea where Senator Galinsky's intern Ms. Horowitz might have gotten to? She seems to have gone missing, and supposedly you two had some words back on day one here."

"We got a bit bored last night so we decided to sacrifice a Jew to our pagan gods by burning her in a wicker cage under the stars, while we danced around the bonfire in horned helmets," said Barrow.

"That's in rather poor taste, don't you think?" said Lodge disapprovingly.

"How the devil should I know where Mr. Stanhope's recreational vehicle is?" replied Barrow irritatingly. "I'm not screwing her. If we couldn't restrain ourselves from making away with Jews for a while, we wouldn't be here."

"I understand one of your young men has had a, er, prior acquaintance with Ms. Horowitz?" probed Lodge delicately.

"Yes, she was part of the family your government sold him to like a pet hamster under the It Takes A Village program," said Barrow.

"Cody doesn't want any more to do with her or any of them, and anyway he was in our part of the hotel last night, with me and the other members of the delegation."

"One other member anyway," said Lodge, smiling and shaking his head as he held up a copy of the front page of the USA Today which showed Cody and Nightshade in a photograph taken through what appeared to be a night vision lens, locked in a passionate embrace the night before out by the vending machines. The caption read Northwest Nookie. "I do apologize for that," said Lodge. "The behavior of some of these press people is abominable. I remember when this was a reputable paper."

"You created a rubbishy public so the media gives them rubbishy entertainment. Look, I don't mean to sound so crotchety, Mr. Lodge. Thank you for seeing me. I know this is a violation of the conference protocols. We're not supposed to be meeting with one another without other members of our delegations present, which always indicated to me that you must not trust each other. My people don't object to my meeting you in private, but apparently yours do. That tells me something. Maybe that indicates I should have done this a long time ago. Am I correct in my surmise that you are the man who holds the real power in this dog and pony show, and that if you and I can come to some kind of understanding we can pack up our briefcases and go home?"

Lodge shrugged. "Well, I like to think my word carries some weight with my colleagues," he said. "Weintraub and Galinsky are here because they pretty much have to be. If we tried to sit down and have a pow-wow with you boys without someone from the Tribe in attendance, the stink would be beyond bearing. But you shouldn't discount Walter Stanhope's clout as well. He's a player. You might say I speak for the world of business and he speaks for the world of government and politics. Brubaker is here as a sop to the military, who never like to admit they're beaten in any era."

"So you admit you're beaten?" asked Barrow keenly.

"I said the military don't like implying they're beaten," said Lodge. "I will go so far as to say that right now it would be really convenient for us if we could cease pouring money down this Northwest rathole and get on with putting out some other fires, like the one which is approaching in the Middle East and in our overseas possessions. You guys are the mouse that roared, and this whole sideshow is bad for business."

"By business I presume you mean the couple of thousand men in suits who actually run the whole planet through international finance capital?" said Barrow.

"Yup. That's who I mean," said Lodge. "The great big bad world conspiracy itself. Insofar as there is one, I guess we're it. Not even a couple of thousand of us. A very wise old Jewish gentleman, Walther Rathenau of Germany, once made the comment that three hundred men, all acquainted with each other, control the destiny of the world. That was in 1923. Today I'd put it at about five hundred. I know most of 'em, and the rest will take my calls."

"I recall that for all his alleged wisdom, Rathenau was run down on the streets in his limousine and shot down by some young German

officers, in retaliation for his pulling the plug on German ammunition production at the height of the 1918 spring offensive,” said Barrow. “When Hitler referred to the Jewish stab in the back, Rathenau’s was the hand on the dagger. An interesting parallel, Mr. Lodge, and an instructive lesson. All the power and all the money in the world can’t stop a bullet, when it is fired by a heart that is proof against all your temptation and all your money and all your threats. That’s why so-called terrorism drives you people around the twist. Terrorism is the weapon of the weak against the strong, and it is a highly effective one, possibly the only one that can get through to you any more, the only weapon that can pierce your wall of power and privilege. You can’t bribe a bullet, you can’t corrupt it, you can’t vote it away, you can’t brainwash it into thinking it’s a snowflake, you can’t have a corrupt judge in a black robe bang his gavel and make it go away, you can’t sue it, you can’t jail it, you can’t hire some dumb-ass local deputy to beat or murder it, and once it’s fired it’s going right into the target. You and your kind have to keep all the hearts and minds of humanity in darkness and bondage, because it only takes one free man to pull a trigger and bring all your schemes and your constructions to nothing. That’s why we’re here. Because white mens’ hearts and our souls have escaped, and all the king’s horses and all the king’s men can’t put Humpty together again.”

“Bluntly, yes,” said Barrow. “I won’t lie to you, Barrow. A large part of why we are here speaking to you today, instead of hunting you down like dogs, is that you have demonstrated the capacity to kill, and I don’t mean homeboys or Mexican braceros or Joe Schmo the cop on the corner. We don’t care about ordinary people. They are an inexhaustible resource. Mere gangsterism we could handle until the cows come home, but you are gangsters who understand what targets to select, and that is something new. You don’t shoot at Oz the Great and Powerful, all smoke and mirrors. You shoot at the little man behind the curtain, and that has gotten our attention. If it makes you feel any better I will concede your point. A large part of the reason for this conference is that some of those five hundred men who really count have been hurt, and you have seriously interfered with the conduct of our business by forcing us to worry about you, to take you into consideration. That has to stop.”

“The Old Man calls it breaking the credible monopoly of force on the part of the state. By the by, we want you to let him go, but he has sent word that it’s not necessary. He’s willing to stay there in Florence and be murdered if the mood strikes you. He doesn’t care about himself so long as we don’t yield and we bring the Republic into being. I imagine that perturbs you as well. You’ve never dealt with anyone to whom money wasn’t the be all and end all, have you?”

“Well, it’s a little premature to talk about his status,” said Lodge with a smile, “But I do have a little surprise for you on the prisoner release front. Today, in fact. I’ve noticed you’re getting a little antsy, and I figure it’s time we made a gesture. Call it compensation for these strenuous negotiating sessions. This isn’t official, just something I did on my own bat. Well, Walter Stanhope came up with the idea, actually. He seems to be almost sympathetic with you at times, although I put that down to the fact that he got turfed out of the Senate by a taco bender.”

“And how will your Jewish colleagues react to this little bit of generous unilateralism on your part, whatever it may be?” inquired Barrow.

“They have less to say about it than you might think,” said Lodge seriously. “Certainly much less say than they would have had in the past, when Jug-Ears and his neo-cons ruled the roost with an iron hand. Again, that’s largely thanks to you boys and your habit of filling the little man behind the curtain with lead. A lot of those little men behind the curtain that you’ve whacked out were Jewish, and we’ve seen that they are by no means invincible or omnipotent. We’ve also discovered how easy it is to do without them. You’re right. All the protekzia in the world can’t stop a bullet. Jeanette Galinsky is here because she’s Hillary Clinton’s eyes and ears. Weintraub is here because Israel wants him here, but don’t overestimate their influence. Jewish power is still strong in the world, Barrow, but not nearly as strong as it was fifty years ago.”

“But they’re actually a separate faction within the capitalist world?” probed Barrow.

“Mmmm, well, let’s say that as a group, the Jewish world financial community sometimes has interests which are a bit divergent from the rest of us,” said Lodge carefully. “Now Frank, suppose you just go ahead and say what you want to say.” Barrow sighed and helped himself to some scrambled eggs.

“Articles 83, 84, and 85,” he said. “They’re not on. Not now, not ever. Don’t even bother to bring anything like that up again. We set our own tariffs and we issue our own money and we control our own economic policy. I know you don’t believe this and you’re going to try to get around it, but when I read those passages in that big mass of bullshit you laid on us, I finally understood how little point there is in our staying here. I’ve come to tell you that despite the fine hospitality and excellent cuisine of this establishment, we’re going to be leaving soon, most likely tomorrow, unless of course you try to stop us, in which case we’re going to kill as many of you as we can before we get shot down ourselves. We came here to end the war and bring our new nation into existence. Almost every day since we have been here, we have presented for your signature a simple single-page document of six points, which would bring five years of bloodshed to an end. No terms, no conditions, no indemnities, no recriminations, just a simple agreement that this war is over, we have won, and you leave now. We are serious about that document, but apparently you people either cannot or will not understand that it’s over. You fought a war to keep us in the Union, you have lost, now its time to pick up your marbles and go home. In return all we have gotten is ream after ream of bullshit like that draft proposal you finally gave us. I have looked that over and I am appalled. You seriously don’t think we’re going to stay here in this hotel for another year quibbling on and on about crap like that, do you? There is nothing difficult or complex about what we want. What part about ‘You have two weeks to get out’ do you not understand? As to those articles that reduce our nation to the same servitude we just fought for five years to escape, I suppose you thought that I was so dumb I wouldn’t notice them?”

“No, not at all, General,” said Lodge. “I never thought you were dumb. Anyone who can force the United States of America to even consider some of the things we have discussed at this conference isn’t stupid. We know that, even if some of our colleagues of the Hebrew faith might not entirely grasp it. There’s a lot of things they don’t grasp.”

“Like the coming to an end of their world?” asked Barrow.

“That’s definitely something they don’t grasp,” agreed Lodge. “The Jews are a very ancient people and they have survived a lot, but this has led them to believe that they will survive forever. But time marches on, even for them. I and the men I do business with understand

that now, Frank. You and your crew have made us understand it. It is not a lesson we have enjoyed learning, but we have learned it. You seem to think that articles 83 through 85 are some kind of insult or attempt to do you in or enslave you. They are not. They are actually an admission on our part that you have won. You didn't read them right. We weren't shutting you and your gunmen out, we were letting you in. Giving you something you would never have had in a million years if you hadn't done what you did. We are offering you a cut. I don't mean you personally. I wouldn't insult you by offering to bribe you. But your Party, your new government, your new nation—you get a cut, a cut that you can use to do anything you want. Build a thousand statues to Adolf Hitler if you want. Create your ideal White Homeland. Whatever you want to do.”

“Of course, by accepting this cut we also acknowledge that it's your pie to divide,” said Barrow. “It isn't. Never mind, I see you still can't hear the word no. Probably you never will be able to. I suppose you're constitutionally incapable of it. On another subject entirely, let me ask you something, Mr. Lodge. Have you men in the suits and the corporate board rooms decided to finally dump Israel? When the Arabs attack next year and Israel frantically calls to the U. S. for help, are they finally going to get an answering machine?”

“Mmmm, well, I'm just a businessman and I wouldn't know anything about that, of course...” Barrow waved his hand.

“I think we can take all the disclaimers as read, Mr. Lodge.”

“Okay, disclaimers having been read, Israel was an interesting experiment, an experiment which after a century the world needs to admit has failed,” said Lodge. “An attempt to bring the Sidewalks of New York to the land of the Bedouin and the mosque. The British originally offered Palestine to the Jews in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration. It was a bribe in order to induce them to change sides during World War One and stab Germany in the back, as your Adolf Hitler so presciently observed. It was never intended to be taken seriously, but the Jewish people have always produced a high percentage of neurotic obsessives, and a lot of them did take it seriously. Its original strategic purpose from the free world's point of view, or the capitalist world if you will, was as a forward airfield and an outpost in a largely Soviet-controlled region. That purpose hasn't been valid for well over a generation, and eventually we ended up having to go in and conquer that part of the world ourselves at great expense after all, in order to secure our oil supply.”

“Your oil supply?” interjected Barrow with a bemused chuckle. “My God, you honest to God don't get it, do you?”

Lodge disregarded him. “In the long run, that little colony proved to be more trouble than it was worth. Sometimes one simply has to do that, admit you've made a bad investment and let it go. When you think about it, dumping a few million Jews down into the middle of a sea of hostile Arabs and trying to steal a little sliver of land from them that happened to be some of the holiest real estate in Islam right out from under the noses of a billion Muslims wasn't a very smart idea, but remember this was done in the aftermath of World War Two, when the Jews and America were riding high, wide, and handsome on a wave of victory that would never end, when Jewish arrogance and Jewish hubris knew no bounds. After their help during World War Two in destroying National Socialism and making the world safe for big money again, they presented their bill, and we said what the hell, what are bunch of ragheads going to do? So we gave them their shitty little country just to shut them up. Big mistake.”

“And now you think you're giving us our shitty little country just to shut us up?” said Barrow. “Well, I can live with that. I don't care what you think of us so long as that Masonic dishrag goes down from our sky and the Tricolor goes up. But we aren't Jews. We're serious about this new world we're making, and I feel constrained to repeat that these three articles that give you looting rights on everything of value we've got aren't on. Nothing of the kind is going to happen. When you leave everything with the word Federal in it leaves, and that most especially includes your Federal Reserve.”

“General Barrow, we don't give a damn who works those mines and forests and ranches, so long as we get our cut, no pun intended,” said Lodge. “It's true that Third World immigrant labor is cheaper, but believe it or not, over the years we have come to understand that what's cheaper in the short run can prove to be more costly in the long term. We understand the necessity of investing money in long-term projects. We are willing to make your new country a long-term project. Man is an economic animal. Oh, you get guys like that big hillbilly with the beard who thinks he can fight and shoot his way out of anything, but eventually economic man triumphs. Once you boys are sitting there in those offices with the power and the responsibility, behind some desk with a sign on it that says the buck stops there, things will look very different, believe me. And you know, we really don't hold you in quite the contempt you seem to feel. This whole revolution of yours has been quite a daring exploit, although it was no fun having your bombs and your bullets aimed at us. I'll be honest with you, a good many of my colleagues are looking forward to dealing once again with guys who look like us and like girls.”

“Dear me, that statement would get a working man from one of your assembly plant five years in prison,” said Barrow. “It might even get you a few mandatory hours of sensitivity training.”

“Hardly. I wrote the template for most corporate ethnic diversity and sensitivity training courses, so I know they're crap,” said Lodge with a chuckle. “The schoolbooks teach our children that America is about freedom and democracy and the pursuit of happiness, and lately they teach that it's about diversity. That's horse hockey, General Barrow. America is about the accumulation of wealth. Columbus wasn't trying to prove that the world was round; all educated men from ancient Greece onward who could look at the horizon and understand what they were looking at knew that. He was looking for trade routes to the East Indies, but why was he doing that? For the greater glory of God or the spirit of intellectual inquiry? Bullshit. He wanted to be rich. All of our ancestors who came to this country other than the ones who were shipped here in chains as indentured servants just like the blacks were came here in order to find wealth, gold, land, tobacco, cattle, opportunity to have more than their neighbors. And even the ones of our people who came here in chains, and there were as many of those as there were black slaves, were brought here in order to make other people rich”

“Including a good many of your Boston brahmin forbears,” Barrow reminded him.

“Including a good many of those,” agreed Lodge. “Oh, not that we're not a spiritual country as well. We've always had more religion than we can stand, as I hear you folks are already starting to find out. God in America has always been foursquare on the side of the big man with the money who drops the parson's portion into the collection plate. That and it gives Americans yet another excuse to make ourselves feel superior to other people. Why, the Pilgrims had barely gotten their first log cabins built before they were whipping Quakers through the street and driving red hot nails through the tongues of people who said something the church elders didn't like. America has always had a hell of a lot of religion, just a different kind. Europe produced the great Gothic cathedrals; we have prosperity

theology. Europe produced St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Francis of Assisi; we produced Billy Sunday and the Reverend Ike. I'm not surprised you people have some religious issues of your own. You get this new country of yours, you ought to try prosperity theology as a state religion. Our own native American denomination that fits all. What the hell is wrong with a God who wants you to have a Cadillac?"

"God's Cadillac comes with a few too many strings attached," said Barrow. "Like all those niggers riding free and ripping off the hood ornament, and all those Mexicans who want to chop it down into a low rider. You say that America is about wealth. That's wrong. America is about race."

"The two are inextricably intertwined. Look, I will give you this much," said Lodge, leaning forward intently. "Race is the American problem. It always has been, ever since one of Columbus's sailors shot the first Indian with a matchlock musket. Aside from the Civil War of the 1860s, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, there has never been any kind of serious attempt by America seriously and honestly to address race. Maybe it's time that changed. We've put it off too long. We've got all kinds of different races and cultures on this continent now, and like so many kiddies, they can't seem to play nice. What do you do when you've got a house full of squalling kids who can't get along and who keep on beating one another with their toys and screaming so loud you can't hear yourself think? You give them a time out and send them to their rooms until they settle down and ask to come out and decide to play nice. So why shouldn't we send all of our little minorities to their own rooms and make you stay there until you can play nice?"

"We get the Northwest and the Mexicans get Aztlan?" asked Barrow.

"They've got it already," said Lodge flatly. "Yes, that's coming. Aztlan will simply recognize an established fact. And I don't think there will be any trouble from them over their versions of articles 83 through 85. The Hispanic peoples have always taken a very pragmatic approach in matters of government and business and the relationship between the two."

"I believe it's called corruption," said Barrow. "Well, I won't argue with you, sir, I guess I'll just have to show you. This morning I'll formalize it. You sign the six points and we run up our Tricolor on that flagpole outside, or else we go back to the shooting and the bombing, starting with an assault on Portland. This round will be real civil war. I hope you're prepared to live with that."

"Dammit, you know I don't want anything like that to happen, Barrow!" wheedled Lodge.

"Jesus, I'm not some kind of monster! I'm more sympathetic than you might think. After all, if you know anything about me you'll know that even though I serve a Democratic administration at the moment, I'm considered to be a staunch conservative."

"Well, you see, there's the problem," replied Barrow seriously. "I'm a National Socialist."

"And how do you define the difference?" asked Lodge. "I'm willing to acknowledge to you, in private, that there a lot of similarities, although if you ever repeat that outside this room I'll call you a liar on worldwide television."

"I don't define the difference," said Barrow, slowly and carefully. "Commander Rockwell did. He said that a National Socialist is someone who wants to save his race. A conservative is someone who wants to save his money. I have said that race is the American issue, but the problem is we've never actually admitted it and resolved the core dispute, which is to whom does the continent of North America belong? The liberals and Reds have always claimed that America was founded by and for white racists and based on white racism. That's not true, unfortunately. If it was, if we had admitted de jure as well as de facto from the beginning that the white man was claiming this land for us and us alone, then things would have been a whole lot different. But economics intruded, and we just had to trade those barrels of perfectly good sippin' whiskey for twenty niggers back in 1619. America as we know it was created largely by conservatives, who by virtue of their racial and cultural heritage had the mental and spiritual wherewithal to do so. The result is that this country is a plutocracy, and so it always has been. That is what is going to change, Lodge. I know you don't believe this, but we're going to strip you of what you have and give it back to the people who created that wealth. Society will be reduced once more to its organic components, the worker, the artisan, the soldier, the homemaker and the farmer. The businessman as a factor in politics and the civic order will disappear. You want to let us go, Lodge. Believe me, you want to let us go. I just wonder how long it's going to take you to figure that out."

"Do you think we would have come here if we weren't prepared to at least take a big step in that direction?" asked Lodge.

"I think you came here to see just how far we would bamboozle," said Barrow. "The answer is, a hell of a lot less far than you think. Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me. Well, we've been fooled enough. Enough bullshit, Lodge. It's over. You know what we want and we either get it or we don't. I'm not going to waste any more time with that so-called draft agreement of yours. You might as well have saved yourself the paper. We're going to wind this up today and give you one last chance to sign off on our six points and end this war. One way or the other, this time tomorrow morning I'm calling for Chernilov and his copter. When we lift off, assuming you don't break bad on us and we don't go down firing, we will either have that signed document with us or we won't. Either way, we'll see how it plays out."

* * *

Cody and Nightshade both accompanied the delegation into the conference room that morning for the daily meeting, in order to forestall any possible difficulties with FBI agents who might be investigating the disappearance of Susan Horowitz. In fact, Senator Jeanette Galinsky attempted to bring up the subject immediately. "Barrow! Where is my intern Susan Horowitz?" she demanded.

"Ask Mr. Stanhope," said Barrow. "He keeps more track of her whereabouts than I do."

"That little Nazi psychopath has done something to her!" shouted Galinsky, pointing at Cody.

"Not lately, ma'am, no," replied Cody in a level voice.

"This is still the United States and you Nazi pigs are still subject to United States law!" shrieked Galinsky hysterically. "There's a whole corridor full of FBI agents out there and all I have to do is call them and they'll come in here and arrest you Nazi swine and take you to prison where every one of you belongs!"

John Corbett Morgan drew out his .44 Magnum and laid it heavily down on the table in front of him. "Call them," he said flatly.

"That's not necessary, John," said Barrow uneasily. This was unscripted, the first time a weapon had actually been drawn. "I thought you were used to Mommy Dearest and her mouth by now?"

“Why should I get used to it?” asked Morgan, his eyes glowing dangerously, transfixing Jeanette Galinsky like a snake with a rabbit. “I understand that less and less, as the weeks go by and we sit here and take nothing but abuse and insults from these people. I tell you what, you Jew bitch. You call your FBI men, and you see what happens! FBI die like everybody else. I know. I’ve killed me a few. Including the one who murdered my wife. I watched Special Agent Bruce Goldberg die with a burning rubber tire around his neck, lady. I listened to him die, and that was even better. So for the last time, unless you have something important to say, you’d better keep your goddamned liver lips shut. Because right about now, my patience with you is as thin as a fiddle string.”

“We all feel that way,” Barrow told him, standing up. “Put the iron away, John. There’s no need. We’re going to go ahead and wind it up now.” Morgan sighed and put the Magnum back in its holster, and everyone in the room breathed a bit easier. “I have an announcement to make,” continued Barrow. “One way or the other, this will be the last session of these proceedings here at Longview. We have been here for almost two and a half months, there has been virtually no progress, and it doesn’t seem there is going to be any. Accordingly, I am going to give you one last chance to sign the six-point agreement which we have been presenting to you virtually every day for the past ten weeks. If you do not, then we have to assume that the United States is not serious about bringing the present conflict to an end. Ten weeks is enough, ladies and gentlemen, more than enough. We have our border delineated, thanks to the diligent work of our subcommittee, and frankly we got more than we expected, including most of Wyoming and more of Montana than we thought we could glom. Groovy. That was the important part of this conference, but none of that is worth anything so long as we keep dragging this out. It’s time to sign on the dotted line and then we’re outta here. Or not, as the case may be.

“My comrade’s theatrical flourishing of the weaponry notwithstanding, we know we can’t make you sign at gunpoint. But it is time that you people faced up to the reality of why you are here. A new world is beginning and it wants only your signatures, twice, once on each copy of this simple treaty.” Barrow placed the documents down on the table before him. “There is nothing complicated about getting the hell out of our country in two weeks, and it is well within your logistic capabilities to get all your forces out of the Republic in that time. If you do need any help in getting out, free passage on our highways or gas for your vehicles or anything like that, by all means, we’ll speed you on your way. But this delegation is leaving this room now, and we’re leaving this hotel tomorrow. Early. We’ve eaten our last breakfast buffet in the Sockeye Grill. Our breakfast tomorrow will be field rations with our army preparing for the assault on Portland if your General Partman decides he wants to break bad on us. That need not happen. I assume and hope that being a good soldier, Partman will obey orders. You’ve got until tomorrow to save God alone knows how many lives and give this process of a new nation’s birth some kind of peace and order. Or it can be a bloody mess. It’s your call. Now make it. Because we’re not hanging around anymore waiting on you.”

“If you can postpone your departure for a moment, General, as I mentioned before, I do have a surprise for you,” said Lodge, as if the whole speech had not been spoken. “We understand your concern about members of your organization held in Federal custody, and we have been more than willing to release those whom we feel are no longer harmful to society. After some discussion we felt that this lady fell into that category.” He went to the door and opened it. “Ms. Frost? Could you come in, please?”

There was a flutter at the end of the room, and a tall woman stepped in through the door. She was wearing a scarf over her head to cover her short, patchy blonde hair where it had been largely pulled out by the roots. Her face was a glowing red mask where it had been reconstructed surgically, yet it still showed an expression of suffering unimaginable. Her chest was flat, both breasts gone. Her original face had been removed by the FBI paramedics during her interrogation, strip by strip, with a scalpel, yet through some miracle she was still recognizable. Cathy Frost, still dressed in her drab khaki prison dress with the number on it. For over a year, she had been tortured to the point of death, time and again, because the FBI wanted her to betray the whereabouts of her husband. Although they did not know it, Edgar Frost had actually died of his wounds sustained during the contact and been secretly interred in the hills around Coeur d’Alene, several days before his wife was captured. Cathy could have saved herself at any time, simply by telling them this and revealing the whereabouts of her husband’s body so they could dig it up and destroy it, but she would not talk to the ZOG out of principle. In the very height of her torment, all she ever told them was the Five Words, “I have nothing to say.” So it went on and on and on, until it became a personal issue. The mighty FBI and Homeland Security would make the evil racist bitch speak. But she never did.

Her case had become so egregious that even in an America become accustomed to routine torture of so-called domestic terrorists, it had attracted attention, thanks to the heroic effort of her fellow women prisoners at Pullman Federal Detention Center who had risked life and limb and torture sessions of their own to smuggle the news of what was being done to her out of the prison. The international community, finally becoming fed up with American behavior in general, had decided to take up her case as a cause célèbre, an interesting example of the trendy Euro-left’s hatred of the American empire finally outweighing their distaste for so-called fascists. The entire NVA delegation arose in stunned recognition and respect.

The two Jewish members of the delegation were dumbstruck. “Who the hell said you could do this, Lodge?” screeched Howard Weintraub at Lodge in fury. “This woman is a Class A terrorist detainee, an unlawful combatant in the direct custody of the Department of Homeland Security! No one has the right to dispose of her except me!” Weintraub was especially embarrassed, because he had personally supervised her torture in the Pullman Women’s Detention Center, while the other women prisoners had sang A Mighty Fortress Is Our God to the sound of her screams.

“Actually, Mr. Weintraub, it was my idea,” said Stanhope quietly. “Ms. Frost’s situation was becoming an embarrassment with international ramifications which it is imperative that we moderate, and as such it comes into my purview. If you’re worried about some kind of turf issues, I procured the signature of the President of the United States on the warrant authorizing Ms. Frost’s release into my custody.”

“Hillary would never have let Chelsea do any such thing!” gasped Jeanette Galinsky in shock.

“The President has a tendency to agree in full with the last person she has talked to, as you know, Senator. I had a friend of mine talk to her and he carried the order in his briefcase. Mrs. Frost is now being handed over to the Northwest Volunteer Army delegation. This is a done deal, and it’s a deal that should have been done a long time ago. I am getting just a little bit weary of having to explain to the international community why the land of the free and the home of the brave is skinning women alive in our torture chambers.”

“Comrade Frost, welcome to Longview,” said Barrow, coming forward to grip her hand. “I am glad that you have been able to be here, even if it is on the last day. Are you all right? Jesus, that’s a stupid thing to ask!” He looked at Stanhope. “You do understand we’re taking her with us no matter what happens? You’re not getting her back, under any circumstances. Not ever.”

“You’re not getting any of us back,” said McCausland in an angry voice. “Not ever.”

“I’m still alive, General Barrow,” said Cathy. Her voice was soft, almost a whisper, due to the year of screaming that had nearly destroyed her larynx. “I didn’t think I would ever see this day. I have now, and God has been more good to me than I can say.”

“At least you get a chance to tell your story,” said Barrow. “I know this is a hard thing to ask, ma’am, but do you think you could handle some kind of press conference or make some kind of statement for this army of media reptiles we’ve got overrunning this place?”

Cathy looked at Weintraub and her mangled lips broke into a sneer. “Sure. If Mr. Weintraub would stand beside me and explain to them just how I ended up looking like this. I’d be interested to hear his version of things, and then I’ll give them mine.”

“Oh, I couldn’t appear in public with a Class A terrorist,” said Weintraub, suddenly breaking into a guffaw. “I might lose face!”

It is a simple and underestimated historical truth that the Jewish people are in fact nowhere nearly as clever as either they themselves believe, or as clever as others give them credit for being. Howard Weintraub had forgotten that he was standing a few feet from a large and violent man whose wife had been murdered by a Jew, in a manner very similar to the unspeakable mistreatment that Cathy Frost had through some miracle survived. John Corbett Morgan seemed to take one single step into the air and fly over the table like some mountain Nijinsky. Weintraub went down like he had been hit by a roaring, charging bear, the .44 Magnum was at his head and Barrow was just barely able to grab Morgan’s gun hand and knock it aside before he pulled the trigger. The gun thundered and the round went into the floor. Howard Weintraub screamed like a woman in sheer terror. Barrow was wrestling with Morgan, trying to get the piece away from him. “Help me!” he yelled at the others. Gair and Stepanov and McCausland all came to his aid, grabbing the mountain man around the waist and legs. The door flew open and a dozen FBI and MPs came running in, Uzis and pistols at the ready. Reporters out in the lobby had heard the shot and were yelling, demanding entry. Cody whipped out his 10-millimeter automatic and leveled it at the first FBI gunner in the bunch. “Back off!” he shouted. “Nothing to see here! We’ll deal with it! Get the fuck out of this room!” Nightshade had vaulted over the table despite the uniform skirt she wore, her switchblade flashing, and she had gotten hold of a screaming Jeannette Galinsky by the hair. She held the blade under the Senator’s quivering double chin.

“You heard him!” she yelled at the Federal muscle men. “Out the door, all of you, or we’ll see how this Jew hog can take a little of what you motherfuckers gave Cathy!” The Feds stood there like a gaggle of geese, waving their gun barrels in the air, uncertain of what to do. Morgan still had Weintraub clutched in his left fist. He was even stronger than he looked, with Barrow clamped firmly on his right arm keeping the .44 pointed away and the other three all over him, and he was slamming Weintraub again and again against the wall.

It was Cathy Frost who put a stop to it. She walked over and managed to reach through the struggling group of men and simply touch Morgan on the face, and suddenly he stopped. Sensing that she might be able to get through where they could not, the other men let Morgan go and Barrow was able to quickly twist the gun out of Morgan’s hand. “Let him go, brother,” she said to Morgan softly. “This is our day, the day when the people of Coeur d’Alene arose against the tyrant and struck him down. Don’t let a cockroach have any part of it, even by paying him too much mind as to step on him.”

“How can you say that, when he did you like that?” said Morgan, still half insane with rage.

“I say it because we are the true seed of Adam. It is we who bear the true yoke of God, not these creatures of darkness, and God demands that we be better than they are. All of us have suffered, brother. We share a common pain, you and I, someone beloved whom these devil things took away from us. There will be vengeance and justice for us all in plenty. God will not deny us that. But for every thing there is a season.”

“Ecclesiastes,” said McCausland.

“Yes,” said Cathy. “This is our day. Weintraub has but one part in it. He must sign that paper. Let him go, so that The Beast will let all of us go.” Morgan suddenly released Weintraub, who crumpled to the floor. He had fainted, and the stink that filled the room told of what he had done in his underwear in his terror. Nightshade’s nose wrinkled and she sent a sly smile of remembrance at Cody.

“I think I’ll always associate this time of my life with the smell of Jews shitting themselves,” said Cody in disgust. None of the others picked up on the possible implications of the remark.

Barrow picked up the two copies of the six-point treaty. He tossed it down in front of Stanhope. “Screw this. We’re not even waiting for tomorrow. We’re going upstairs and we’re going to pack our stuff and I’m going to call Captain Chernilov and tell him to warm up the helicopter. If you decide you want to stop any more killing, sign this and mail us our copy. Otherwise, you can all go fuck yourselves. You don’t want peace. Well, it doesn’t look like you’re going to get it, and your beloved Israel is just going to have to do without the million or so troops we’ll be keeping occupied here in the Northwest.” He quickly tossed the .44 back to Morgan. “Here, John you may need this yet.” He turned to the gun-toting Federal officers clustered at one end of the conference room. “Get out of our way,” he told them. “Now.”

Walter Stanhope made a signal to the FBI agent in charge and they turned and left. The NVA delegation filed out, hands on their guns. “The stairs, not the elevators,” commanded Barrow as they pushed through the excited crowd, some of whom recognized Cathy Frost. The reporters shouted questions about Cathy, about the gunshot they had heard, about the whereabouts of the missing Susan Horowitz. After a long and nerve-wracking walk they reached their rooms. Jane Chenault was staring at pandemonium on CNN.

“My God, what happened?” she cried. “What...my God, Cathy, oh, Cathy! Oh, what did they do to you?”

“Hi, Jane,” said Cathy as the two women hugged one another. “It’s so good to see you again! It doesn’t matter, Jane. I have lived to see you all here in the uniform of the country Marc and Eddie died for and I suffered for, and I am fine, fine, fine! Hey, you think this is bad? At least they did some reconstruction on my face before trotting me out in public. Two months ago I looked like the Phantom of the Opera!”

“How can you joke about it?” whispered Nightshade in horror.

“The best way not to weep is to learn to laugh, Lieutenant,” said Cathy. “Look on the bright side. At least the media will now have

something else to put on the front page besides you and your boyfriend here going at it like rabbits next to the Coke machine. Yes, I saw that on the helicopter coming in."

"They have a video of it," said Jane disapprovingly. "It's been all over the news. I thought we had a very clear no-nookie rule established, young lady!"

"You do realize now that your Mom's worst fears are confirmed?" asked Cody with a grin.

"That was part of an undercover mission!" Nightshade protested.

"Oh, is that what you kids call it now?" asked Cathy.

"Cease this bootless badinage and start packing, you guys," said Barrow. "We may yet have to shoot our way out of here."

But they didn't. Instead, half an hour later there was a knock on the door. It was Seamus O'Connell, looking pale and wan. He had lost twenty pounds in the past ten weeks and even joked about it. "Sure, 'twill take a lot of Bewley's fry-ups and good pints o' Guinness to bring me back up to fightin' weight." O'Connell handed Barrow a large leather folding document case.

"What's this?" asked Barrow, not able to force himself to look.

"Confirmation of what you already know, General," said O'Connell. "The very proof of the pudding so to speak."

"Confirmation of what, Mr. O'Connell?" asked Stepanov over Barrow's shoulder.

"You won the war, gentlemen," said O'Connell. "The Pacific Northwest is yours." Barrow opened the folder and found the treaty inside. It was signed by all five American plenipotentiaries. "My country took eight hundred years to drive out the oppressor at the point of the sword," O'Connell went on. "You lads did it in five. You're bloody good, I'll give yez that."

"We had some good teachers, sir," said Stepanov with a smile. "The lives of Michael Collins and De Valera were required reading in the Party."

"How did this happen?" asked Barrow in wonder, staring at the paper in his hand in disbelief.

"Mr. Stanhope. Apparently he called them all in and gave them a good talking to. He asks one thing: that you postpone your departure long enough to help with the announcement. It's going to be a bit hard for a lot of people on the American side to swallow. After that, it's all yours."

"We'll be down in twenty minutes," said Barrow.

After O'Connell was gone, Stepanov said "That must have been some talking-to! What in the name of the devil did he say to them?"

"I suspect he was speaking with Lodge's voice," said Barrow. "Lodge is nothing if not a businessman. Theatrics don't convince him, but he knows better than to pour good money after bad. That's all I can think of. Let's just take it as a miracle and leave it at that." The news still hadn't sunk in, and everyone was simply standing and looking at one another.

"So what do we tell the world at the press conference?" asked Cody. "How good are you at making historic speeches, sir? You did all right in the conference."

"We don't tell the world anything, Lieutenant," said Barrow. "We show them." He went to his suitcase and pulled out a large plastic bag, from which he drew a folded Tricolor flag of strong weatherproof nylon. "Six by ten, pre-10/22 Party manufacture," he said, opening a few of the folds. "Made in Taiwan for one of the old Party front companies, ironically. This is the one that flew over the central post office in Coeur d'Alene five years ago, during the Sixteen Days. Red Morehouse gave it to me before I came down here. This hotel has a very fine outdoor speaker system for golf tournaments and whatnot. I'm giving Chernilov another call, and I'm going to ask him to send down all those CDs he has of classical music so we can select something nice and dignified to play as we march out there and lower that red, white and blue flag of a once noble experiment that failed so badly, and raise up this flag of a new nation wherein hopefully, we'll do a better job this time."

"Maybe this time we'll learn to keep the rats out of the barn," suggested Morgan hopefully.

"I hope so, John. Comrade Frost, would you do the honors?"

"I would be honored, sir," said Cathy.

It took almost an hour to get everything set up, get the reporters and everyone else herded outside to await an unannounced major event, and get the American delegation present. Weintraub and Galinsky originally refused to attend and Barrow shrugged. "Fine with me," he said. And yet at the last minute they came downstairs, white and staring, creeping quietly up to the fringe of the group that stood in the lobby speaking in low tones, unable to keep away. "Are we ready?" said Barrow. "I know I am. Where's McCausland and Gair?"

Cody appeared at Barrow's side. "Sir, could you come into the office?" he said in a low voice. "We have a problem."

The problem was John McCausland and Robert Gair, standing in the back room of the office where the public address system's control panel was placed, bellowing at one another with rage. This time it was John Corbett Morgan who was keeping them apart; they seemed about ready to start swinging on one another while Doctor Doom, who was in charge of the PA, sat hunkered in the chair in astonishment with a small stack of music CDs in front of him. "What the hell?" demanded Barrow.

"Musical differences, sir," said Lieutenant Waters.

"This day will be a celebration of the victory of Christ!" screamed McCausland. "It will be a statement to the world that this new land will not be some kind of comic book Fourth Reich of socialism and paganism! I've put up with this constant derision of the Bible and the Christian faith for ten weeks now, General, but by God, sir, this one time we are going to acknowledge that America is a Christian country and that we are a Christian people and we always will be! For fifty years ZOG has shut God out of our national life! No more, damn you!"

"Major McCausland wants me to play Handel's Hallelujah Chorus," explained young Waters.

"Twenty million Germans and other Nordic people slaughtered!" bellowed Gair. "Babies burned in their cribs in the Dresden firestorm, from bombs dropped by Christians fighting for the Jews and the Jew god! German women raped by the millions by the Bolsheviks! You want to go back before that, try the Thirty Years' War, two thousand years of White people slaughtering one another because some of us are stupid enough to worship a goddamned Jew as a god! This day is vengeance for 1945 and it's a sign that our Folk have finally awakened and we are casting off all these Jew lies!"

“Captain Gair wants The Ride of the Valkyries from Wagner,” said Doctor Doom.

“Oh, for Christ’s sake!” yelled Barrow. “Okay, bad choice of words. You guys just couldn’t leave it alone, could you? I suppose you want something else, Commandant?”

“Actually, I’d like some Charlie Daniels, but this Russian chopper pilot seems kind of light on country,” said Morgan.

“Well, let’s see what else he’s got,” said Barrow, pawing through the CDs. The problem was that Chernilov was a Russian and he had mostly heavy classical stuff. “Okay, looks like we’re going to have to find something to compromise with. Nuts, I have no idea what most of this stuff even is! Well, here we go! Hohenfriedburgermärsch, the Hills of Peace, by Frederick the Great. A good, solid, dignified piece.”

“The Nazis were very big on Alte Fritz,” agreed Gair. “Okay, that will do.”

“So instead of a pagan piece about female demons flying through the air we play a Nazi song?” growled McCausland.

“Enough, gentlemen,” said Cathy Frost calmly from the doorway. “We are in the presence of the enemy. This has to stop, and it has to stop now. If you think that this movement owes me anything, I want you to lay your differences aside and this my way, on just this one occasion. It is the only reward I will ever ask of the Party.” She opened her purse and took out a Walkman CD player. She took out the CD inside. “I asked the Red Cross for this when I was released,” she said, handing it to Waters. “Lieutenant, when the Tricolor begins to go up the flagstaff, please play track number four, as loud as you can. It is my favorite hymn, the one my imprisoned sisters sang for me so I could hear it while I was being tortured under the so-called Dershowitz protocols. Yes, Captain, it is Christian, but it was written by one of the greatest men of our race who ever lived, a German. His name was Martin Luther. The name of it is Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott, which means A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. However you view God or the gods or whatever destiny rules our world, this day could not have come about without the approval of that force. He has been with us, gentlemen, throughout all these terrible years. And even if we have forgotten Him, He has never forgotten us. Play track four, Lieutenant.”

XII.

“I think I’m free.” – Jane Chenault

The Northwest nation was born on a crisp and clear afternoon in the autumn, five years to the day after the Singer family had been burned alive in their home in Coeur d’Alene rather than allow their children to be torn from their arms by The Beast. Five years to the day after Gus Singer’s neighbors had taken guns from their hiding places and opened fire on the armed forces of the United States, in order to help a good neighbor and a good man fight against the tyrant who came in his power and his arrogance to do them harm. Five years to the day after white males became men again.

The crowd watched in stunned silence as the group of delegates walked out the front door of the hotel. They and the watching world could hear a rattling from the cable on the flagpole, as the Stars and Stripes which had flown over this land since the days of Lewis and Clark went down for the last time, after something over two hundred years. Human history brings change, and two hundred years in the Northwest was the span that destiny had allotted for the red, white and blue banner that now seemed to drop like a stone down the staff. There was a brief and quick folding, and Barrow handed the flag to Brubaker, who was weeping openly. Barrow stepped back and saluted; Brubaker was too overcome to return it and simply clutched the American flag to his chest. Then Cathy hooked the grommets on the new nation’s banner into the clips and drew it floating and snapping, high into the air, green and white and blue against the sky. As the Tricolor went up, music burst forth from the hidden speakers. A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, by Martin Luther. It was a thundering paean to God and human destiny, in the proud and ancient tongue of the greatest and most noble nation among the Children of the Sun. Generations after the heroic immolation in the Berlin bunker, the spirit of a mighty people and their Leader was avenged by a hundred mighty voices, singing in German. Nobody noticed that the hymn came from a public address system. It seemed to come from the sky and earth itself, as if a choir of angels and heroes from Valhalla had descended to earth sing at the new dawn of time. The entire crowd suddenly burst into an incredible cacophony of noise. Men and women screamed, wept, cursed, pounded one another on the back, embraced one another in a mad passion of joy that at long last their ancient race was free once again to be who they were. Jeanette Galinsky ran hysterically through the crowd, shrieking and bellowing in Yiddish like a wounded beast. Howard Weintraub fell to the grounds, jerking like an epileptic, white froth coming from his thick lips. No one paid them any attention. Their day was done. Barrow stood staring at the flag, his arm around Jane Chenault. He turned to her and said “So what are you doing after the revolution?” “I think I’m free,” she whispered.

Cody and Emily turned to one another and hugged in unbelieving joy, both of them crying. “This day has to last forever!” Cody whispered into her ear. “Never leave me! Stay with me always!” Her face was buried in his shoulder, and she simply nodded.

XIII.

“In the long run, this is the only way. We finally understood that.” – Cody Brock

On the first day of November, Cody and Emily were in Camp Murdock outside the appropriately named Battle Ground, Washington. The preparations for the Northwest Defense Force assault on Portland were almost complete. General Delmar Portman had refused a direct order from the President of the United States to comply with the terms of the Longview Treaty, issued a call for her impeachment, and was digging in with the last holdouts, American troops and FATPOs and several thousand hastily-recruited loyalist militiamen. Murdock was the temporary base which the First Corps of the Army of the Columbia was using for its jumping-off point; the move south was already beginning as elements of the rebel army moved out. Carter Wingfield was in command, and by his side was the newly appointed Political Officer for the Army of the Columbia, former U. S. Secretary of State Walter Stanhope.

“Stanhope was the Third Section agent at Longview?” yelled Cody in astonishment when he heard. “How in hell did that happen? Don’t tell me Threesecc has penetrated the Skull and Bones itself?”

“I had some trouble wrapping my mind around it myself,” admitted Barrow. “That day we met privately in the hotel room, when you and the late unlamented Hadass were circling one another in the living room, we couldn’t really speak because Stanhope himself made it

clear that he didn't know whether or not the room was clear. I took a napkin and put a couple of question marks on it, that's all. He wrote back, Even a rich man sometimes wakes up one morning and looks in the mirror. I still didn't entirely trust him, but damned if he didn't come through. We need a man like him in the Political Bureau, a man who knows how it's done and can teach the rest of us. Did you meet with your Dad, Cody?"

"Yes, sir," said Cody. "He's changed a lot, of course. He's actually heading out to Florida. Captain Moore was able to pick up on some information that my sister Gwendolyn may have been sent there. He's going to try and find her. She may not even want to Come Home, of course, but one way or the other, we've got to know."

Cody and Emily were now wearing camouflage fatigues and field gear, and new wedding rings on their left fingers. That afternoon a group of what appeared to be Northwest army nurses was getting off a mini-bus, canvas bags over their shoulders and suitcases in their hands. They were wearing NDF camouflage fatigues with white and scarlet Red Cross armbands around their left sleeves. It looked as if the quartermaster had run out of the sassy little female berets, because these women were wearing the Alpine fatigue caps of a line unit on top of braided, clipped, or bunned-up hair. One of them, a tall and lithe girl with a single blonde braid running down her back, came up to Cody. "Excuse me, Lieutenant, can you tell me where to find the Third Mobile Field Hospital Unit?"

"Down about five hundred yards on your left," said Cody, pointing. Then he did a double take. "Kelly?" he said in stunned recognition. "Kelly Shipman?"

"Cody! I hoped I'd meet up with you somewhere!" cried Kelly in excitement.

"What the..." Cody gestured at her uniform. "How did you...why...I mean, yeah, I guess after what happened and all..."

"It wasn't just the Mitch Newman thing," said Kelly, shaking her head. "I think maybe I got into this a little with you back at Hillside—God, that seems so long ago!—but even back there, for a long time I understood that I was having doubts. It's not that I don't still love acting and want to be an actress and work on set. I do, more than ever. But I always had this odd feeling in the back of my mind that before I could do that, there was something I had to do. Pay my dues, so to speak. I was never really happy with having everything handed to me on a silver platter. Most girls would be, but for me it just somehow seemed off kilter a bit. You have to live for something else, for a while at least, before you start living for yourself. Otherwise, if everything is always about you, how do you grow as a human being? America never gave me that. All America ever gave me was a credit card and the mall. It turned out those weren't enough."

"How about your parents?" asked Cody. "How did they take it?"

"Not well," admitted Kelly ruefully. "But at least my staying kept them here as well. I told my Mom and Dad that I had to go with my own people, and do something bigger than just me. They'll come around. I'm worried about Jason, him still being in the U. S. Army, but this is something I have to do."

"It must have been a hard decision," said Cody.

"No," said Kelly. "It wasn't. That's what surprised me so much about it, the fact that once I understood there was something in life greater than my own dreams and ambitions, I wanted to shoot higher than just being some pretty face on a movie screen. Oh, don't get me wrong, I know Hollywood's out now, and this means I'll probably end up doing Arsenic and Old Lace in some old renovated theater in Boise instead of starring roles in Hollywood. But I can live with that. In fact, in a way I think I might enjoy being a real actress with a small audience of real people than some kind of icon that multi-national corporations use to sell people junk they don't need. Is that a ring on your finger?"

"Yeah," he said, holding it up.

"Emily?"

"Yup. She's around here somewhere."

"Right behind you," said Nightshade, coming up on them and holding up her own ring on her left hand, slung M-16 over her right shoulder. "Well, well, looks like Betty Grable decided to try out for MASH."

"Hi, Emily," said Kelly with a smile. "How'd a skinny broad like you ever beat a hottie like me out for a guy like this?"

"I'm a good listener, and I laugh at his jokes," said Emily. "That, and I can suck the lug nuts off a timber truck."

"Ooo-kaaay, I don't think we'll go there," said Kelly primly.

"Speaking of hunks, how's things going between you and our own 007?" said Emily.

"I'm kind of seeing him, yes," said Kelly with a sudden blush. "When we can. He's off somewhere doing a spot of cloak and dagger, as he puts it. He's told me a lot about both of you. You're both up to 007 class, the way he tells it. Boy, did I miss out on you two in school! Still waters run a hell of a deep, don't they?"

"Jack Flash a good man," said Cody seriously. "You could do a hell of a lot worse, Kelly. So do you know if you're coming with us when we move on Portland, which should be any day now?"

"Somebody's going to have to sew you guys back together," said Kelly with a sigh. "I wish there were another way to get freedom and justice besides this."

"In the long run, this is the only way," said Cody. "We finally understood that. Almost too late, but the penny finally dropped. Well, there go the first units down to the north shore of the river," he said, pointing to a long convoy of camouflaged trucks pulling 155-millimeter and 108-millimeter field guns behind them. "This time, when Partman opens up with his artillery, he'll get a dose of his own medicine. I've noticed that the United States doesn't like getting a dose of its own medicine." "Yeah, well, screw what the United States of Amurrica doesn't like," said Emily with a grin, waving as the artillery train rolled by. "In case you hadn't noticed, they ain't in charge any more."

The trucks roared southward down the highway, the heavy guns rolling behind them, and the Northwest troopers' machine guns leveled over the cabs, at the ready to fire on any of the slavemaster's dogs who dared to bark. Loud over the speakers boomed the rocking battle cry of an earlier generation:

"Look what's coming up the street!

Got a revolution, got the revolution!

Epilogue

The Storm Set To Sweep Oscars

Chicago – (Reuters) - As the movie world prepares for its annual Academy Awards extravaganza in an unaccustomed venue, indications are that the combined US/NAR mini-series *The Storm* is set to sweep the boards. *The Storm* will almost certainly bring away the Oscars for Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor and Actress, Best Director, Best Soundtrack, and Best Screenplay, with wins possible in several other categories.

The Storm made cinematic history not only as the most-watched mini-series of all time, commanding viewer shares in the 90-percentiles in the North American, European, Southern Pacific and Asian markets, but as the first open collaboration between movie-makers and actors in the United States and the Northwest American Republic.

The Storm raised eyebrows with its unique production technique of two separate plot lines and casts, one cast from the Northwest Republic portraying a band of Northwest Volunteer Army fighters engaged in revolutionary combat against the United States government, and one American cast including minority and Jewish actors from Ad Astra Pictures who played members of the Seattle FBI office and the long-since disbanded Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization (FATPO.) Since under the constitution of the Northwest Republic, non-whites and people of Jewish ancestry are not allowed into the country, most of the American cast's scenes were filmed in Hollywood, while the outside scenes and NVA segments of the movie were shot in Seattle, along with a meld of old news footage from *The Trouble* which gives *The Storm* a convincing period flavor.

White American actors Del Raymond, Sean Carroll, Denise Winters and Pete Parisi, as well as other white cast members from Ad Astra who play FBI agents and FATPO officers, were in fact allowed into the Republic and did outdoor scenes, which led to friction and a number of resignations and protests among minority cast members.

Each cast also used its own American, Aztlan and Northwest writers to produce the dialog, so that both sides of the conflict were presented in balance. Action sequences were based on actual historic events which took place during the Northwest insurgency, which is known in the Republic as the War of Independence. Director Kelly Shipman supervised Hollywood assistant director Ray Thorne on the Ad Astra set by satellite video conference hookup, and also in person on several occasions until Northwest cast members and personnel were banned from entering Aztlan by the *Oficio del Diversidad Nacional*.

The Storm has been widely praised by drama and film critics as being the most realistic and convincing portrayal of the Northwest conflict yet achieved by the cinematic art. But *The Storm* also generated another kind of storm, a massive controversy due to the flouting of international sanctions against the NAR which reached its culmination when the annual Oscar ceremony had to be moved to Chicago from its traditional Hollywood venue at the request of the government of Aztlan.

Presidente de la Raza Mario Fuentes expressed "profound regret" at his government's decision but said that "we feel it is inappropriate for a nation such as ours, which has been founded on freedom, diversity, and multi-culturalism, to be host for a ceremony which honors a film such as *The Storm*, a film not only produced in blatant violation of international sanctions and Aztlan law, but which presents a skewed and glorified view of one of the most tragic and horrific episodes in living memory. We regret that the Ad Astra studio saw fit to collaborate in the making of this deeply racist picture, and we consider it a sufficiently serious breach of our laws and of simple human decency so that a criminal investigation has been opened."

The Storm has been banned from public showing or broadcast nationwide in Aztlan, and also in several American cities with large Jewish and minority populations such as New York, Philadelphia, and Atlanta, on the grounds that it allegedly promotes racism. Legislation is pending in Congress to have the movie classified as hate speech and possession or downloading of a copy made punishable with a term of imprisonment. The controversy seems only to have swelled the movie's popularity worldwide. Sales of the movie online and in stores are still at record levels, and everywhere it is shown in theaters it is still playing to packed audiences.

Director Shipman, from the Seattle-based Cascade Film studio, who is considered a shoo-in for Best Actress tonight, does not deny the controversial aspects of the film. "I'm somewhat at a loss to understand just how we were supposed to deal with actual events involving the establishment of a world-wide Homeland for one race of people, without mentioning race," she said in a recent interview. "The entire history of the North American continent is based on racial conflict. We tried pretending that race didn't exist for a lengthy period during the last century, and you see where it got us all."

Ms. Shipman is considered likely to carry off not only the Best Director but the Best Actress award for her portrayal of NVA guerrilla and intelligence operative Captain Emmeline Parsons, code name Nightshade.

Responding to concerns that *The Storm*'s allegedly heroic portrayal of the Northwest Volunteer Army, who officially are still considered terrorists by the United States and Aztlan legal systems, would offend minorities and people of the Jewish faith, Ms. Shipman said "I have to confess that catering to the sensitivity of the Jews was rather low on our scale of priorities when we were making the film. All I can really add is that with a ninety-one percent viewer share in the United States last April when *The Storm* was first broadcast, I don't think it could have been all that offensive. Offended or not, people watched it."

Ms. Shipman, who is married to General Nigel Moore of Special Service or SS, herself served in the Northwest insurgent forces during *The Trouble*, as an eighteen year-old nurse. She is modestly dismissive of that time in her life.

"I wasn't actually ever in the NVA," she said. "I think I joined something like two or three days after it officially became the Northwest Defense Force, so I was never a domestic terrorist, if you insist on the term. No fifty thousand dollar bounty on my head. It was while the Longview Conference was going on. I was a member of the official army of a government, even if it wasn't formally recognized yet. I helped save a lot of wounded people's lives, soldiers from both sides and civilians, and I will always be proud of that. Mostly I just remember that was a cold, wet winter and I had to sleep in a tent in a clammy sleeping bag a lot of the time, when I wasn't on night shift or in the OR. I was issued a pistol at some point, in case our field hospital was attacked, but I don't remember ever firing it. I think I still

have it in a trunk up in my attic somewhere. It's probably rusted solid."

Shipman has admitted that her character of Emmeline Parsons, the role which is expected to win her an Oscar tonight, is based on a genuine woman who was a rebel agent and assassin, whom she actually met when both were in high school in Seattle.

"By sheer coincidence I was in the same school with the real Nightshade. None of us had any idea that she was a Volunteer, until the last few months of the war," said Shipman. "That was what made her such a great spy. She was just this quiet unobtrusive little girl off in a corner that no one would have suspected of being involved in anything. Of course, she was a lot younger than Emmeline in the movie. An amazing number of Volunteers were very young. I certainly can't credibly play a teenager again, so my movie Nightshade had to age some, up into her late twenties. Late twenties, I can still manage, thanks to a lot of time on the treadmill and a really great makeup crew. When we were doing the film I tracked the real girl down, and got together with her. We lived over old times at Hillside High, and she and her husband gave me a lot of really great tips and advice on the role. But she wouldn't even let me give her a mention in the end credits of the movie. She's married with children of her own in high school now, and she didn't want her kids to have to deal with their mom being known as the real Deadly Nightshade."

Chicago police are on high security alert to deal with a number of planned demonstrations against the Oscar Ceremonies, to be held in the Daley Plaza Civic Center beginning at 8 P.M. Central Time tonight. Rachel Cohen, spokesperson for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith and Barry Glickstein of the Coalition for Anti-Fascist Action issued a press release... [snip]