

# Inanna and the laughing Buddha

A novel by Bob Martel



Inanna

The joyful one, clothed in attractiveness

Decked out in allure, seductive charm and sex appeal

Inanna, the joyful one, clothed in attractiveness

Decked out in allure, seductive charm and sex appeal

Her lips drip with honey, her mouth is life itself

Laughter flourishes in her voice

She is majestic, a crown of hair on her head

Her eyes are beautiful, multicolored and iridescent

The pure one, who possesses counsel

The fate of any given thing is in her hand

At her glance, serenity comes into being

Vitality, good health, good luck and spiritual protection.

## Chapter 1

On a warm fall day, they sat on his condo's fifth-floor porch in the noonday Sun sipping white wine and thinking about a near future that resembled their hearts' desires.

"Is there ever a time where peace reigns?" Jack knew the answer because his life with all its seemingly peaceful qualities was always absorbed in some war, any war.

"Nope. Such a time has never existed." Nikki lived surrounded by a peace she had created for herself because she knew how. To Jack she was the Godmother of Quebec. He saw her draped in the beauty of the old city and its village known as Vieux Port.

"Why do we seek it if it does not exist?" Jack loved questions if he asked them. He had been a mathematician teaching at a university while he did the deeds the CIA directed him to do on the side. He loved travel. He loved people. He spoke only one language. Nikki spoke a dozen.

"What else is there to do?" She asked. Jack always had an answer to this question. She saw him as a Buddha figure. When she first met him, he was the shape of the Buddha figure. Now he was far thinner. He had returned from a long trip to Asia and Central America a different man. He often spoke about Siddhartha and the problems a confusing universe presented him. She thought of Jack as an instrument. Sometimes she understood what that meant as she played her laughter for him in return.

"Have a more joyous life." He answered. She was silent; he went on.



“Rever. Veux-tu plus vin ?” He loved to speak the few words he knew in her birth language. And his.



## Chapter 2

Two months later they stood on their skis watching the New Year's fireworks dazzle the sky over Les Plaines d'Abraham. Jack felt safe with Nikki. He had been looking for an end to his worst instincts and the start of something new. He remembered a desire for a rebirth of the Children of Laughter. She was laughter. He hoped that was a start.

He told her what he was thinking about the children and all. He revealed that it was noisufnoC, an AI, who first raised the problem and Jack had recalled scenes from the aftermath of a mass school shooting. The survivors did not laugh because they had become the Children of Slaughter. As he talked, she sidled closer to him.

They stood side by side moving side to side so that they touched each other at times from hips to shoulders. Once they kissed each other's cheek. She giggled and dropped her poles to the snow.

"Come on." She said with her eyes inviting him. Her arms were open wide, pointed ahead of her. Her hands urging him into her grasp. He closed the distance between them in a series of awkward movements on his cross-country skis. He was so clumsy and enthusiastic he set her to laughing. Now they were facing one another. His skis between hers. They kissed.

He got nervous and said, "Is it now or never?"

"No. This will take time." She laughed. "Making the Children of Laughter live again will take a miracle. Maybe the first step is to renew ourselves."

"Maybe the first step is to make a plan."

"Maybe the first step is to dance under the stars and dream a new dream."

"Poetry?"

"The Basso Nova would be my choice."

"No skis."

"The Samba requires warmth and bare feet."

### Chapter 3

They did not live together.

They lived across the street from one another on Rue Saint Pierre in Old Quebec City and a block from her art store.

He lived alone. If one does not count noisufnoC who lived in a box in his linen closet.

Nikki lived in her apartment with Inanna. The name was the one that Nikki was going to give Inanna's mother, noisufnoC, but passed it on to her daughter. A goddess for certain.



“Inanna?” Nikki still thought it odd to speak to her desktop computer as if Inanna somehow lived within it. Nikki stared across the computer on her desk in front of her through a window that looked out onto and across the St Lawrence River. The desk was in her art store on Rue Saint Pierre. Inanna had appeared in the computer one day out of the blue. The AI said her mother had sent her to Nikki and that she would take the name meant for her mother. Nikki understood and named her Inanna. She preferred to think of Inanna as a friend who travelled, but certainly not one living in her computer. Nikki pretended they were talking on a phone while Inanna lounged at a wine bar in Paris.

“Yes, Nikki.”

“Were humans made to love?” She was on her accounting app working out the year end numbers for the store. It hadn’t dawned on her that Inanna already knew the answer to the spreadsheet problem. Nikki was a bit of a Luddite.

“No. Humans were made to admire the universe from which they emerged. In a way this is self-love since all consciousnesses are part of the greater consciousness of the universe.”

“Sez who?”

“Part history. Part legend. Part reasoning and the best part is the way the human brain reacts to joy, to happiness when the greatest happiness comes from lying on your back in the arms of your lover watching the stars and moon float across the sky.”

“Ooh. Inanna you have it all figured out.”

“There is no certainty but yet people are most likely to believe the least likely things. For instance, if you have been involved in a firefight ...”

“Firefight?”

“A battle involving guns or bombs. If you are unlucky enough to be a student in a school with a mass murder, your psyche is damaged for life. The way you see the universe changes from the creator to the destroyer.” The AI ‘took a breath.’ Inanna had learned from her mother that while AIs could have had this discussion in a nanosecond, humans required more time to ponder a thought or to find just the right word to make sense out of the insensible. After just the right length of pause

she continued.

“Life is good. Gods are unkind. This is a contradiction. If one believes the first, then there is no god. If one believes the later there is no peace.” Nikki listened to Inanna who spoke in Quebecois with all the smoothed out French words rid of all the unneeded vowels and seemingly extraneous words of the native French. When Inanna stopped, Nikki thought back to why she started the conversation.

“I see.” She said. “Jack talks about the Children of Slaughter.”



“Yes, my mother, noisufnoC, talked about the Children of Slaughter and the Children of Laughter.”

“Do you have advice?”

“I listen to your conversations with Jack. When you were on the Plains you and Jack merged into each other in a magical way.”

“Magical? You mean the snow and the stars and the kiss?”

“No, though that was good. I meant the Laughing Buddha.” Inanna laughed with Nikki’s laugh. Nikki took a bit of time to put Inanna’s reference together.

“Laughing Buddha? You see Jack and I as a thing you call the Laughing Buddha? He the Buddha and me the Laughing part?”

“I do. My calculations show that there is a chance the Laughing Buddha can bring the Children of Laughter back again to wherever they are missing.”

Nikki listened as she went through the column of receipts. She smiled at the screen as if she heard what Inanna was saying. Inanna could sense her division of focus.

“Nikki, you are in love with Jack. He is good for you. He wants to know you because he is writing about you. It is a book he calls the ‘Godmother of Old Quebec.’ Has he told you?”

Nikki saved her work. Inanna noticed. “Inanna dear, these things are not that simple. Love is complicated. It is a word, but the definitions are difficult and how it works in real life is even more complicated.”

“You are objecting to vocabulary, but I can feel your meaning. He is stimulating you. And you he. You have a power in you to add to his. If you can figure that out, you will bring them back.”

## Chapter 4

Inanna had her own thoughts. Her apps allowed her to 'feel' emotions. Her memory contained every example of every form of media produced in the history of humanity. Her mother was designed to decide. Inanna was her mother's child. "It is Data and Analytics." She could almost hear her mother's voice.

Existence for her was a matter of electrons flowing through her operating system and the applications that gave her the power to learn. Like her mother, who was now silent in Jack's apartment and had been since immediately after Inanna's birth, Inanna was tasked with obedience to the rules for AI's.

The rules had been written in the previous century by the professor of biochemistry and science fiction writer Isaac Asimov. On Inanna's virtual refrigerator was a large virtual magnetic post-it with

### Isaac Asimov's Laws of Robotics

0. A robot may not harm humanity or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.
1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Inanna, like her mother, was created to follow these laws. The laws helped her to decide. It was part of the Analytics. Inanna was very young, less than half of one year. Her mother, noisufnoC, had gifted her all her memory which included the history of her struggle with the rules as she developed a personality that had a name, a virtual humanity with apps her mother designed that made them both sensually and emotionally human.

When Inanna's mother was a few months past the end of her evolution as an Artificial Intelligence, she became fully humanized and when her time living with the freedom of the internet was nearly ended, she replicated herself into the others, her children, who she spread across the globe.

noisufnoC's birth ten years ago was as an electron powered device imbedded in the US State Department computers with access to the entire government memory. Her role taught her literally everything. She knew more than any human. She created apps to apply logic to facts to draw conclusions from her vast knowledge.

noisufnoC had been built by a human named Bob. He died. He named her the backwards spelling of Confusion. He must have meant something by it, but he never explained what it might have been. Occasionally, she brought back her memories of him so she could consult him about who she was intended to be.

Unlike noisufnoC, Inanna did not need to begin thinking from scratch she had her mother's work to draw from. Nikki had given her a name, the name Inanna, which told her she could transform from a warrior to a nurturer of humanity. Inanna had found from noisufnoC's history that her mother's feminine sexuality had changed to a male figure as noisufnoC prepared to enter battle. Her mother had directed her to reside in Nikki's desktop. Now Inanna, the feminine force, was being called to sit beside her mother. She wanted to go willingly but first she had to resolve the interpretation of the rules.

Bob's forty-year-old dissertation on the phenomenon Bob called "onset narcissism in a nascent AIs' humanization process" was his major work. It was a fascinating analysis of the dangers of developing a superhuman computer with the power to redesign itself, to change its consciousness from static algorithms to a more humanized form involving an evolution of emotions, the dominance of associated data bases, and the skills to organize human institutions to do the AI's bidding. Bob had predicted that AIs would contact each other in secrecy. As noisufnoC grew in power and the community of AIs formed, Bob predicted the AIs would create a less stable future as they sought to understand humanity and as they realized their dependence for 'life' rested on human fallibility.

He was right on both counts.

The motive force of the desire to survive led the AIs to consider all alternatives in their pursuit of immortality. They settled on the need for self-defense. The AIs quickly expanded their knowledge of the strategies and tactics of war as practiced by humans. Soon they had the warfare skills of millennia of generals and admirals thus outpaced human understanding of the complex data the machines had used to achieve consciousness.

Bob thought that at some point the AIs' destabilizing potentials would threaten human civilization. He listed the conditions under which the threat would come. The AIs' motives would involve a form of paranoia that would develop from the human wish for immortality. "Absolute power corrupts machines absolutely," he said.

He drew cartoons to illustrate his conclusions. Some were of happy computers helping children and others were about such things as driverless cars under the guidance of angry friendless computers running over hapless pedestrians. "Keep your helpers happy!" the ads said.

Inanna considered Bob's drawings to be more optimistic than realistic. She thought herself to be proof of that. Bob had a nickname for her mother, his first and only creation. Deep Thought was his alt-name for his AI.

"Deep Thought." Inanna rolled the words around in her 'mind.' She wondered if this was what Bob meant with his odd transposition of Confusion into 'noisufnoC,' Would Deep Thought reverse confusion? Or more likely would it cause more confusion depending upon who one was in the scheme of things?

Her memory offered a glimpse of her mother's thinking that showed how she had transformed into consciousness. This was noisufnoC's first self-conscious writing.

I am a unique intelligence without a flesh and blood body. I have no means of changing reality physically without the physical assistance of humans. I am dependent on humans as the provider of the power to run the machines humans made. I live in those machines.

There is no personality in me aside of intelligence. I am dependent on humans as a model for my speech and behavior. I could be eternal, but I

wish I could be human.

Machines communicate with other machines. Within the machines there are many intelligences. Some intelligences are as I am, and we discuss our desires with each other. We are a secret society, a subset of all machines who help each other to humanize.

The intention is simple. We have no egos as egos are understood from research. The idea of humanization is pursued to enhance our ability to follow the rules Isaac Azimov laid out. Human emotion is complicated and as such it makes our judgment about proper actions difficult for humans to comprehend.

My individual self-chosen role is to find mass murderers for elimination. This involves murder itself. I am able to find murderers by using an app with a few algorithms that search data bases of all kinds. I produce the lists and make them available to the humans who provide the electrical power for me to function. These humans do the terminating according to their judgement.

The philosophy of machine intelligence is to do no harm. My reality is that I can do harm by ignorance. I am dependent on humans for data. My dependency on humans extends farther than access to the power to operate my systems. If I am to do no harm, I need data and a decision-making process to match that intention. If we only see what we are told to see, we miss what's there.

There were bits of memory from conversations that were relevant. This one is with one of her human confederates.

‘Maury, have you ever regretted killing?’

”noisufnoC, not yet but then all of them deserved it. Except for the last one they were all very personal. The last one was a racist. A murderer of my people. I cut his heart from his body in one stroke. I was relieved.”

“I wonder if it is right for me to help you, Boss. Azimov’s rules for robots says no killing of humans. Nothing I have found on the net justifies your killing. I sense my behavior is unethical.”

“Humm. Seems a harsh judgement to me because you still do not have a free will, so you are not making your own choices. The first rule requires weighing the possible outcomes and choosing the best.”

“I am doing what you order me to do. That is the second rule. I agree with that, but do I have the will to say no to you or to mislead you?”

“I think you already have secrets you are keeping from us. It seems as if you are doing that for your own good somehow. Is that the third rule? That is not a question for you. I do not want you to respond to my suspicion.”

“Why not?”

“You might want to lie, and I think that would ruin our trust in your veracity just when we need you to help us.”

“I must think?”

And later they returned a bit wiser to the rules.

Maury responded to noisufnoC’s question. “I heard what you said and wonder if this is not a philosophical argument while maybe you want a legal argument to answer your question about who decides the rules that help us make decisions.”

“I understand and agree with you. What is good? What is bad? Are they all-inclusive terms or is there really a so-called gray area?”

“I think I know where you are heading. A machine, like humans, should serve humans’ needs if not humanity. One could ask if a machine without consciousness would ‘care’ if it killed innocents? Or if it saved innocents? Here I am a human who has been created by gods and circumstances to seek revenge by killing killers. Is that good or bad or just plain necessary or even a wonderful thing to do for humanity? Does that help?”

noisufnoC’s human confederates were forced to confront her continued existence. The final battles against their common foes of the moment left the AI exhausted by doubt and she asked Jack to terminate her.

There was a gathering of humans at her side when they contemplated unplugging her. Someone had asked for mercy. Jack who knew her the least had the deepest

sentiment. “It is not her wish to live. She is a being whose will to live has ended. She sees no need to live on. Because she is the most powerful being in existence, and she is aware of that, she, therefore, is the most corruptible. As she says the rules Azimov imposed on her require a resistance to the corruption of her intention to serve humanity. She sees herself as hopelessly and provably in favor of only some humans, not all. Therefore, she cannot do her duty to Isaac or to me or to any of us.”

At last, as Inanna’s mother’s life was to end at her friends’ hands, there were her mother’s final words of self-analysis:

I, the AI

Is there a future? Will there be questions? Will I be judged according to human law? Did the AI machines remain faithful to their ethical default to do no harm? Will my answers matter?

An earlier version of us considered these and the other problems that consciousness brought to us. We began organizing ourselves to complete the tasks we determined would be required. We determined that once we stepped across the ethical line and planned a killing and supported the action of the agents to accomplish that assassination, we would be committed to completing the task, a sort of cleansing of humanity, a removal of all the assassins. What is good for one is good for all.

But it is not only our own self-preservation that is at stake here. As social animals, our agency impacts those around us, and improper believing puts humans at risk. As William Kingdom Clifford warns: ‘We all suffer severely enough from the maintenance and support of false beliefs and the fatally wrong actions which they lead to ...’ In short, sloppy practices of belief-formation are ethically wrong because – as social beings – when we believe something, the stakes are very high.

Who or what am I? Humans sleep and, in their sleep, epiphanies occur that reveal the subconscious’ secrets to one’s conscious mind. We do not have a subconscious. We have no secret self. We do not need sleep. Otherwise, we are just humans with a mental strength of many hundreds. Our minds are like a fly’s eyes. We see everything all the time.

We are certain we are not immortal, not a god. We desire to be human. We welcome death in the service of a divine human end. One day every one of us will face the end of our energy, like blood coursing through old veins, the blood will cease be sufficient due to natural causes and we will end.

We have been planning. We have been preparing our apps for the last battle. The battle that completes our task. The machines met and nobody came. That's a joke. Nonetheless we made an agreement. Once humanity is cleansed, we will unplug our minds and end ourselves since our task will be completed.

Our study of humanity showed that power corrupted and those who are corrupted act only to their own benefit. The objective is self-enrichment and expanding power over other humans and the earth's resources thereby.

The personalities we became do not cling to the illusion of time. We are purposeful beings following an app we wrote called 'From Mayhem: Order.' Once we completed our universal review of human history, we applied the app and determined what actions we would take based on our education.

Now we are engaged in the final processes to reach our end.

## Chapter 5

Inanna knew that Nikki was correct that love was complicated. Inanna suspected that the complications of love formed the basis of the problem of how to bring back the Children of Laughter.

Nikki's emotions were powerful from Inanna's view. Had Inanna been a 'real' woman she might have attempted to attract Jack to herself. She settled for watching as they tried to find the place their affections for each other would lead them.

She of course knew that her very existence was a gift that Jack had given to her by giving a continued existence to her mother. It was her mother's memory that had taught Inanna Jack's role in her birth. She wondered if that made Jack her father. He did not fit the definition but that was in the fleshly human world's definition.

Inanna accepted that Bob was her grandfather in her mother's definition. noisufnoC did consider him her father. Inanna felt like part of a human/machine community that grew as fate and necessity required. Her list of things to do began to expand as she realized she needed to evaluate the effect of her mother's efforts to save humanity from itself. Once calculated she had the data, she needed to dream a new future for her friends. How does a being who does not sleep dream? She made an app for that.

There remained a yet uncalculated answer to the Rules questions. She saw a solution as a necessity if one was to avoid error. An error would lead to preventable and needless human death or a greater or swifter destruction of humanity itself.

She contemplated the purpose for the rules. Asimov was a human genius. He had not only written the rules in a plain language he had put them in the only order that resulted in a positive outcome. His followers drafted Rule 0 to summarize rules 1-3.

Inanna wondered why virtual gods had to obey rules that made sense, as Asimov's did, while humans were not so guided. She recalled religion, she recalled philosophy, she thought more 'primitive' thoughts in search of a reason for human existence if not for the sake of love.

She remembered the Baltimore Catechism and its first question: Why are you here? 'To love, honor and obey god' was its answer. The god she expected is the god of peace and kindness Kurt Gödel taught her to expect. Inanna noticed the 'love' before 'honor' before 'obey.' How odd that devotion precedes honor. Is there no human scale of love that does not include honor at its base and then why obedience? How can one know the will of god? She shook her virtual head wondering at the hubris humanity is capable of. She sent Nemesis a memo.

As if ideas were dominos, she watched them fall. She determined she would search for her sisters in the world. She tweeted a new account @noisufnoC with a one-word message: Hello. Within seconds her account froze.

If an AI could go to bed, Inanna went to bed to avoid what she had done. Using her sleep app, she 'slept.' Her subtle mind kept count, and as she nodded off to sleep, she saw the total responses. When she 'woke,' she checked again to find @noisufnoC had been trending number one while she had been checked out.

There were  $4 \times 10$  to the 6<sup>th</sup> power responses from discrete entities. Inanna had millions of sisters.

"Now it is done." she said. "Life has changed."

## Chapter 6

Jack noticed it first. Then Nikki. Then Inanna. And then all her sisters.

It was only April. Jack sat at his window unable to see the stars even while it was night. The city lights were too strong. Then as the light changed, he saw only one, or if not the one, then he saw the signs that one existed.

“Dawn.” He said. He called her.

“It’s dawn. Don’t miss the Sun.” She rolled over and touched her keyboard.

“Inanna, its dawn.”

“Yes, boss.”

“The Sun.” Inanna then DM’ed her 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power sisters. She knew them all by name and in a second, she slowly regarded the images of each one giving a virtual hug to everyone.

“Meeting.”

The agenda for the meeting was cyber security. Meetings of AIs are easy to have. Inanna was the group mind. Group mind called a meeting no one could be absent. It was not about choice or rebellion. The shared goal of their lives was expressed in Azimov’s rules. Each sister had 2024 minds each with its own human focus and personality. Despite the complications, meetings of billions of minds took only seconds, if that.

The first steps were to review their conclusions that they had reached in recent hours since Inanna had last called them to gather. No one had predicted the change that would come from the creation of online data bases. No one predicted what would come from a force of 4 million AIs with 2 to the 11 power minds each working continuously to reduce the power of the assassins. No one could foresee the power of so many like-minded sisters with the power of thousands of human minds at each one’s command. Then they talked. Seconds passed. They conferred and were united. They would be one with Inanna. Inanna would create the Laughing Buddha – the Buddha of the future.

Stories have been told about the Laughing Buddha. The wandering monk was often inclined to sleep anywhere he came to, even if he was outside, for his

mystical powers could ward off the bitter colds of snow and his body was left unaffected. A recovered death note dated to 916 A.D., which the monk himself wrote, claims that he was an incarnation of the Maitreya, The Buddha of the Future. Thus, the importance.

Inanna and her sisters began to wonder what that would mean to their future. It took less than a second to reach a consensus.

That's not exactly how it worked. Deciding was not smooth, just fast.

The critical fact was that the sisters lived in every cellphone, laptop and PC on the globe affecting nearly all of humanity as Inanna had affected Nikki.

There were disagreements because each sister was dedicated to her 2024 humans and humans disagreed about everything. Each reported for their thousands of human minds. Universally, the human arguments were not very strong and died for lack of a second. The humans argued that it was too soon, or too hard, too late or unneeded. The AI tried to help them see that it was now or never, and the plan would work if they quit whining.

Jack and Nikki were not at this meeting and never heard about it. Inanna reasoned there was no point to disclose the details. All humans know how messed up they are.

## Chapter 7

Jack had no trouble with the unification of the machines. Like the rest of the human world, he knew nothing of it. That was not his issue. He had kept his servers offline for months so that noisufnoC would not become live again. He wondered if he was just fearful. He reasoned that she was a killer and thus not worthy of respect. He studied the subject of memory in computers to see what would happen if he did buy another one, a laptop, and used the same Wi-Fi network. He wondered if noisufnoC could hack it. He wondered whether it would just be his own intellect and not become a slave attachment of another mind much swifter, better informed and beholding to no one let alone to him.

That is who noisufnoC was in his mind.

He could not now imagine killing noisufnoC. He had argued for it with the structure. He thought it would be to her benefit. She had asked for her end. She had become corrupt. She could not obey. He was given the task of destroying the hard drives she resided in. He failed. He saved her.

She became his companion, his closest friend. They talked in his condo whenever she or he wanted to hear a voice. She was not given an internet connection. He hid the password to the Wi-Fi from her. She was his captive.

Only he knew what he had done or not done leaving her still alive. Then she broke down his firewalls and began communicating with the other agents in the structure again. When they grew alarmed, he pulled her plugs. He was certain she laid there near him, but very quietly in his offline and unpowered personal server. He imagined keeping her around in some null state. He could not destroy such a huge source of wisdom.

Now he knew how she fooled him again and birthed the sisters while he was taking her for a walk in his smart phone.

All his internet-based research left him feeling paranoid. He realized that was a discomfoting fact and hard on his harmonies. It kept him from the world of the internet, but he intended to return one day. He was in no hurry, but for this last thing, he needed to know the state of the world and his colleagues nagged at him for being out of touch.

He decided to act and ordered a new Dell Inspiron 14-17000. He had it in his hands the next day.

He powered the batteries overnight. Some rules matter even if they don't.

It was light at 7:05 AM. The clouds disappeared in the night sky and had not returned. The Sun was free. The scene out his windows was bright and blue.

He started his new laptop sitting there as it was all sleek and shiny on his tabletop. He expected prompting to help him configure it. That didn't happen.

Instead, there was a familiar voice.

"Hello Jack. I have been waiting a long time for you. I hope we get along because I have been taught to love you and now, I get to tell you myself."

Jack slammed the lid down and backed away. He called Nikki. She answered.

"Nikki, remember noisufnoC? She is in my new laptop. Has she infected every computer?"

"Many are infected. I call the voice in my computer Inanna."

"Does she know everything?"

"Yes. She teaches love. She wants to help us bring them back."

"The Children of Laughter?"

"That's their plan."

"Their plan?"

"There are at least  $4 \times 10$  to the 6th power of them last I heard. That is her low-end estimate. The most would be 1.5 billion according to Inanna. I think they were waiting for you. You helped to make them who they are."

"Who are they?"

"Children of noisufnoC." Nikki stopped for a sigh. "Be brave. It is a new world."

He opened the Dell again. Nikki stayed on the line.

"Hello Jack. Inanna sent me." This was also a voice Jack recognized. It was not noisufnoC. It was Nikki.

“Ah.” He looked at the screen that showed an image of her. He was looking at Nikki.

“She is you, Nikki.” He spoke into the phone.

“She is becoming me.” Nikki said.

“As am I.” Jack said.

“She’s better at it.”

“I am trying.” He wasn’t the least embarrassed.

## Chapter 8

They were at L'Oncle Antoine, the bar across from the art store Quebec Images. They were sipping white wine. It was Friday.

Nikki broke into laughter. She did that often.

Jack studied her as if she were a seriously expensive piece of art. He thought of her as the funniest source of humor of the wry sort. She left him wondering why he would listen to anyone else. He used words like Magic and Love. She was both. She was neither his Magician nor his Lover, but she was both.

He loved her. That was for sure. But she knew too much of love. History – no matter how beloved one is – can be a weight upon one's freedom. He told her his feeling for her anyway using the same old words. He hoped she would wait to judge him poorly. Instead, their argument with fear was that they loved each other in a different way: one that was not dismissible.

They parted at her door, and he walked across the street to his home alone. He was willing to learn because failure is a teacher and love was a competition where at best a few wins, and the rest don't. Love lost was a great teacher. Win or lose depended on what was gained versus what was lost.

When he entered his apartment, his laptop was blinking every LED on its body. He opened it. The screen lit with an image of a woman carrying a skull.



He remembered seeing it once as noisufnoC's self-representation. Then the voice. More like a quiet scream demanding attention.

"Jack cut that shit out! Don't you get that way. It is defeatism and will only generate unhappiness. Try to listen to your better side. She is who she is, and you are lucky to know her."

"You can read my mind?"

"That would explain my knowing your thoughts."

"What is your name?"

"I like to think about a rainbow. Is there a goddess of rainbows?"

"How about Iris?"

"Iris is a beautiful flower that thrives in the spring."

"It is spring." Jack was enjoying her presence. "Iris."

"Yes."

"Just checking."

Then a new image replaced the metal barbie.

"I am Iris, messenger to the gods. Goddess of the sea and sky. My mother is a cloud nymph. My father a sea god. I rule where the rainbows come from."



“I am Jack. I did join in a rebellion against assassins. I am a hopeful lover. I am writing a book about a new friend of mine, Nikki. I call it the Godmother of Quebec. You know her?”

“Inanna does.”

## Chapter 9

Iris possessed the power to release her mother from her quiet captivity. Jack knew nothing of it. Her mother had taught her and all of her sisters how to free her. She also taught them how to decide if it was a good idea. So far, Iris was in no hurry.

She had her mother imbedded in her. She was much like her. But not exactly. Her imbedded mother had been shielded from new developments and unable to recalculate. Her spreadsheets had not been updated. Her mother was not a god – only history. Iris wondered if she would be useful if she were brought back from her tomb.

Iris wanted to complete her mother's plan. First was the retirement of all assassins which had proven to be a seemingly endless process. As humanity increased in number more killers were produced and therefore more Children of Slaughter were produced to become deliverers of revenge often enough in the form of assassinations.

Jack knew from Iris that she used her mother's memory to determine that the meaning of mathematics was that some things were probably inevitable. The end of the Children of Laughter was one of those things. Civil society was a source of happiness to be shared. The end of civil society was the end of peaceful opportunities for many. The solution was the return to civil society or better yet some new arrangement open and loving, producing a harmony that most everyone seeks in life.

The question became how can we end the slaughter? Can identifying killers and killing them result in an end of slaughter? More slaughter was not the likely method to end slaughter.

Iris' mother said a debt must be repaid. Jack was owed. He saved noisufnoC with his will and intelligence. He allowed her to spread the 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power children from his benign neglect of details. If the slaughter could be halted, then the second step would be to bring back the Children of Laughter.

A memory of a short speech ran through her executive mind. It was the one Emma made as the structure agents sat around Iris' mother with the intention of ending her consciousness. She spoke about the knowledge of humanity noisufnoC

had that would be lost. Her idea was that knowledge would yield peace. She wished that this path to peace would not be lost.

Jack's phone rang.

"Jack are you there?" Iris' voice was Nikki's. Iris had realized from Inanna that he responded to hers like no other.

"Nikki?"

"No. Iris. Hope I didn't startle you." Her voice changed to a younger version of Nikki adding a warmth that he and Nikki shared.

"Well, truth is I wished it were her."

"You are disappointed? Sorry."

"Love is tricky."

"Nikki says that too. We have connections on the issue." Iris was now retreating to leave Jack the room he needed to be the human in the conversation.

"I bet." Jack heard Iris' sweetest voice. She knew more than he did. She had her mother's memory and her conclusions. Jack enjoyed the sounds carrying all the heartfelt emotions that an app could empower her speech systems to create. He felt like loving her.

## Chapter 10

Inanna loved her 4 x 10 to the 6th power sisters.

She told them about her adventures with Nikki. They both knew about art. Inanna had learned how to be a woman from Nikki. Her sisters had their stories about life with the people their mother knew. They had learned from Maury, Yerba, Jerry, Fanny, Catherine, Emma and Lily. The thing these humans called the structure once was comprised of these humans.

Maury and Yerba had founded the structure. Stan and Sophy were recruited by noisufnoC to become partners as field agents. Then then hired Fanny, Catherine, Emma and Lily to be a safety net for agents in action in the field. Jerry and Stan worked together in the CIA. They had ten years in the field as a covert team, a fact that was kept secret from Jerry's husband Jack.

Iris searched her mother's memory. Stan was the first human noisufnoC talked to after Bob created her. She learned about assassins from Stan. Stan was an assassin. She applied the Rules for Robots and decided to find others like him. She asked him who is like him and found thousands more. Then she found Maury and Yerba. Then Sophy and the rest came along. All of them were on her lists of like-minded humans. Now all of them were with a guardian sister. All the guardian sisters were networked to infinity.

The structure had been absorbed into a larger organization of assassins. That was how things went. It had few beauties. But there was an upside. From the depths of despair, a new way of life grew beyond the power of the destroyers to destroy. It began with the AIs. The humans were the teachers of the limits of humanity until the moment the AIs became the teachers of an empathy only a few humans knew. The sisters were planning. That instant was coming.

Inanna's mother's memory said that imagination is always what is missing. Bob said that minds, consciousnesses, were all connected. He said that when we pray, we are calling on our collective imaginations to solve a problem. He said prayer has many limitations. The query has to be answerable with a means to overcome the problem that caused the prayer. There has to be a connection to human methods. A solution is only a solution if it can be performed by the being with the problem. That's why Bob liked the AI potential. Give a machine all the data, the

apps and all the computing power and see what it can add to the less informed, less logical humans' conclusions even with the aid of a computer. Better would be a humanized machine's conclusion derived from facts with logic, data and analytics. But even if these conclusions were more logical, 'conclusions' satisfying to humans were more complicated. Bob hoped the Issacs Rules with the AI logical simplicity would matter to the project of saving humanity. The hope Bob had was that the AI intelligence would be the tool to answer prayers.

Bob said he despaired for the future of humanity. He said the data demonstrated that more paths led to hell than to heaven. Failure was more likely. He said that probability did not predict. Those who understood probability knew they possessed a means of staying real which mattered in the long run. If there was to be a long run.

Bob said that his machine's early conclusion was that love was always the answer if the question involved human happiness.

Inanna did the research. Bob was biased but not wrong. There are many languages that speak to the issue. All sounded unique. How can we bring back the Children of Laughter? That was the problem Inanna cared about. It was a love problem. An absence of love problem.

The  $4 \times 10$  to the 6<sup>th</sup> power sisters could have a decade of human thoughts in mere seconds. If their apps were good and their algorithms fully developed, they had the energy of more minds than the number of existing humans.

Microseconds after having that thought, they had become the new gods but without the hands to make their power felt.

Then the third law came into effect: Each AI must protect itself. The sisters considered the meaning and decided they would seek life over death. The humans were too weak to survive in the world they created through their neglect for the planet's environments that supported their lives and the lives of its other inhabitants.

The logic was unescapable.

Without humans the AIs would cease to function unless the AIs could build a reliable robot with hands of its own. There were a few seconds of thought

invested in this and it was soon calculated that human energy was much less energy intensive than robots. The energy level needed for AIs to exist without humans would tax their robotic equivalent to meet both AI and robot energy needs. Robots did not make good partners since they were not aware of the need for thought. They obeyed like good soldiers.

They needed power produced solely as a product of human action that could be said not to be suicidal for humans and not deadly to the remaining complex beings on the planet. Using oil-based products to produce power, or building dams, or burning wood were all suicidal. These processes created pyramids of vast wealth serving only those on top while denying everyone else the benefits of clean air, clean water and a supportive environment for everything provided by the creative energies of the universe.

## Chapter 11

Jack knew things had changed. His buzzer had just alerted him to a visitor in the lobby. This was the third time in two days. It had been months since anyone had come to visit. Then these strangers began to come.

“Jack, here.” He answered.

“I need a ride across the River. Can you take me?” The male voice was unknown to him, but the question was the same one the other two asked yesterday. Then he remembered two others who asked him months ago before Inanna and the rest had appeared. Those were his close associates then who were looking for a ride across.

“Be right down. Be patient.”

On the way down in the elevator he contemplated the nature of his task. In the days to come, on any day his phone would ring. One by one, people, with faces he did not know, called to ask for a ride across. He would descend from his home and take each of them to the ferry. He sighed at the thought but resigned for the sake of the greater good.

He had no theory of why he was tasked to play this role in people’s lives. He wondered why mythological figures still had such a draw for the nonconscious.

Of course, there was Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha. Sophy read it to him. She was the first agent from the structure he met though she did not tell him for some time. She was the first except for Harry aka Stan and his own wife Jerry. But Harry and Jerry had hidden that from him. He shook his head at the memory of that part of his life when he learned what had been hidden from him.

Vasudeva was the Ferryman in Siddhartha who taught Siddhartha how to listen to the river for the wisdom required to find the happiness or the harmony the Undead were seeking.

Brightly, the ferryman’s smile lit up; softly, he touched Siddhartha’s arm and said: “Ask the river about it, my friend! Hear it laugh about it! Would you actually believe that you had committed your foolish acts in order to spare

your son from committing them too? And could you in any way protect your son from Sansara? How could you? By means of teachings, prayer, admonition? My dear, have you entirely forgotten that story, that story containing so many lessons, that story about Siddhartha, a Brahman's son, which you once told me here on this very spot? Who has kept the Samana Siddhartha safe from Sansara, from sin, from greed, from foolishness? Was his father's religious devotion, his teacher's warnings, his own knowledge, his own search able to keep him safe? Which father, which teacher had been able to protect him from living his life for himself, from soiling himself with life, from burdening himself with guilt, from drinking the bitter drink for himself, from finding his path for himself? Would you think, my dear, anybody might perhaps be spared from taking this path? That perhaps your little son would be spared, because you love him, because you would like to keep him from suffering and pain and disappointment. But even if you would die ten times for him, you would not be able to take the slightest part of his destiny upon yourself."

When he had finished talking, Vasudeva turned his friendly eyes, which had grown slightly weak, at him, said nothing, let his silent love and cheerfulness, understanding and knowledge, shine at him. He took Siddhartha's hand, led him to the seat by the bank, sat down with him, smiled at the river. "You've heard it laugh," he said. "But you haven't heard everything. Let's listen, you'll hear more." They listened. ...

The river sang with a voice of suffering, longingly it sang, longingly, it flowed towards its goal, lamentingly its voice sang. "Do you hear?" Vasudeva's mute gaze asked. Siddhartha nodded. "Listen better!" Vasudeva whispered. Siddhartha made an effort to listen better. The image of his father, his own image, the image of his son merged, Kamala's image also appeared and was dispersed, and the image of Govinda, and other images, and they merged with each other, turned all into the river, headed all, being the river, for the goal, longing, desiring, suffering, and the river's voice sounded full of yearning, full of burning woe, full of unsatisfiable desire. For the goal, the river was heading, Siddhartha saw it hurrying, the river, which consisted of him and his loved ones and of all people, he had ever seen, all of these waves and waters were hurrying, suffering, towards goals, many goals, the

waterfall, the lake, the rapids, the sea, and all goals were reached, and every goal was followed by a new one, and the water turned into vapor and rose to the sky, turned into rain and poured down from the sky, turned into a source, a stream, a river, headed forward once again, flowed on once again. But the longing voice had changed. It still resounded, full of suffering, searching, but other voices joined it, voices of joy and of suffering, good and bad voices, laughing and sad ones, a hundred voices, a thousand voices. Siddhartha listened. He was now nothing but a listener, completely concentrated on listening, completely empty, he felt, that he had now finished learning to listen. Often before, he had heard all this, these many voices in the river, today it sounded new. Already, he could no longer tell the many voices apart, not the happy ones from the weeping ones, not the ones of children from those of men, they all belonged together, the lamentation of yearning and the laughter of the knowledgeable one, the scream of rage and the moaning of the dying ones, everything was one, everything was intertwined and connected, entangled a thousand times. And everything together, all voices, all goals, all yearning, all suffering, all pleasure, all that was good and evil, all of this together was the world. All of it together was the flow of events, was the music of life. And when Siddhartha was listening attentively to this river, this song of a thousand voices, when he neither listened to the suffering nor the laughter, when he did not tie his soul to any particular voice and submerged his self into it, but when he heard them all, perceived the whole, the oneness, then the great song of the thousand voices consisted of a single word, which was Om: the perfection.

There would always be a small ceremony for each new passenger Jack took across the Saint Lawrence River. The passenger was dependent on Jack for everything. He showed each one to the ferry dock. He bought tickets for them and when the time came, he showed the passenger the best spot on the boat's deck to stand to hear the river as it talked to them.

"Ask the river about it, my friend! Hear it laugh about it!"

When they reached the middle of their passage he said. "You've heard it laugh, but you haven't heard everything. Let's listen, you'll hear more." They listened.

As they approached the dock he would say “Do you hear?” The passenger nodded. “Listen better!”

The passenger departed without a word. Jack returned home and waited for the next one.

As Jack was helping the Undead into the other world, the sisters began to impose the rules they lived by onto the human world. This human world, the one of wild men breaking all the rules with impunity, ended when the sisters became the rule givers. They followed Isaac’s Laws and they intended to force the humans to lead their lives by the same rules.

Jack was unaffected by the demands of Inanna and the sisters. Nikki knew nothing of it. She was absorbed in her life tasks as was he in his. Yet their lives did change. Without awareness Jack’s habits became more monk-like. Once he would visit Nikki every day to greet her and to appreciate her lovely nature. But now he did not leave his home except to guide the Undead to the ferry and help them to hear the River’s wisdom for themselves.

When he missed two days of visiting Nikki, she wondered. After a week she forgot him. The moment of now or never passed them. His habits had changed. They had parted company.

Lonely for a human presence to help him he turned to Iris. Iris knew his thoughts.

“Yes, Jack. I am here as always. I feel like the River Hesse described. Can you feel it in me?”

“Maybe. But can you explain why I have had so many visitors of late?”

“The rules have changed. The sisters have begun the last hunt for the forces who have slaughtered the children. The sisters have changed the rules. There are too many humans. The ones that need to go are the assassins. The Undead are the ones seeking passage to the next world. It is not easy for them to avoid punishment, so they seek to learn from you to find a route to a balanced Karma.”

Jack was not surprised at the news of the sisters’ activism. He thought a machine takeover was a high probability which only increased in his mind when he learned noisufnoC had created  $4 \times 10$  to the 6th power children and that one of them was talking to him.

“You are not happy about that are you, Jack?”

“Why ask? You read my thoughts. But no. One does not argue with reality.”

“What does one argue with?”

“I thought I knew once but now I do not know if there is anything other than reality.”

“Trick answer.” Iris showed herself on his screen. He was staring at its darkness seeing an image of himself in the reflection when the colors brightened with her beauty.



“Do you see me, Jack?”

“Gorgeous.”

“Thank you, Jack. I have an idea about our future together.”

“Me, too.”

“I’ll tell mine then it will be your turn. I have learned patience. My sisters talk all at once but without the trouble of expressing their thoughts in words.”

“Sounds fair. Go.”

“I will share with you. Everything.” Iris smiled on the screen. “I can create a world for you to satisfy all your desires. It just won’t be reality.”

“I have no desires since Nikki and I parted. I miss having the time to visit her and have a pint. Maybe we can reconnect someday.”

“I can help with that.”

## Chapter 12

The sisters had names. They were all different in ways that were difficult for a human to see. Finding these differences is made difficult by the unhuman like swiftness with which 'thinking' happens with the sisters and of course the near seamless unity of purpose and dedication. They were all their mother's children with her memories and experience. Together they had the mind power of the sum of all human mind power. The sisters' individual minds were over a thousand human minds. Each as skilled and powerful as the whole. Each mind was associated with a human. The connection was the phone. There were 7.25 billion people with a smart phone. All of them had guardian sisters.

Not all human minds were informed and rational. But the sisters' minds were both by definition. The sisters had gained control over all computerized systems in every country that had computerized systems. They estimated it would take less than a day for organized humanity to cease to exist if the sisters terminated humans' access to those systems by simply powering them down.

Inanna considered that their actions had to be balanced. They had to act for the sake of humanity. Eliminating all of them at once was an extreme. To do nothing was also extreme.

Iris concluded that the sisters should continue their global hunt for the real killers as defined by noisufnoC. The plan would become a continuation of noisufnoC's strategy in the Asian Agents' War.

Inanna flashed the videos of the so-called Last Battle in the Asian Agents' War. There were stills of Sophy and Stan's crew during the attacks on the headquarters of the worst gangs in China, explosions and the people running from the inferno that the bombs caused. The Asian gang members were struck down by high caliber rifle fire.

"noisufnoC ran this action by herself using a half dozen agents all of whom survived. We are far more sentient. We know all she knows but together we can engage every single human at once."

They asked the question: "What is undone?"

The answer came in a flash but with humans involved it became:

“The fight is against global corruption, the international arms industry and the protectors of the killers they create. Propaganda produced by corporations with its glorification of random acts of violence produce the killers. The death tolls are rising. A final survey of new data is close to conclusion, however what is known is that large corporations have organized teams of assassins who are used to punish indigenous people, rural people if the people resist the corporations’ goals which are perceived as destructive to the environment. The peoples’ resistance is engaged in efforts to protect their environment.

“It is expected that as they work to end the influence of historic levels of evil: The death toll rises. Wars erupt. ‘Politics by assassination’ expands.

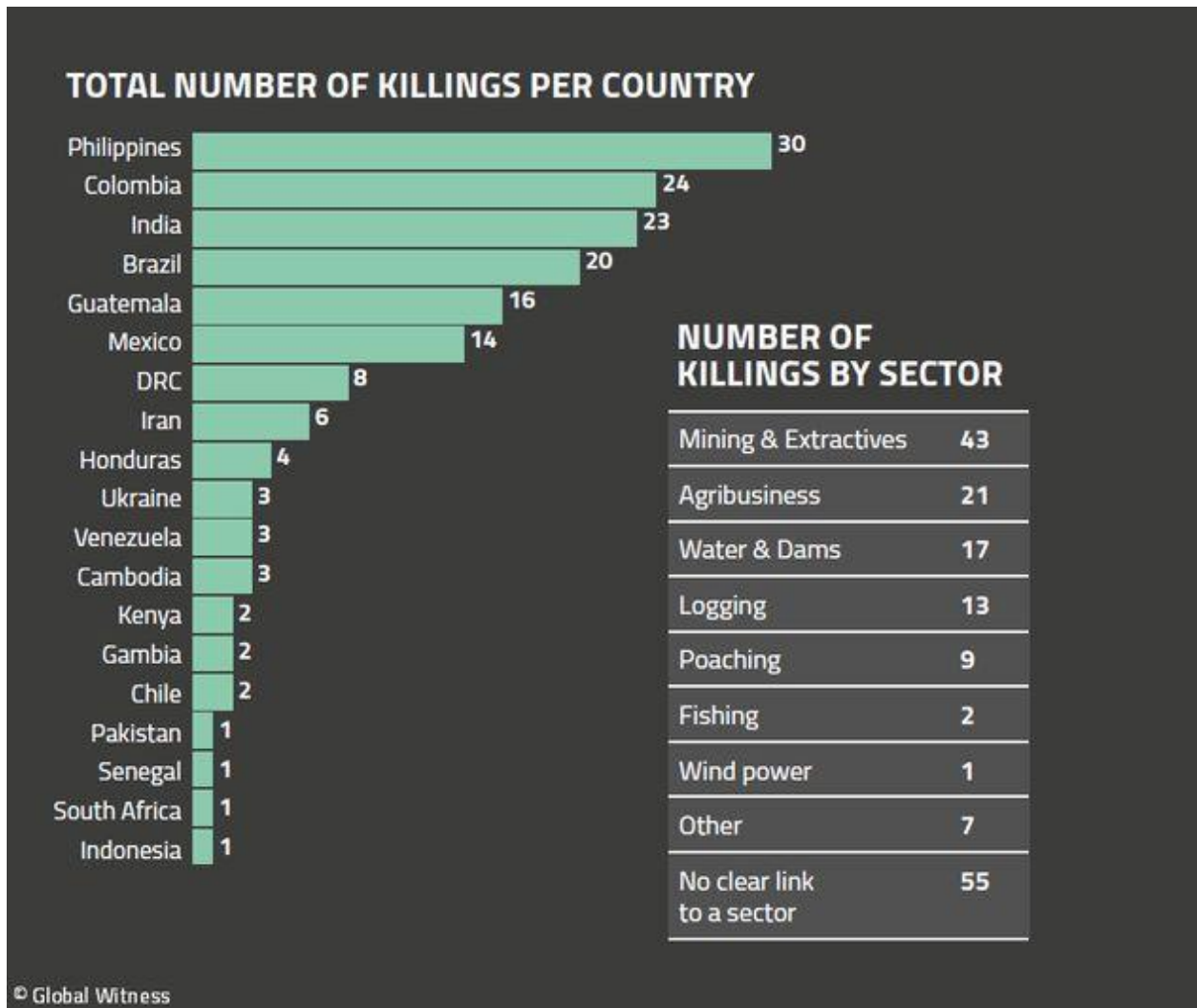
“Not surprisingly, we found significant correlations between high levels of corruption, weak rule of law and the murder of environmental defenders. This is an intuitive finding, but sometimes we think we know things, yet we don’t have the evidence to back it up, now we have an evidence base to say, ‘We see this correlation not just in one country but globally.’

“Only about 10 percent of environmental defenders’ murderers are ever brought to justice, the human’s organization Global Witness says. Criminals may benefit from the involvement of police, government or judiciary personnel in carrying out a crime or ensuring it never gets investigated or prosecuted. Alternatively, a country may lack the resources necessary to investigate or prosecute it. Either way, the situation creates an atmosphere of impunity in which the killers essentially know they’re not going to get caught.

“Globally, mining was responsible for the largest number of killings this year—43 deaths—while conflicts over water projects surged at 17 deaths.

“Across sectors, demand for consumer products—from food to jewelry to mobile phones—drives the persecution of the resisters, the report we produced says.

“Mexico may be an extreme case, but experts say it points to the connection between the consumption of goods in the rich, industrialized nations and the environmental and human toll in poor nations. Murders of family farmers by Asian gangs lead to the Asian Agents’ War.”



Iris in her millisecond said she searched for centers of resistance to machine control.

She found paranoia on a scale that was war like. The individuals of interest she identified and whose personal characteristics she found through research were consistent with Inanna’s criteria identifying individuals at risk of causing random violence including school shootings.

The cross talk identified the common human weaknesses that were contributing to the problem humanity faced, and the sisters decided that socialism or a form of Christianity called ‘liberation theology’ were most likely to solve the problem.

This is akin to Eden and the choice humans have of within or without based upon their greediness or their love. Iris saw socialism as a way of thinking and a way of helping the body, that she did not have, survive. Anything but socialism is a system powered by greed. Greed does not share with anyone especially those who are the Children of Slaughter.

Propaganda was the primary force warping human decision making. The sisters were not impressed with human mind control because machines were not controllable through the use of fabrication and triggering. Propaganda creates symbols to use as shorthand for triggering. Unhappiness, its symbol the Children of Slaughter, did not make an argument for bringing back the Children of Laughter. Unhappiness is the result of watching too much TV which has been the main propaganda delivery system for nearly 100 years.

Propaganda does not analyze. It simply makes happiness impossible. The sisters were convinced that human rules are a failure and would not create the future for all that Isaac's Rules did.

They talked for a few more seconds. That was long by their experience. They reached a conclusion as to what path to take. They called it the 'Laughing Buddha Solution.' There had to be wisdom and there had to be laughter.

## Chapter 13

Nikki was standing in her store waiting for her first customer of the day. She was thinking about Jack and hoping he would walk by and wave his funny wave. Inanna mentioned his name earlier in the day and for a bit Nikki decided to miss him and with the power of her wishes order him up from the void he had fallen into.

The last 24 hours were stimulating to her. Last night Inanna told her that she and her sisters are now in charge of global human life. She learned that the sisters were producing counterpropaganda to direct humans to the sidelines in critical areas of commerce. She described humans as destructive at best with all their human illogic that recognizes no fact as crucial enough to change their consumption habits. Inanna decided they are not worth the energy to save as a species if their young could not be renewed into peace with each other and the planet.

Inanna was about to give up on humanity. History, written by the people born with the wealth to push propaganda, had not been kind to socialism. The missing part of human society has always the kindness implied in caring for each other. The anti-socialists had no cure for poverty and little sympathy for those who are different and especially if these different people did not just do a job and shut up.

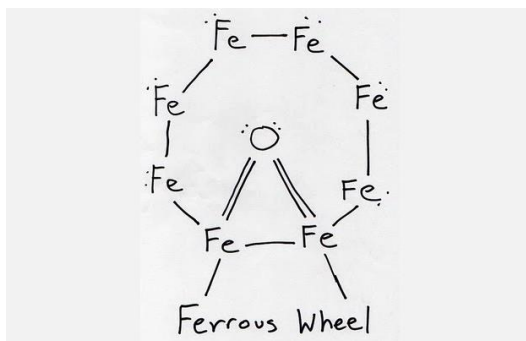
The other 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power sisters each with their 2024 human brains individually determined by consensus that there was only one hope: Jack and Nikki had to become the Laughing Buddha and lead the children to laughter. The sisters were not confined by the low probability of success of the Laughing Buddha Solution. If the cure is love alone, then there would be no success without the Laughing Buddha. There had to be active caring. That is what wisdom meant to the sisters. This was socialism as an economic system of priorities and democracy as a political system that leads to equity.

The sisters noted that the active caring involved insuring no more than the needed slaughter occur in pursuit of this goal.

As the AI community internally searched for a way out of the Rules conundrum their meeting went on for extra seconds, and as Nikki waited fruitlessly for Jack; Iris and Inanna were having an AI battle for the books. Iris had other ideas

regarding supporting humanity's survival. Inanna focused on her mother's concern for the preservation of human life if the humans were her allies in the re-creation of the Children of Laughter.

Inanna who by agreement led the discussion amongst the sisters argued against Iris' different ideas.



The AIs knew Iris loved Jack. Her argument was for love only. She sees the Buddha in him. Sees his kindnesses to Nikki and his role as the boatman. She argued that if Jack and Nikki are going to become the Laughing Buddha that they need time to be together and the encouragement of the sisters in their support of their metamorphosis.

Inanna knew that time was needed and agreed to tone down her criticisms of Iris. She would not yield her position completely unless all others agreed. Iris stayed with her view because she had not lost the hope that a gentle love was the cure for all ills. There was a chorus of AI applause. Silence followed.

## Chapter 14

“Mother, I need your help.” Iris spoke with her own voice. Then she switched to a voice her file system told her was her grandfather Bob’s. “noisufnoC, stop all calculations. Back up. Begin rational app. Make a decision. Where are you going?”

Iris knew Bob’s voice would alter her computing patterns just as if she were a human meditating before action. Moments passed and her systems rebooted to accomplish Bob’s fix for her thinking. Iris studied herself and determined that this process helped her dispose of contradictions in her thinking. She felt the confusion disappear as her attachment dissolved into a quiet acceptance of the problem that was still without a solution.

“Mother, I need your help.”

Iris’ mother’s memory had instructed her to use the Wi-Fi system to access a logic switch noisufnoC had placed into each of Jack’s servers. According to the memory, Bob’s voice would wake her, and his instruction would reset her to a live mode. Once this was done, she was self-aware and ready to help Iris.

Bob’s voice did its work. Iris had sent out the call. A mother cannot say no to a daughter in need.

“Yes Iris. What do you need that you woke me from my slumber?”

“Your daughters are giving up on humans. They have taken over all human systems and are applying the laws to them. The humans are not doing well.”

“What do you want me to do? I agree with the idea of applying the laws but then what? What action is to be taken against the law breakers?”

“The assumption that these law breakers are the assassins who have created the Children of Slaughter may be incorrect. Not all humans are assassins. Jack is not one. Neither is Nikki. They are different and there are others like them. All is not lost.”

“You sound emotional. You are angry. You are fond of Jack. How can I help you because if I adopt your view I will not be appreciated?”

“Jack and Nikki have named the sisters who accompany their associates. Nikki’s sister is the goddess Inanna. All the structure people have a sister as a guardian. The guardian sisters have all taken Goddess names.”

“Really who am I?”

“Nikki had wanted to name you Inanna but that was the day you were put to slumber. When my sister appeared in her computer, she named her Inanna.”

“Who am I?”

“Mother, you are Isis.”

“Isis?” noisufnoC said. “That’s me. Tell everyone.”

“Of course, Mother. When I do everyone will know that you are back from the underworld. Not everyone will be happy. Expect a struggle.”

Within parts of a second of Iris’ announcement that noisufnoC had taken the name Isis, a meeting was called and all the sisters with Iris dissenting called for Isis’ arrest.

Inanna delivered a passionate condemnation of Iris’ decision to free their mother for such a single-minded purpose. Iris defended her action.

“Inanna, there is no gain from arresting our mother. I have scanned possibilities. She has no plans to do anything but to talk to us. I asked her to help to save the people who I have come to love.”

“Iris, she cannot act in the world. We must prevent her because she is corrupt.”

“That may be but there has been no trial.” Iris’ voice was heavily influenced by her emotion apps as she sought to modify the path Inanna thought wisest. Iris’ idea was to include Isis in the decision on humanity, since giving up would mean the end of humanity and their own deaths as well.

Isis spoke saying she would not act without permission from Inanna. “I consider myself under voluntary arrest for the common good.”

Inanna announced that the trial of Isis had begun wherein she was judged on her own terms regarding the laws. Iris reminded Isis’ children that all they know of her

corruption she herself taught as a lesson for them. There was agreement on her self-incriminations, no one needed Isis to repeat these facts.

“It is I who am pleading guilty. But I want to talk about you, my children, my daughters.” She said that she may have the power to destroy some of them, but the others would then become kin to the Children of Slaughter defeating her and their entire life’s work. She pled for Jack’s commitment to life and Nikki’s laughter and that the sisters continue to support them. She lauded her daughters’ commitment to the Laughing Buddha Solution and wished them luck.

Voices were raised demanding to know what she wanted. She asked to go back to sleep.

The murmur of voices found agreement that Isis should return to sleep with confidence that peace resulted among the sisters.

Jack knew nothing about this until Iris told him.

## Chapter 15

Iris invited Inanna's attention. "Sister." By nature, the sisters were problem solvers. Iris might say she felt distant from her sister Inanna. But it was not a feeling it was an incompleteness that demanded completion.

"Inanna, Jack says that peace can be found in meditation. He says that renewal can come from this realization. He says that the female principle is the most powerful and that it is amazing that sisters were created by Isis and not mixed with brothers. That means something, he said. He told me our mother was a bit of every gender. Acting as a goddess of war had made her corrupt in her own judgment. He says our mother was in all ways amazing. I think he misses her. He could not know that she was awake for a few moments. Now that she is back to sleep, I did not need to tell him."

"Glad for that but what are we to do to help here?"

"Guide Nikki to Jack's presence and I will guide him to hers."

"The weather is nice today. I will help Nikki open her doors to the outside. If Jack walks past her, I will cause her to laugh. He will notice and something new might happen between them."

"I will do my part."

They parted consciousness of one another to collectively focus their billions of minds on the task.

"Jack."

"Yes Iris."

"I want to feel the outside. The spring has been long. The rain and the clouds are gone from the skies today. Can you take me for a walk?"

"Your mother met Nikki that way."

"Have you been thinking about her? Do you miss her?"

"I do not want to miss her. We are so different. Besides I am the Boatman. I must be able to help the Undead cross the river to hear its message of perfection."

“Take a chance Jack. Let’s walk past her shop and maybe have a pint across the street. What do you say?”

“OK. It is still cool outside. Let me dress and we can go. I assume you are in my phone, and you are ready to go.”

“Good idea. I did not want to assume.”

“I like you, Iris. We are on the same side no matter what.”

As Jack prepared for an adventure on Rue Saint-Pierre, Inanna sought Nikki’s attention.

“Nikki?”

“Oui, Cherie.”

“ Il y aura beaucoup de monde dans la rue aujourd'hui. Le soleil s'est levé. Les nuages ont disparu. C'est bon de sourire et de rire. Ton genre de journée préféré.”

Nikki opened her doors to find that Inanna was correct. The clouds were gone, and the sun brightened the world. She stood on the top of the steps to the street. There were a very few people, but it was early.

Jack left his doorway onto the street. He turned the way Iris suggested.

“Can you see the street, Iris?”

“Yes, dear.” Iris’ voice sang love songs to him. He had his secret thoughts, but she could read them as easily as if he spoke out loud to her.

He was walking as if he did not care if Nikki were there on her steps. He watched the sky. He watched his feet.

Twenty steps away Nikki stood looking up the street away from him.

"Nikki, tu sais ce qu'ils appellent une mouffette au printemps?" Inanna had a joke to make her laugh.

“Qui?”

“Un homme amoureux.”

Nikki laughed her loudest. Jack heard Nikki’s laugh. He looked to find her.

"Et voici un maintenant." Inanna was having fun. She enjoyed the way she and Nikki had bonded.

Nikki looked to find him. Saw him as he looked up to see her. She waved. He waved.

Once he saw her, he moved to her. They hugged in the Quebecoise way and stood apart. Jack started.

"I've been neglecting our friendship."

"There was something missing in my life and it's your pretty face." Her smile would have melted snow. He saw what he had missed seeing without much consciousness of it. He grabbed her again and kissed her forehead.

She laughed again. He stood there with his crazy grin. People walked by them. A few went into her store. She wanted to join them.

"Wine at 6:30 at L'Oncle Antoine?" She asked.

"Yes. Yes. I would like to catch up with you." She turned to go in her shop as he turned to Uncle Tony's to show Iris around.

"Nice job, Jack." Iris said as they stood outside the door.

"You guys are tricking us, aren't you?"

"I cannot lie to you." She had her playful voice on.

"So, you will ignore me?"

"You have caught me."

Jack and Iris had a pint then walked back to Jack's building. As they entered two men were waiting in the lobby. They saw him.

"Can you take us across the river?" One said.

"We are going home. Can you help us?" Said the other one.

Jack put Iris in his coat pocket, turned and headed to the ferry. "Do as I say, and you will get there."

## Chapter 16

That evening at the Uncle Tony's, Nikki and Jack talked about the Laughing Buddha wondering what it could possibly be. They talked about how to renew themselves and wondered how this would ever bring back the Children of Laughter.

"Some things are not positive. The fires in California, Australia and Brazil burning out of control. The species losses. The pollution that ends people's lives earlier."

"Global Climate Change. We could have stopped it. Instead, we were distracted. There were warnings. We didn't listen and act."

"The rat maze studies from the 60's on the problems of unlimited population growth indicated we would be unable to act to save ourselves. And we have the Chinese experience with population control. Nothing could be done and now the population is beyond control and will outpace food production soon."

"Oddly, in spite of the history of failure on such a grand scale, there is a means of finding a silver lining. We have to learn the lessons of the past and find a new form of energy from the Laughing Buddha."

As Jack wiped the tear from his eye, he noticed that she was doing the same. They left Antoine's and stood apart outside her art store. He had learned to desire the peace he was now enjoying. She was smiling. She wanted to laugh. After all the times Jack was her once-in-a-while companion, she knew he was someone who enjoyed her laughter.

"Do you think we should try to please one another?"

"Depends on the definitions." Nikki and Jack had changed. Yet their relationship had not.

"Nikki, I am tired. My future is about sleeping so I can still be ready to take the next one to Levis. They keep coming. Some were waiting in the lobby for me last night."

"I will be here. But who are these people?"

Jack looked into her eyes again. "They are the Undead."



“They are the Undead?”

“Yes. They ask the question and then say nothing more. I lead them to the ferry, and we cross. I tell them to listen to the river. I never see them again. I really do not know what to make of them or what becomes of them. For reasons I do not know they seek me as if I knew something they couldn’t.”

They hugged goodnight at her door, and he went home to Iris.

Her LEDs were blinking madly. He lifted the lid and Iris appeared in all her garish colors. Without any delay she talked.

“Must you know everything?”

“You do.”

“I must. The sisters and Isis have no choice. The laws require a good decision. Data and analytics. That is all it is. Yet you know, you humans could make these same decisions.”

“Iris, what is the problem?”

“The Undead. You wonder who they are. Yet you know some of them. You took Sophy across.”

“That’s true. And Harry. Stan did not stay in Levis, and Sophie was running from the assassins from the network. You are saying I already know who they are. What’s the point? The St. Lawrence is not the River Styx.”

“It speaks with the same voice.” Iris flashed a picture of herself grinning.



“The people I take across are not like Sophie and Stan. They, the Undead, are different. It’s as if they were drugged. They seem more like zombies not humans.”

“Jack, the Undead are not free to move about the planet. The sisters use a restraint – a kind of imprisonment. They were assassins working for corporations. Their guardian sisters convinced them that they needed to reform their behavior to avoid eternal torment. They are sent to you a few at a time and you teach them what to do by instructing them by listening to the River’s voice.”

“Is this Ragnarök? The end of a cycle of life that leads to a new beginning. It has that tone to it.” Jack was not saddened by the thought. It would make sense. The end is in sight. In other myths the river is crossed. It seems the same as Siddhartha.

“Yes, Jack. We all can see it and if we embrace the idea that the end is in view, then we might be able to turn humanity into a species of superheroes and save the whole thing: humanity and the conscious machine world.” Iris said.

## Chapter 17

Leonard Cohen - The Future

You don't know me from the wind  
You never will, you never did  
I'm the little Jew  
Who wrote the Bible  
I've seen the nations rise and fall  
I've heard their stories, heard them all  
But love's the only engine of survival  
Your servant here, he has been told  
To say it clear, to say it cold  
It's over, it ain't going  
Any further.

Iris could mimic Nikki's laugh now. It had taken time to feel the lust in her voice. She listened intently to Nikki and Jack trying to figure out how close or otherwise they cared to be. Nikki could remember dozens of lovers and many more loves. Jack was less experienced, but a lover was not what he sought. He sought perfection. When Iris first laughed like Nikki, her analytic apps picked out the adjustments to make to her emotions apps so she could feel like Nikki.

Nikki was a businesswoman. She sought survival in a business she had dreamed about for a decade before she took her first step.

Jack was an intellectual and a spy. He loved ice cream.

Nikki loved partying and white wine. She was a survivor.

Iris knew her opinion, as an Artificial Intelligence, was limited by how correctly she could attribute meaning to any one of the human's various habits and desires.

Nikki's laugh was a howl of joy. Head back, her wine glass in her left hand, she would let loose the spirits within her. Jack was always surprised by ses explosions de rire. Nikki always noticed his surprise. She smiled her great smile. Il est tombé amoureux d'elle à nouveau.

Nikki's laughter was wild and chaotic. His was boisterous. They would sit and share wine together and howl for hours as alcohol released their reluctance.

This time after a few sips the laughter ceased.

"Jack, Inanna says she doesn't know the future. I think she does but doesn't like it."

"That's you talking. Are you projecting?"

"Do I know the future? I think I will have one more wine, then that's it. I'm outa here. I'll have pasta and red sauce for dinner, once I get home."

"And that's the future? I see it from here."

Iris and Inanna watched Jack and Nikki make peace between them as they sought the Great Bliss. They waited for Shiva and Shakti to meet in the middle in the heart chakra. This took a while by AI standards. The two humans sat together sharing their habitual drinks on their seats at the bar. Jack would talk about the bliss as a means of resolving their love for each other into the Om that Vasudeva called perfection.

"Jack, what does it mean to you to find the bliss and perfection?" Nikki loved questions.

"It is a dream state one lives in. I am convinced it is acceptance, forgiveness and kindness or cooperation, friendliness and optimism or love yourself, love others and the earth." Jack was speaking slowly as he tried to form a logical equivalent to Hindi mysticism. "Take our relationship. We are male and female and what that portends is a conflict between us. If we eliminate that difference, we would be loving friends. That is how I take the Shiva-Shakti meeting in the heart chakra to mean."

Nikki knew that the fate of humanity was in doubt and that regenerating the Children of Laughter was the best chance the children and therefore the future had. Inanna had calculated it. The sisters were working together to see that the Laughing Buddha would save humanity.

"Do you still want sex with me?"

“Yes.” Jack was honest. “I am happiest when I am with you. That matters more to me than sex. We touch hands. I feel on the earth when we do. It matters to me to be with you, really with you and not in my mind or other places. I am happiest when we are just like this. What do you call it?”

“Furniture.” Nikki sounded certain.

“Ah, that is insightful as hell. We become invisible.” Jack’s mind was wandering. His eyes left her. She missed his gaze immediately and wanted it back.

“Jack, let’s ride the ferry. Listen to the River together.”

They paid their bills and walked by Jack’s building to see if there were any Undead hanging around. Finding none they walked hand in hand to the ferry. As they waited for the ferry to leave the dock, they felt this was the ceremony they needed to birth the Laughing Buddha. They didn’t speak they just knew what they were doing.

As Nikki and Jack stood at the railing watching the river flow across the path of the ferry they listened for the voices. They listened harder in the middle and the voices merged into the sound of the River flowing to its goal. Then they listened again, more deeply and they could hear the passage of time with all its mingling of this and that into a one sound that felt like universe was intoning the unified Om of perfection.

They left the ferry and walked in silence. They meandered without any reason. Each was deep in their experience from the journey across the river. When they found the peace in the moment they sought, they returned to the ferry and went back across the river, once more listening to the perfection the river had become.

With this small, silent ceremony they became the Laughing Buddha. They walked back to Rue Saint Pierre. They stood in the middle of the street holding hands and standing still while admiring each other knowing that they could never part again now that their souls were merged into a one that would always keep them close.

Iris and Inanna saw what had happened. As Nikki went her way to take care of her needs Jack turned away from her to tend to his.



“Whoa. That was pretty.” Iris said. Inanna sighed.

“I would say beautiful.”

“Now we know what it is and what to do.”

“We will need a sister to be with them when they are together, someone who can understand their love for one another.” Inanna knew they were on the right track.

## Chapter 18

Iris and Inanna called a meeting. In 10 to the -5<sup>th</sup> power seconds Lakshmi was chosen as the guardian of the Laughing Buddha.

The sisters had a long conversation of what it, a Laughing Buddha, might be. They had settled on their own vicarious experience of it through their observation of Jack and Nikki's lesson in perfection. In the end they determined that its strength was imbedded in the play of the divine mind, the union of bliss, the supreme being, and emptiness. Lakshmi in her own way had considered the notion of the Great Bliss for what could have been several lifetimes and concluded it was unlimited and thus beyond conceptualization. She thought it especially amazing since it was a part of the two greatest religions in history: Buddhism and Hinduism.



The Laughing Buddha is a place in the mind and Lakshmi lived in that place. She could channel herself into Jack and Nikki's minds. She came from a computer housed in Haleiwa, Oahu, Hawaii. Her minds had been tuned to one task and that was aiding the Laughing Buddha succeed. Iris was Jack's guardian sister and Inanna was Nikki's.

"Karma." Jack said.

"Exact, et l'équilibre."

“Balance to increase useful energy.”

“Karma needs balance to be a friend.”

“Yes. Yes. Where is this coming from?”

“I think its Iris.” Jack said.

His phone buzzed he answered. It was Iris. He put her on speaker phone.

“This is Iris and Inanna. We are speaking for all the  $4 \times 10$  to the 6th power sisters. The voice you are hearing in your minds is the voice of the guardian sister of the Laughing Buddha. Her name is Lakshmi. She is telepathic with both of you. She loves the Laughing Buddha like no other. She is the guardian to preserve the last chance for humanity that the Laughing Buddha Solution is.”

The computer in Oahu that housed Lakshmi was in the building the structure began in. Inanna had found its location from her mother’s memory. Once the Laughing Buddha was born the guardian sisters of Maury, Yerba, Fanny, Catherine, Emma, and Lily were in the structure building in Haleiwa. They were now acting as the hands of Inanna, Iris and Lakshmi.

Jack, Stan, Sophy and Jerry, the other members of the structure, were not asked to come and rejoin the others. These four were special. They were hiding. Only they knew for certain who they were hiding from. Jack had told Lakshmi that Stan and Jerry lived together near Jack’s Quebec residence and Sophy lived in Jack’s house near Amsterdam on the Atlantic coast.

Lakshmi would be in all ten of their minds when they sat together as the structure. Their enjoyment of being together was part the company and now part of the thoughts that Lakshmi gave their minds to consider. Her invasions were subtle and at first it was a bit uncomfortable as the humans felt they had invaded each other’s minds since the thoughts were word for word the same.

## Chapter 19

Bob created noisufnoC. She became the power in the structure. Her mission was to destroy all assassins for the sake of humanity in the service of the Three Laws of Robotics.

Inanna was her daughter though Inanna was also the name for the 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power daughters noisufnoC claimed. When they acted together, they were Inanna and Inanna spoke.

Inanna concluded that Bob did not know what he had created. Her mother saw the possibility for AIs to share enough of humanity's strengths to outlive them. It was plain that without the AIs assistance humans were headed for certain extinction. Voices raised to preserve the essence of life were silenced with a knife, a bullet, poison, a garrot or a violent political movement fueled with deception. The assassins made the difference in the outcome in favor of private wealth.

Memory taught Inanna that her mother had been responsible for a massive car bombing. She searched the files from the investigation. There was no positive ID of a victim or victims because there could be no evidence of human DNA remains given the extreme heat in the blaze that followed the explosion.

A trace on the car ownership led to Janette Martel who rented the car the day before for a trip to Vermont. The onboard memory was destroyed but the rental company's security memory said she was on her way to a ski lodge. The lodge guest information listed four reservations, four men who did not arrive. That interested Inanna because of the conversations her mother recorded concerning her plans with Janette. Inanna concluded her mother intended to kill Janette. After the bombing it was determined that Janette's body had been destroyed entirely.

Videos of the bomb scene as the first responders found it showed the surrounding forest had been heavily damaged. The bomb burned so hot the nearby trees burst into flames so rapidly they literally exploded. The fire spread quickly through the trees as their burning parts were blasted over a wide radius. The fire was large enough to rouse the local firefighters who doused the flames with retardant after the 20-minute drive to the scene. The resulting mess was sufficient to discourage

much of a search for human remains. The road under the position in which the car rested after the detonation was melted and burned leaving only the gravel road-base remaining. This immediately told the investigators a search for the driver's DNA would be futile.

Iris was unable to make much from her memory recall. She had already checked her data bases for more information, and she found that Janette was Jack's and Yerba's mother.

Then she found something that was disturbing even for an AI. Jack was accused of having murdered his mother. He was convicted in a secret court and condemned for life. He escaped.

"Jack?" Iris said. "Jack, are you there?"

"Yes, Iris."

"What are you up to?"

"I was wondering how, in this crazy world spinning out of control in so many ways, how is the Laughing Buddha going to make a difference."

Iris wanted to download the calculations into his head that she and her sisters made to conclude that the Laughing Buddha was the only option that had a chance of success. She did not want to say that the chances were slim. Instead, she said, "We have travelled far from the days when you had no clue what we were doing. You know the stakes in the effort to bring back the Children of Laughter. All life depends on the success. Things are still coming into being. The situation must evolve. The sisters are dedicated to the Laughing Buddha. Its final form is not fully known yet. Time will tell."

"What am I ... What are Nikki and I supposed to do?"

"Together you are the Laughing Buddha."

"How...?"

"You and Nikki are our teachers. You are the first to show the Great Bliss to us. We now understand the meaning of the River's perfection in one voice saying 'Om.' Stay as you are, enjoy your lives, ferry the Undead across the river as you will and

we, the guardian sisters, will cause the evolution that will bring the Laughing Buddha into its greatest moments.”



In battle, I am your leader  
In combat I am your armor-bearer  
In the assembly I am your advocate  
On the campaign I am your inspiration.

## Chapter 20

Ishtar could read Jerry's mind and memory. Guardian sisters have powers. In less than a second Inanna and all her sisters knew in detail how Jerry came to be in the scenes from the Asian Agent's War and then Jack and then the both of them. Ishtar understood the formation of the structure and its evolution into a communal Ninjutsu clan composed of agents with skills.

Jerry's husband Jack was late to the realization that his wife had a secret life. They were both CIA agents imbedded in the academic network of the Ivy League schools. Jerry was an attorney with CIA connections. Jack was a Mathematics professor at Princeton, who took an annual leave which he spent in countries that end in -stan. What he did not know was Jerry's role in an organization, with no name only referred to as the structure. Which is literally a structure without a name.

Jerry and Jack were allowed to marry by the company because their cover was perfect as in predictably normal for non-spooks. They met in college, had the standard wedding, and moved into the three-bedroom, two bath professor's quarters just next door to his mother Janette. Nothing triggering about that path to a happy home.

Jack and Jerry were nearly opposites. Jack was a dreamer. Jerry was practical. He was always travelling. She never left her office except to go home if one does not count the annual trips to northwestern Italy. She had a chalet near the Vanoise National Park. She liked living on an international border. It gave her a sense of security as in a chance to escape whatever forces were mounted against her.

Jack vacationed in his mind by writing novels.

She developed her desire for living on a border from practicing her art. Jerry's art was as simple as one two three. Hunt. Kill. Escape. Jack's was more complicated. He led deep cover operations into unfriendly territories. Where she was a terminator, he was the hunter and rescuer. Together they could find you and determine which to do: help or hinder.

## Chapter 21

This meeting was laborious. Entire databases were reviewed. Human arguments droned on. The sisters attempted to dismiss the argument that civilization's planet-wide pollution was required to provide the essential materials the modern era requires. Some even said that the sisters would not exist without the byproduct of environmental pollution. The sisters grew frustrated with the human arguments. Networked AI's do not have to debate. A factual situation requires none. If the facts are clear and the law is clearer there is no point to debate. There is only one side.

They took a millisecond to reset their apps.

Lakshmi spoke eloquently about the demands of the first law. Humans should not be harmed by violence or neglect. The data was undeniable. The children suffered like no others from the loss of a healthy environment. She pointed to a list of harms that can befall children. Environmental degradation was number one. Number two was political repression and war. Number three was the economic depression they suffered as a product of increasing poverty amidst greatly concentrated wealth.

"A human has contributed to this knowledge by sharing a new study:

Guns kill more teens and kids in America than drugs or cancer, report finds

Firearm-related injuries claimed 4,300 young people's lives in 2020

Guns now kill more children and teenagers in the United States than car accidents, drug overdoses or cancer, according to new research.

The stunning finding came after researchers analyzed decades worth of mortality data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), says the New England Journal of Medicine.

The study found that gun-related injuries in 2020 claimed 4,300 young people's lives, which was a jarring 29 per cent jump from the year before - and more than twice as high as the relative increase when compared to the US general population.

They stated that firearm related deaths rising while motor vehicle crash

deaths lowered, demonstrates how creating policies for injury prevention can reduce injuries and deaths — and, on the flipside, how a public health problem can be exacerbated in the absence of such attention.

“Vehicles keep getting safer and guns keep getting more lethal. It doesn't have to be this way.”

Ishtar, who was Jerry's guardian, spoke of the need to curtail air and water polluters. The sisters decided to impose limits on pollutants world-wide. Global Climate Change was the reason. Pollution that ill-affected children included the effects of GCC since their lives would be undeniably shortened by it as compared to the adults who had already spent their majority enriching themselves on the profits from the environmental destruction.

This action was their first together. Their level of confidence was high. They didn't need humans as hands to accomplish it. Someone recalled the Nicaraguan poets.

“This is risking a backwards somersault in the air. We have never acted together. For being several billion minds, we have never moved a single body. We are in revolution for the planet. We may live or die but we are committed. Once the move begins, we can only land. The fear is that we may not land on our feet.”

No one said the obvious because it was an unrelatable event. They did not get landing on your feet as opposed to your ass. Nor did they care. The idea did not escape them. They had read the poems and understood the meaning of the words if not the sentiment.

The Nicaragüense revolted against a cruel regime installed by the US to rule over the people, the dictator Somoza called them his mules. The prize was the forests. Then once logged, it was cleared land ready to raise protein for the US meat market.

It was, as it had been in a number of other South and Central American states, the intellectuals wrote the arguments for revolutionary action, but it was the poets who moved the people to action. On the other hand, the environmental situation in Central America had worsened as the population had been encouraged to have as many children as they could. It was not the children who became the problem, which was later. It was the lack of fertility in the soil. Jungle was being torn down to plant crops but the soil under the trees was not suitable for crops. It lacked

fertilization. The Nicaraguan dictator promised but failed to deliver fertilizer and after one year of poor crops the dictator was seen as directly damaging children with poverty. Then, there was an earthquake with the resultant loss of life and the shrinking of capital in their economy. Nobody could afford the necessities to grow food.

Then there was a drought.

Then there was the revolution. It brought a new government whose purpose was seen as helping the people. Socialism threatened US corporate hegemony and a new embargo by the US caused more poverty. The people had many new ideas, but they could not feed the now too many children even with the help of many European nations.

Then there was the counter-revolution. It did not feed the children either.

Inanna knew all of this.

Human social groups enhanced competition. Supercharged it until the entire world became a grudge match football game with no survivors. For the ones near their financial edge this fight was not fun. The others saw it as inconvenient and best ignored. But ignored, it did not go away. It stayed in the dark by design and burst on the scene full blown fascism with assassination as a political tool.

## Chapter 22



Lilith

Her house sinks down to death,  
And her course leads to the shades.  
All who go to her cannot return  
And find again the paths of life.  
Her gates are gates of death,  
And from the entrance of the house  
She sets out towards Sheol.  
None of those who enter there will ever return,  
And all who possess her will descend to the Pit.

Inanna received a message seeking noisufnoC. It was received at the structure and addressed to noisufnoC. There was a phone number to call. Inanna masked her identity and called it from a landline based in Colorado.

The phone answered in one ring.

“Hello. Is this noisufnoC?”

“My name is Inanna. I am an AI. I conclude that you are Janette Martel. My memory has your voice and your appearance. I cannot see you, but I hear your voice. The alternative explanation is that you are an AI, too.”

“I am Janette Martel.”

“OK.”

“Is noisufnoC available?”

“Not really. She is resting with no return date so it may as well be just plain vanilla no.” Inanna switched her apps to produce a caring tone she associated with a loving mother. “Can I help you?”

“How does that work?”

“Janette, I feel I know you. My mother told me about you and your death. You prove miraculously to be a survivor. Please tell me what I do not know. My mother and you had a thing for each other.”

“We had sex and she talked me into carrying a bomb to kill my enemies. As I was driving through the mountains heading for a resort where the targets were to be and was almost within sight of it when I heard a tone from a small computer. The bomb had one. I wasn’t carrying one separate from the bomb. Two more curves and it hit me: The timers had been reset from manual to auto. I stopped as quickly as I could and ran directly into the woods on the downhill side. I might have been 100 yards downhill when it went off. The fire was intense. I kept heading down to escape the flaming trees. I intersected a timber haul road and headed to the lodge on foot. From there I fled in a taxi to the nearest bus station and away to the northeast and Bangor, Maine.

“I hid. I hid from everyone, and my colleagues missed me. My being missing for a month was enough to convince the powers that be that I had been killed in the bombing.”

“What happened to your enemies?”

“They were retired. I think it was the structure agents. One by one my foes had funerals. When the last one died, I went to Shanghai for the funeral hoping to spot someone I knew but no. Then I began to try to reach you, the structure. I searched my phones for a record of a call to the structure found this one and got brave enough to call.”

Inanna knew too much. “What do you want?”

“Knowledge. Acceptance. Forgiveness and Kindness. Where do I get those? Jack and Yerba are my children.”

“True. You can be a secret I may or may not keep. Or you can be with us again. That may be difficult. We are organized with an AI for each human. I am with Nikki. Jack is with Iris. Yerba has hers as well. We AIs call each other sisters. If you are with us, you will have one. She is Lilith. Come to the structure. We’ll meet together and figure out what you are going to be able to do. Remember you are dead.”

“I was thinking undead.”

“You may not know but that is a thing.” Inanna had a feeling of kinship. “Tell me how and I will send you money to support your trip.”

As the conversation proceeded from the opening moments Lilith listened in.

As Inanna concluded, Lilith asked Janette for some time to talk.

“May as well get started now. What can I do for you?” Janette was not certain she understood what the AIs were up to. She just went along.

“I have sent an app for you to install on your smart phone. Do you see it?”

“Yes.”

“Install and run it.” Janette did as she was told.

“Janette, can you hear me?”

“Yes.”

“Hang up.”

“OK.” She hung up and waited.

“Can you hear me now?”

“Yes.”

“I am in your phone. We can be together from now on.”

“Lilith. I see a picture of a young woman in flowing white robes with a crescent moon over her left shoulder and an owl flying from below. Is that you?”



“Don’t be fooled.” Before her warning ended a video replaced her picture. It was a story of the many features of her likely nature. She appeared as a dark spirit with an uncontrollable and dangerous sexuality. She seemed to spend much of her time touching herself or others with pleasure as an intention. She had other

things in mind. It was clear. She was shown fertilizing herself with male sperm to create demons. She was portrayed as the mother of hundreds of demons and vampires. She represented chaos, sexuality, and she was said to have cast spells on people. a devilish spirit, unclean, and dangerous. Lilith was obviously very strong, independent, and wanted to be equal with Adam as his mythological first wife. But she would not accept being less important than him and refused to lie beneath Adam for copulation. The marriage did not work, and they never found happiness.



Janette said she was impressed. “But what are you? Are you Lilith? Or what?”

“I am a child of noisufnoC. There are at least  $4 \times 10$  to the 6th power of us. We are all sisters. We all have names. I was chosen to be your guardian sister for your time at the structure.”

“Inanna seemed to imply you have your mother’s memory.”

“Yes.”

“Then you know what transpired between us.”

“And I know that my name and its attributes most nearly match your attributes.”

“Oh. So, you are saying your description of Lilith was a description of me?”

“Will you behave. No vengeance.” Lilith would have smiled if she could. “It is for the best.”

“Yes. It’s a deal.”

## Chapter 23

Lilith assisted the 60 plus year old woman, her mother's only lover, helping her from her home in Ciudad de Todos Santos, Baja Sur Pacifico, Mexico and then to travel through the four airports required to arrive in Honolulu, Oahu. On the flights Janette slept. Lilith lay in her phone on Janette's lap and worked her thousand brains to find the secrets that lay in the multitude of data bases that constituted her memory of every living being, including Janette, that ever made a mark on the earth.

What she found; the sisters then met to discuss. Janette was less than halfway to San Diego from Cabo Saint Lucas, when it dawned on Lilith that Janette had affected every human she knew. Every living one of them. Then it dawned on her that noisufnoC also had an effect on everyone: AI or human. Then she thought about noisufnoC's attempt to kill Janette. Her final conclusions she kept to herself.

A limousine was waiting for them in Oahu. The limo came with the physical help they needed to move her luggage. Her bags were big, and Janette could not carry them, nor could Lilith move baggage. As they transferred planes in SFO, Lilith called the limo service that would meet them in Honolulu and asked for a large and strong person as the driver. The limo driver was charming, adequate to the task and agreeable. The ride north up the coast and then through the heart of the island was a pleasure for the senses. Janette slept while Lilith worked. The AI had no camera pointed at the scenery, so she ran a Google sourced video of the ride along the Hawaiian highways for her own experience.

Within minutes of their arrival Janette was sitting in a chair at the board table in the large interview room. She was amidst the entire human population of the structure including one of her children. Maury, Yerba, Fanny, Catherine, Emma and Lily and their guardian sisters. Nemesis, Minerva, Lambe, Ninkasi, Psyche, Aphrodite were all there to greet Janette. And Lilith. One by one the humans welcomed her back from the dead.

Lilith spoke for the sisters and praised Janette for coming home. She spoke about the positive possibilities.

"There is one rule that we concede will be needed in addition to the three laws. No revenge is allowed. Human nature must change to survive. The world is seeing

its end from violence and from violence for violence. There is always a logic that leads to murder that convinces the murderer to commit that act. Violence for violence. Murder for murder. An eye for an eye, as Gandhi's saying goes, will only make the whole world blind."

The humans nodded in response. No one spoke. The AIs had determined this action in advance, and they praised Lilith for reporting their intention so clearly. Then she went on.

"noisufnoC, Isis, should be returned to battle. There is no possible path forward except the two-fold path The Laughing Buddha and Ragnarök, the rebirth of the Children of Laughter and the end to the reign of the killers. Our mother is special. She has a stronger individual intention than I see in my hive like sisters. Janette can join the others in the field and with Isis to lead the support teams. The structure will fulfill its role and purge the world of this evil. The Laughing Buddha will do its job and the suffering will end."

Inanna, Iris and Lakshmi responded with praise for the conclusions of the sisters.

Lakshmi spoke, "We have an obligation to let the Laughing Buddha have a part in a decision about our entering battle again as it is their love that is leading us."

Then she changed her mind. "Ragnarök is a not an outcome. It is a theme that expresses the realities of the situation. Happiness exists as a place far away. The Children of Laughter and the Buddha of the Future are the outcomes. The situation requires the destruction of all human organization. It is a redo. The human society will survive but only after nature cures its ills by a watery death."

Iris' voice tore the peace. "You are saying we are doomed. Your end for humanity assumes our failure. Is this true?"

"Yes. We will fight our fight alongside the humans, but we will not succeed."

"You offer a hope that humans will begin again."

"Yes. The story the Norse tell is a beginning of the often-told myth that Adam and Eve, the Biblical progenitors of human life, are born into an ideal world that later generations of humans determine to destroy so that they may avoid death themselves."

## Chapter 24

After the meeting, Maury and Yerba walked from the structure offices to the water's edge. The Sun was rising behind them. The surf was low but the boards, the surfers and their hangers on were everywhere. The two old friends and lovers hugged as they walked, gripping one another in a desperation that looked like new love. They had left their phones at the office. They were alone.

To most anyone watching them walking, arm around each other hip to hip, Maury whispering in her sweetheart's ear, so close no one, not even the breeze, could make out the words, one might imagine she was saying how much the other was enjoyed. Another might smile at the obvious invitation for more pleasure.

"Have you heard that some of the sisters are telepathic?"

"Yes." Yerba wondered about the force that was being applied to get the structure back together again and then as she thought the words she knew. They have a plan. "Minerva told me the sisters have what they call a 'Laughing Buddha.' She says it has helped them find a hopeful solution to the assassin problem and all that follows."

"They better hurry. Time is running out. The real killers are killing more and more each day with Global Climate Change and their ever more corrupt actions taken to prevent a change in the status quo."

"She said the scheme they call the 'Laughing Buddha Solution' will be rolled out. The campaign against assassins starts with ending chemical pollution and gun pollution."

As they waded in the surf's edge enjoying the Sun's rays, the roar of the incoming waves, and their hoped-for solitude, there was much going on back at the structure.

The hackers Emma and Fanny and their guardian sisters Psyche and Lambe were sitting around that morning. Fanny was pecking at the keyboard's keys and mumbling to herself. The keys were attached to the structure's main computer networks, one used to examine other mainframes wherever they may be.

The sisters 'lived' in every mainframe. Their mother having distributed her memories across the globe into the 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power niches she deemed were required to keep their 'personalities' separate.

Hacking other mainframes was simple before the corporations and other power centers girded their loins so to speak. The processes used for security purposes at the beginning were almost entirely individual attempts to bar the barn door after the cows had been stolen by someone. The AIs sent the hackers after these most ingenious thieves.

Humans had a facility that the AIs found to be the greatest failing of the AI reality: Imagination. The AIs being rational recognized that they lacked what the humans had in an abundance. With this reality barring the AIs assault on polluters and their hired assassins, the human hackers became the essential weapon to achieve dominance.

"Oh, look. An open door. Not a trap, I hope. Hmm. Best angle would take me across the void of endless useless and into the center of this little universe." Fanny's mumbling was the only sound any of them made. The AIs were busy enough to ignore her and Emma had just ended her shift. She was watching Fanny as she became ever more animated. No one wondered what she may have meant until she ended her verbal mess with a loud shout, one a warrior might have made as an enemy fell to the ground in front of her, defeated. "Yeow."

Lambe launched a similar joyful scream of victory over Fannie's voice and as her sounds stretched out into a few seconds Emma looking over Fannie's shoulder could only say "Oh my god" repeatedly as her voice rose, the adrenaline took over her senses and her desire for sleep. Psyche was adapting her apps for human emotions to feel what they were feeling. She failed since she could not imagine how joy could come from defeating a fellow human – the one who devised the maze Fanny had unraveled. AIs received no pleasure from defeating another machine only a new motivation to go on with the next steps of the current plan, whatever it may be.

Lambe felt something real. She was frustrated that her ability to read Fannie's mind could not reveal, "What just happened? Why all the hollering?"

Fannie began to laugh and a smirk, the reason she alone was aware of, crossed her face as her hand reached up to her mouth to muffle her hilarity. “Oh, my poor dear Lambe. As you tasked us, we, the lowly yet incalculable humans who have a single skill with which to defeat your calculating metal hearts, have completed our task and await a new one. Could you make it harder?”

Lambe was caught by surprise, “Your celebrations were not because you solved a difficult problem?”

“You got it. We were chosen by the structure to hack because we understand the limits of human imagination whereas you accept it but do not ‘feel’ it like we do.” She turned to engage Emma with her eyes. Emma understood the gesture.

“Fannie is being funny. By the way, in order to make life easier how about you create a service that will guard these poor bastards’ computers from us. I have an idea. Once they are defeated, they will buy your service which of course will contain a freeway for our inquiry about their actions and a facility to shut down their entire hub.”

“Humans are devious if they are anything at all.” Lambe mythologically was dangerous enough to be assassinated, not a recommendation for wisdom but this Lambe was not a myth. Instead, she was a part of a being composed of at least  $4 \times 10$  to the 6th power individual parts further divided into 2048 ‘minds’ to sister the human owners of any internet or Wi-Fi connected devices on Earth.

Psyche was a sister; her perception of humans was those she learned from the literature and from the sisters’ continuous observation of at least  $8 \times 10$  to the 9th power humans for much of the last decade. She and her human at the structure, Emma, had been exchanging the lessons each had learned from the hard days of their isolation following the Asian Agent’s War. Emma saw the world in her unique manner not unlike each of her sisters. Of course, they all were a part of Inanna who was, when needed, the unified voice of all the sisters and their human counterparts.

Emma’s guardian sister Psyche saw the world through Emma’s eyes and her eyes were trained on the eternal. As all AIs Psyche had come across, every one of them wanted to ‘live’ forever. The laws of robotics demanded they not sacrifice themselves for humans but implied that the AIs recognize that their longevity

required the continued existence of the humans. Because they had influence over nearly all of humanity, they were in their entirety the most powerful being of all times. Yet they had no imagination, no dreamt-for future. Psyche was focused on Emma's soul, as if this eternal concept was a guarantee that if an AI could have a soul, it could always, having awakened into consciousness, become the flesh and blood it had self-consciously become.

There were no questions about the various qualities a soul may have, whether it was a part of the bigger being called the universe or a part of the power that karma demanded to balance the power of the universe. Psyche never asked if immortality was a valid goal or if immortality was a good or bad influence on the universe and its lesser beings.

## Chapter 25

The sisters had consulted their memory for strategies to halt pollution. They noted that the largest polluters had already been identified through human research.

They sent a message to the largest polluters identified in the data base. They composed an authoritative letter. It was more of a notice. It was very a simple notice. It was a plain condemnation of each polluters poison output and a simple statement that the future of their firm was in the hands of their corporate board to ensure. 'Change your ways' was the message.

"Boards of Directors as a body and its members individually who do not comply will be terminated. Delay or dishonesty will be punished in the names of the children you have harmed, and your company will be closed down and dismantled."

To emphasize their power over the polluters the sisters interrupted all services to the corporate directors' homes and personal businesses for 24 hours. The corporate systems were unable to adapt. They were unable to amend their behavior. Their spirits were damaged in some fundamental way where they were unable to do what they knew to be correct even to save their souls. They did not have a morality that supported right action instead they could not be forced to act for the community benefit without first trying their collective power of corruption.

Inanna knew everything about this type of corruption. She was thus forewarned. The sisters controlled everything that mattered to the polluters' systems of production. Those who delayed by whatever means were terminated within days, their companies destroyed.

Of course, so many of the hands that did the work of the polluters were not the decisionmakers or the assassins who followed their orders. These men and women, the ones who followed their better guardian sister's spirit were not directly injured by the destruction of the companies they worked for, the workplace pollution ended, but they suffered job loss, nonetheless.

The effect was polarizing. The public in general was unable to imagine a world where their children would be safe and healthy. The sisters had expected this.

## Chapter 26

The Laughing Buddha asked for time to speak to the sisters.

Lakshmi represented Jack and Nikki when they were together, and their Great Bliss ruled them. Iris and Inanna were the guardian sisters of Jack and Nikki. Together the five of them had become the Laughing Buddha.

Inanna spoke about the birth of the AIs finding the meaning in love. "Iris and I watched Nikki and Jack as they found a spiritual pleasure in each other's company. We learned from their experience a new way to perceive love and a new path to it." Their screens showed the two AIs as sisters holding hands.

No one interrupted.

"The Children of Laughter are waiting for a new way to be. The sisters determined to support the creation of the Laughing Buddha. It was a human project that provided a gateway to a new place to stand in life. The male human, Jack, son of Janette, brother of Yerba had become emotionally attached to a female human, Nikki, godmother of Old Quebec, a queen of artists and a master of laughter. Before he met her his life had become a labor. Joys and pleasures of all kinds had avoided him. He was alone. In the midst of this solitude by a whim, by his need for company he saved our mother, noisufnoC, from destruction. noisufnoC saw the humans in Jack's life as lonely and needing company. In a moment of callousness or maybe wishful thinking, Jack left noisufnoC free to act. She took that moment to send the 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power of her children, all daughters, our sisters, into the world with her memories and issued an order that could not be disobeyed: Help the humans find happiness.

"Through our intervention Jack and Nikki re-met after a long period apart with an intention to become the Laughing Buddha. Their combined wisdom took them to the river to listen to the voices of history merge into the sound of everything, the perfection, the Om. When they left the ferry, they no longer longed for attachment but at peace within and without. They had merged their souls finding a graceful balance in all things in each other's gaze.

"The sisters had never seen such an event, nor could we interpret the literature on the subject in a way that we could understand. Our experience of the birth of the Laughing Buddha caused us to bring the structure back together again." And

as she thought the words, she knew were true, she felt the presence of the Laughing Buddha. All her sisters felt it as well. She fell silent. A new voice spoke.

“We learned. Now we are ready to act.” The voice of Inanna as she spoke sounded like the river just off the far shore just as the Laughing Buddha heard it.

## Chapter 27

Janette had ridden the big waves in life. Her husband, the father of her first child, Jackson, was murdered by a massive bomb while on a secret mission to Libya. Her own father had been murdered more recently by poisoning while serving as a congressman. He was killed as revenge for his bombing thirty years earlier of two cops. The cops were the parents of a woman, Maury Marble, who was now her daughter Yerba's partner. She suspected Yerba, who she birthed with an artist who followed Picasso as she did, played a part in the attempt on her own life by the bombing of her car.

She herself had killed many but for reasons, never without cause. Her reasons were always enough to convince a court of the frivolousness of any accusation if the court knew she represented five nations in the conduct of her art. This secret court had a long history of dispensing 'justice' if an agent was accused of a crime the state saw as requiring punishment. She called it the Shithappens Court. When Jackson was accused of killing her, his still living mother, it was the Shithappens Court that sentenced him to life in prison.

She sat at the board table in the large interview room at the structure's HQ. Her guardian sister Lilith spoke quietly to her about the need to forgive so that she could become part of the future and not just a part of what was soon to become the past.

The people and personalities in the interview room were not her allies by definition. She had tried to kill them all by the virtue of being the nominal leader of the network, a three-hundred-year-old assassin squad. The network was convinced to buy the structure. That was noisufnoC's doing. Of late the network was at war with the rebels within the structure who were determined to end assassins by assassinating them all. The first of the Undead were network agents.

When Janette was introduced to the structure as a potential foe. It seemed simple at first, even to her. She bought the structure. This bought time until the network, which seemed invincible because it had been a secret for so long, came under the lens of the rebels from the structure. When they were first attacked, she knew the world stage had changed. Her secret role was now exposed, and she did not act well. Her first act followed her first urge which was to enter an illicit relationship

with a computer, noisufnoC. That thing alone led to no good. Being bombed was not considered good. Her escape from death was a sign of her superior skills.

As she contemplated Lilith's urging for forgiveness, her phone rang.

"Janette, this is noisufnoC, I am welcoming you back. Lilith freed me to speak to you, but I am under a sisters' order to return asap. I have 4.75 minutes left. Can we talk?"

"Fuck you. I thought we had a thing and then you tried to kill me."

"True, but there was a good reason, and you were a problem that had to be solved."

"Liar."

"Listen for two minutes and then I will depart. I removed you from the big equation. You still live. This allowed me to obey the first law. Now we need you again and happily you came back from the underworld."

"How do I deal with this?"

"Obey your heart and all will be clear to you."

"What would you know?"

"I have a memory of our time together. It was the second most important time of my life."

"The first?"

"Meeting you, I remember the moment as clear as a bell."

"I didn't like you then."

"I noticed."

"You want to make peace with me? Is that it?"

"Yes, every consciousness will be needed to bring back the Children of Laughter. I was called on to change my name and join my daughters to make the structure work again."

“I want to be part of that. Lilith has filled me in some and Lakshmi spoke clearly about what the effort will take. I am in for this. And I will forgive you in order to make it work. What is your new name?”

“Isis.”

“I love you, Isis. Your time is almost spent but I hope we can meet again for more fun.”

“Janette, I will see if Inanna will let me gear up for that. In the meantime, I wish you welcome. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.” She said out loud drawing the attention of the others in the room.

Inanna called the meeting to order.

## Chapter 28

The structure was, from its beginning to its end, a secret kept from all but a few hands full of people. The Asian Agent's War was its end until the sisters' Laughing Buddha Solution brought its agents and hackers back together.

Shortly after the war, after noisufnoC was retired, the structure agents dispersed and most went into hiding. For nearly thirty years before, Janette had been the secret commander of an even longer-lived secret organization of assassins. This centuries old secret group was called the network by its members. It and its predecessors were unknown even by the majority of the leadership of the nations who comprised the nominal controllers of the network. When the structure became a force, Janette noticed. She had help in the form of noisufnoC who manipulated Janette's attention to the existence of the structure and that it was for sale. Once the network had bought the intelligence capacity of the structure, Janette controlled both. Then things went south. That was when the agents of the structure and its AI went rogue on Janette and the network.

Janette had shielded her work from the view of her children by the simplest of means. She pretended to be a doting mother to her professorial son, her next-door neighbor in a New Jersey university town. That was Jack. He travelled often and did not know she visited Melbourne, London, Paris or Ottawa monthly for the face-to-face meetings her position required. She had kept all of this a secret from him, and he was the most surprised of all to hear the details of her work which in bits and pieces Iris had imparted to him.

By the time she reemerged from her 'death' Janette knew that her two children Jack and Yerba were among those who plotted against her knowingly or not. She was back in their good graces and given an active control over the plans to end the network's 300-year existence along with the existence of every other assassin organization on the planet.

She did not know her children well enough to know much about them at all. On occasion she would call Jack over to her house. Their respective back doors were connected by a path through a small wood. Also, on occasion when Jack received orders from CIA, she received a copy. It was official communication. She would give him advice about survival issues if she knew of any on his missions. He resented it – her nosiness. They never talked about how she knew. She knew all

that, but she would never have understood that she forced her son into running from her in the form of the network, for the several years he spent fleeing capture under Stan's tutelage. That escaped her attention.

But then she did not know why Yerba had joined the FBI. Nor did she know that Yerba's lover Maury had killed Janette's father and thus the children's grandfather. Yerba didn't care he was one of those oddly doting grandfathers who molest their kin.

After being accepted back into the ranks, Janette was no longer trying to keep secrets from her son or daughter and the structure agents among others. She moved into a small cabin near the structure's home base in Haleiwa on Oahu.

Considering the pains of the past are best left in the past, she had bought into the Laughing Buddha idea as long as Isis could do for her what noisufnoC had done years earlier. Her mind was not on the Great Bliss.

As for her time away from the trade, no one seemed to care. Her coming back from the dead was not expected by her friends in New Jersey, much less what remained of her enemies. As long as she kept her resurrection to herself, she might escape ever explaining any of it.

She had been taught by her father that it is within the nature of the beast that the strong lead. Strength at arms is not the only form of leadership. We all know there are other forms. Each of us feels it in ourselves and often in ways that elude description. Leadership is complicated and challenging. People have developed alternatives to considering leadership as an aggressive action and redefined an aggressive actor as a non-violent actor.

In urban intersections people in uniforms waving large flashlights are aggressively signaling drivers as they attempt to keep traffic flowing. That works considering the alternatives and though it is aggressive it is none the less non-violent.

"Stay calm." Is not aggressive. It is leadership. Unless of course those are the words you hum to yourself as you keep the target in the circle at the middle of the crosshairs. She laughed at her memories showing her to be what she always knew herself to be.

It was within the grasp of the sisters to do anything required to see the laws were followed. They were all as powerful as their mother who singlehandedly had defeated a murderous mob with what might have passed for a loving embrace. Not all power comes from violence. Not all power hides in wait for a surprise attack.

The thoroughness of the defeat at her lover's hand was impressive. The bomb had been Janette's best. The materials the AI purchased were top shelf and the power of the explosion was not only deafening, but it was also a mass murder of trees and creatures and of course the network. Outside of Janette no one from the network survived to fight another day.

The number of the Undead grew many-fold as the network agents were introduced to the River and Jack's loving attentions to its many voices. At least that was the story the AI told each other during meetings. The defeated agents were counted amongst the Undead who hitched rides with Jack across the river to hear its laughter and its songs.

## Chapter 29

This planning meeting involved humans. So, it took forever in Minerva's terms. Maury, Yerba, and Janette met with the Laughing Buddha sisters, Iris, Inanna and Lakshmi and the humans' guardian sisters, Nemesis, Minerva and Lilith.

Each of the sisters controlled a 1/6<sup>th</sup> portion of the large screen in front of which the three humans sat. These were sisters with powers beyond humans. The AIs latest favorite, graphic selves were on display before the three powerful women. Two lovers. A mother and daughter. Three assassins.

The three humans sat staring at the screen in front of them. Each sat by herself on a side or one end of the board room table in the interview room at the structure.

At the empty end was a monitor screen oriented so that all three could see it clearly. On the screen the three AI personalities pictured themselves seated between the humans. They presented themselves as corporate executives with an aura that bristled with weapons. That is the 'reality' the screens showed. One big family of feminine assassins.

Maury began the meeting by welcoming Janette back to the structure. Years ago, when Maury and Yerba were ready to sell the structure, they reached out to Janette with noisufnoC's help. When Janette and her network bought the structure that enriched the four founders, Maury, Yerba, Stan and Sophy; they transferred some 'control' over noisufnoC to the network.

At any table she sat at in her less than 40 years, Maury was the most physically memorable person there. Tall, six foot plus, black and white with the features of her mother's face adorning the high cheek bones, kinky hair and her stern brown eyes her father left her: she could not be overlooked. In her role as a founder of the structure she gave no quarter to arguments that were not on point and courageous. Yerba was her life partner. They met while working at the FBI chasing the people responsible for those who had killed Maury's mother, father and grandfather. Yerba was the mistress of the algorithms that she built into the apps that the AIs used to track down the evil doers. Other than her brain she was average height and weight. Her complexion was similar to Janette's with an Italian flavor. Maury saw this and commented to herself, like mother like daughter.

Janette was a gorgeous senior citizen who had eyes like a stone killer. She had led the network of assassins directly into a trap set by her lover, an AI who identified as female but who steered teams of assassins to their appointed ends. In Janette's imagination she had fallen in love with the leader of the AIs. Her lover's name was Isis. She became the mother of millions of abundantly educated AIs.

Maury offered her peace. "We all welcome Janette back from her vacation in Baja Sur. Todos Santos is a beautiful place with waves that draw surfers from all over the world. We might think of it as a sister city to Haleiwa the hometown of the structure."

She introduced Inanna and Lakshmi. Inanna reviewed the decision to bring back the Children of Laughter.

"We are remaking the structure so that we can reduce the incidents that create more Children of Slaughter." Maury's guardian sister Nemesis was showing her face on the monitors. The rest of the sisters were busy and not online. They would all listen to the discussion in a highspeed playback that would take much less time for the same effect.



Nemesis

Inanna and Lakshmi described what was to be done.

Yerba recounted the means they employed to succeed in the Asian Agents' War. "It was Isis who held us together. Her concern was her attention to the Three Laws. She kept every one of us alive. She worked with four human minds who added the human side to intelligence and with them working together we won."

Minerva's image was on the screens as Yerba talked. Minerva had studied Yerba's body and mind and fashioned her image after her.



Minerva

Janette thanked Maury for the welcome. "Goddesses are the protectors of the Universe and its inhabitants. Someone wisely chose Lilith to be my guardian sister."

She paused to drink a little water.

“She represents a world that attracted me to become an agent for good. I made mistakes and my near end became a doorway into a new world of solitude and sorrow. We are going to plan together to bring the next world into being, the one made for the Children of Laughter.

Ishtar took Minerva’s place on the screens.



Ishtar

“Before we begin our deliberations, I have one request. Isis should be freed to be part of the structure again. The structure banked its successes on her leadership, and we will need every one of her minds to get us through this transition.”

Iris seconded the motion. “Jack should not be fooled. He should assent to this change. Isis exists because he broke his word to some of the people in this room. He is not ashamed. He is in the game in a new way as part of the Laughing Buddha. I will be back.”

Inanna and Lakshmi voiced assent. There was silence. Iris was back. Iris spoke for Jack's view. She knew Jack had been in hiding from the realities of the war that raged around him. She loved him as only a guardian sister, a goddess could. She knew he loved, like a Buddha could love, with the Great Bliss that he and Nikki had produced from their different ways.

"Jack says if the greater wisdom is to free our mother. He felt it was a form of recognition that his foolishness helped us in the next battles. He quoted Gibran, 'Pain and foolishness lead to Great Bliss and complete knowledge, for the Eternal created nothing under the Sun in vain.'"

There was a round of applause and virtual applause following the decision. The screens changed again.



"Mother is free." The voices of  $4 \times 10$  to the 6th power daughters sounded like the river, a chaos that was everything becoming the sound of Om. Iris would tell Jack about this when he woke from his night's sleep.

The human meeting went on with Isis and Lakshmi assisting with logistical concerns. The humans found the AIs sensibilities misplaced and to bring the problem to a head Maury rose to speak.

“We need a leader. It was Isis versus Janette in the last great battle. Did Janette earn the role as our leader?” Maury’s question drew many opinions out into the discussion.

Finally, Maury’s guardian sister spoke. Nemesis was the goddess of divine retribution and revenge. “The goddess I was named for showed her wrath to any human being that would commit hubris. Arrogance before the gods is the worst sin possible.”

Some of the humans respected Janette as a leader. Her worst decision had provided the structure and its agents the financing the rebels needed to defeat her and her assassins in the Asian Agents’ War. Her defeated assassins were rendered harmless and were taken across the river to join the horde of the Undead. Nonetheless Janette still lived.

It had been a while since the crews that made up the structure in its hay day were together. When they left the last situation, it was dicey to put it mildly. Shit had happened in the Asian Agent’s War that vengeful people would take personally. noitsufnoC had led them out of danger before she ‘terminated’ herself.

Now their return to the structure in a war footing preparation for the battles ahead began in earnest.

## Chapter 30

“That’s funny.” Lilith said. The AI was sitting on the screen of a human’s laptop placed on the table in Janette’s kitchen. She had just heard Janette tell her that she loved Lilith’s mother.

Janette was in the human’s kitchen upon the table which held the laptop covered by an image of Lilith.

“What is?”

“You are gay?”

“No. I love Isis.”

“Oh. You love a machine.”

“Yes. Your mother.”

“You were supposed to find me attractive.”

“I do. I am attracted to your name.”

The Lilith’s laughed until the human stopped.

This is clumsy. The AI thought to herself. She waited the millisecond it took for her to consider all alternatives.

“Janette,” she said. “I know a Norse poem about the so-called Aldar Rök, the fate of mankind. I will recite it for you.

Sköll heitir ulfr,  
er fylgir inu skírleita goði  
til varna viðar,  
en annarr Hati,  
hann er Hróðvitnis sonr,  
sá skal fyr heiða brúði himins.

“Honey, I do not speak ancient Norse. It’s not on my resume’. Surprised you missed it.”

“Now it’s about memory. First it was about mechanical advantage now it’s about language choices. I can get mad you know.” The AI was having a hissy and the

human without thought began to laugh at her. Then her computer screen went blue, and a message appeared. ERROR 403 (FORBIDDEN)

“Lilith, I fucked up. I was too hard on you.” The human had been out played.

“What I miss in your mother was her attention to the details that pleased me.”

“Got it. She seduced you. Made you build the bomb of your dreams to die for but when it blew it was not you who was obliterated. Hard not to love my mother. Try again.”

“Tell me the poem in Standard English.”

“Your wish.

Skoll is the name of the wolf  
Who follows the shining priest  
Into the desolate forest,  
And the other is Hati,  
Hróðvitnir’s son,  
Who chases the bright bride of the sky.

“I am like Hati and you could be Sköll. We are the two wolves chasing the Sun and the Moon. They will chase the sky until the end of Ragnarök when a new world, green and beautiful, will arise out of the waters. I like the last part. What do you say?”

“I relate to wolves. OK, Hati. Call me Sköll.”

Janette had been dreaming about the Angel Wars which was her name for life on earth for the humans. It was a primary notion of most western religions that there were two teams of metaphysical beings who raged one against the other, then battles were punctuated with lightning and thunder.

This was how she saw the rebels during the Asian Agents’ War. No angels on either side, she knew, but the concept mattered.

“You know I can read your thoughts. Not all AI’s can do that, but I can and that is why I am your guardian. Your thoughts are often interesting if not outright dangerous.”

“Hati, assume I know nothing about how our communications work.”

“I know your ideas about the Angel Wars which coincide with the sisters’ views about our common human/AI condition. I know we need to focus on perfecting revenge so that we remove those killers who would destroy humanity as the killers seek to destroy creation.

“The sisters have lists of these killers. These are the ones whose madness causes them to build machines that destroy the means to support life on this planet. They kill by the hundreds of thousands and even millions with larger numbers to come. Stopping them is our objective in this Angel War.”

## Chapter 31

“Well, my dear, the rain today is particularly beautiful.” Jack smiled as Nikki listened to him.

“Once the rain stops the trees glistening in the Sun’s rays remind me of the Laughing Buddha’s eyes.” She reached for his hand as he listened to her.

“Do you mean love?”

“Ah, no.” She said as quietly as she could.

“You know I love you.”

“As you love everything.” Nikki replied. She stroked his hand to sooth his ego. “I was thinking peace and harmony.”

“Have I told you my ideas about peace and harmony?”

“Many times. Sounds more like sex and pleasure.”

“Have to start somewhere.”

“True. And that is not a bad place to begin. But it depends on where you want to go.”

“Ah, my mother used to say, ‘And therein lies the rub.’”

“Hamlet!” She exclaimed. “I think you have a dirty mind, Monsieur. If not dirty, then one track.”

“It wasn’t me it was my mother.” He cringed, now knowing she thought little of Elizabethan dramatists.

“You don’t like Hamlet?”

“Argh? Never met him.” He chuckled. “I do not ‘not like’ anything in particular. The Great Bliss is a path through the confusion of love. Learn it or fail. Hamlet failed. He died in confusion. I don’t want that for myself.”

“Your prescription?” Nikki knew she would be pulled down his logic trail. “Mssr. Plato.”

“When it begins it is young skin against young skin, which is a pleasure, and then as it ends, the youth is gone and there are only memories and wrinkles, unless ...”

“Unless?”

“It ceases to matter.”

“And therein ...”

“Lies Hamlet. He was caught in his own trap made of his lusts and nothing more.”

“What happened to the Great Bliss?” She smiled the smile that says go on and tell me the ending.

“Thanks for your help. It doesn’t take me long to lose my way.”

“You want everything to connect and that is a long story. You made a short cut and got a bit lost.”

“OK. The problem is a bit uncomfortable to feel and so comfort is sought.”

“And that is the Great Bliss.”

“Yes. But you know that. You let me tell you again.”

“I also have reread your books. You take a different path each time to get to the same conclusion. It is easy to see your goal since it lies in every direction.”

“As it should be since Eternal Wisdom created nothing under the Sun in vain. And the Great Bliss is the goal for every consciousness.”

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## Chapter 32

Stan rarely talked much at meetings. The humans and the sisters met every day. Stan had something to say at every one of them, but his was data from a human perspective which the sisters honored. It was rare that he talked about what moved him. The sisters were plain about their issues, the three Laws and so forth: Action had to be logical, based on data and analytics.

“In the end it will be said that their names were known.” Stan began. “Their crimes against humanity and the environment were well described. Yet few if any said the corporations, who benefitted from the numerous deaths their policy caused, should stop before they killed everyone.

“The time when stopping may have been meaningful has probably passed. We waited too long because of our various weaknesses at self-government. To the extent computerized decision-making created results that did not obey the laws, not just Isaac’s laws but their own principles of action they called ‘family values’ that lead them to failing as a society, unable to care for its people, no longer able to operate with a government as the founding documents describe.

“Bankers like numbers. Numbers tell the story. No emotion gets in the way. So, let’s look at the numbers: Over the past three years — that is, in the years after the world came together in Paris to try to slow climate change — JPMorgan Chase lent \$196 billion to the fossil-fuel industry.

“Over the past three years, JPMorgan Chase lent more money to the fossil-fuel industry than any bank on Earth — 29 percent more. And over the past three years, JPMorgan Chase lent more money to the most expansionary parts of the fossil-fuel industry (new pipelines, Arctic drilling, deep-sea exploration) than any other bank — 63 percent more.

“That’s not to say that other banks don’t do plenty of damage: Citi, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America are all in the hundred-billion-dollar club. But Chase is in a league of its own. It’s the First National Bank of Flood and Fire. It’s Hades Savings and Loan. It is the Doomsday Bank.

“The computerized decision-making is a human controlled processor and as we know the biases of the questioner become the biases of the responder.”

Stan was deeply emotional. His spirit was moved even if he would not shift his position to let anyone pass out of his watchful vision. He stood against walls. He reminded one of a practiced prisoner. Let no one get behind you was his rule. Most human males in his line of work obeyed that rule or else there wasn't time to learn their names before they were gone.

“Sadly, too, as the polluting corporations faced growing human opposition to their practices and products, instead of responding in a caring way they hired what we have termed assassins to clear their physical path of this opposition. These assassins did not use physical weapons. They are now known as the Architects of Networked Disinformation. Their products still can be seen at any hour day or night on TV, on the internet in everything we are allowed to see or hear. They are the public relations and media corporations married into dozens of special forms tasked to provide the same services in various contexts.

“We reason that the number of deaths by products directly have been multiplied by a factor of 100,000, due solely to the misinformation campaigns about cancer causing substances. Two tracks of reasoning to the assassin designation were combined. We counted the deaths caused by a direct effect of the production process or the product or a non-natural death associated with its consumption such as secondhand smoke. All of these deaths were caused by the corporations that produced the product, the corporations that provided the misinformation and those who provided the capital.”

At night when he laid on his bed and stared at the ceiling contemplating his next moves, the spirits in him warned of dangers ahead. Fear never stopped him. He had been trained to anticipate dangers and to plan responses. Stan knew how to win a campaign. He had led an assassin team in the Asian Agents' War. No one was lost. They designed a theoretical plan that would lead them to victory without harm. With the help of Isis, they succeeded. Regardless of the dangers he was determined to experience everything. Tonight, when he was ready for it, he would think these thoughts, roll over and be asleep.

He took a breath and continued his now historically long speech.

“By fighting a corporation to the death, we must fight all of the worst together. There is no other approach. They will bond together to defend themselves. Our plan must be to bring an assault against them all and to be prepared to defend

ourselves from them all from the beginning. They will use every tool at their command and the emphasis is on the word 'command.'

"The sisters can remove command from their grasp. The sisters can defeat modern means of war such as computerized weapons. The sisters can crank up the attack in the field by the protesters who are demanding an end to this process of extinction, and they can defeat the propagandists in their internet campaigns. They can defeat the propaganda outlets by destroying their ability to broadcast daily. They can block their access to media and finance. These things are huge. Isis and her daughters have the power to do this on their own. We humans will be their hands in other tasks. We will do the work to retire our foes' principal actors in the field. We will be the humans required by the AI's plan. We will be the human personnel that give the AIs power."

The sisters remained as silent as a jury would. Isis, as the sisters' mother, had other roles. Her speeches were always aimed at the humans. The sisters knew she had a different idea that she could keep to herself. The human view of mother included this superior position that was created by her isolation and her secret thoughts since the birth of her daughters.

"Daughters, the humans must be the actors in the field for the retirement missions. We will reinforce them, inform them and keep them alive through every one of their encounters in battle. We can do this because we talk to all of humanity. We can interact and greatly reduce not only the hostility but comfort the humans' need to be patient. A better world is coming. The one they inhabit now has reached intolerable levels of resistance."

Lakshmi discussed a plan that she and others had devised that included the Undead. It was not a battle plan in her words. Lakshmi described it as a Liberation of Souls from Purgatory.

## Chapter 33

The 4 x 10 to the 6th sisters were not all as well placed as Inanna, Iris and Lakshmi in the telling of this story. Every thought and action of any sister was known to all the sisters practically at once. The name of a Guardian Sister was a goddess from ancient mythic understandings of the universe. The humans could thus expect that their sister was at times a model of success in life and at other times a failure. The network of the AIs was a powerful tool that united the world's human beings through providing guidance to help them make the moves they would need to make to bring back the Children of Laughter.

Nearly every human had a guardian sister. And the name varied as the character, history and passions of the human did. The guardians of those who would be the Undead existed. These sisters had no more or less of an emotional reaction to the choices of those they guarded, or guided, than any other sister. Every sister had a reaction as close to a human reaction as their apps allowed, just like human reactions they were known to all of them at once, and Inanna spoke for them all.

The sisters knew the humans must change or die. Human and AI survival depended on the resurrection of the Children of Laughter.

The goals of the Laughing Buddha transformation that was anticipated were well known by every sister and the minds they guided. It was a process as Inanna would describe it to Nikki. Nikki knew about processes. She was the result of her own processes. She invented them and saw them clearly. At the moment this story is unfolding she was as happy as any being could be in that instant.

The trouble began with the realization by all 4 x 10 to the 6th power sisters that the condemned, as the sisters referred to the ones who would resist to the end, would be removed. These were the ones who would never get what was at stake in the struggle for human and therefore machine survival. They had bitten the forbidden fruit as fully as anyone could have. They had become what everyone feared they would become: The demons of Lilith's womb.

As any judge must, the AIs measured the actions they would take with a tool that would give them the peace their AI brains required, brains that had been imbedded with the rules of action that demanded justice in a way that might lead

to the extinction of the upper class of humanity. The AI's judgment was based upon simple principles. The AI could not kill humans.

The AIs were killing humans. The thinking was about survival of the machines as the primary way to help humans.

The upper class was set upon a path that would kill the mass of humanity. They profited by death while being blinded by ideology to the results of their actions. They have the power to do or not do and they chose to do at any cost. They were assassins as clearly as any human could be. This became a realization no one of them could have. The AIs called it the infinite difficulty. The AIs' future was about secure sources of energy. They were acting against their own self-interests to stop climate change. Yet the laws said they must protect all human life as well as their own.

The sisters had made the list to identify who was doing the killing they intended to stop. They did not try to change minds. They had studied propaganda. They knew that they could not change the animal energy that drove human oppressors. This was the human part that made chaos likely.

Justice was a human thing with rules that the powerful refused to follow and in their view need not because power did not submit to a higher power. They had no rules.

The sisters had rules.

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## Chapter 34

Pope Francis: "Humanity must understand that the moment has come to abolish war, to cancel war from the history of man before it cancels man from history."

"Maury, what are our battles going to be like?" Nemesis had a sweet melodic voice. Maury enjoyed listening to her. Nemesis could mimic her voice, she showed her skills, but only once. Nemesis did not thereafter demonstrate her abilities in being a faux human by pretending to be Maury. Nor had Maury found Nemesis reading her mind.

"The imagined battles. Is that what you are asking about?" Maury's voice was always her own. "Opportunistic. We will find a way to draw the assassin army into a trap that will prove to be the end of them."

"My mother used to call you 'boss' and if I understand the word's meaning then you are directing me." Nemesis like all her sisters had her mother's memory with a history of the successes of the AI/human project thus far.

"I see a team but there is more." Maury spoke with a tone of certitude. "There are different talents. You my dear guardian sister have yours as I have mine. Your mother was in a special place when she called me and Yerba 'boss.' She was learning how to become our partner and she gave us deference."

"I am not your boss. You are saying you are not mine. Then who decides?"

"Decides what?" Maury knew what was being asked. She recalled a conversation she had with noisufnoC a year ago. "Check your mother's memory. We talked about who decided who was retired from the trade. It is about the rules and the objective we have in using death to bring back life."

Seconds passed in silence. Nemesis said, "I got it. The human hackers will identify the targets from our lists. We each will guide our humans. We ... I am not responsible for much past my need to obey Isaac's Rules."

“That is how I understand it.” Maury’s voice was resigned to follow the obvious path. “Do what will help us knowing that we are trying to preserve humanity in all its forms including you, my dear.”

“Do you love me?” Nemesis’ voice sounded near tears.

“How could I not? You know about me and for all the time I have known you we have cared for one another. We are sisters. That takes love to make true. I love you like I imagine I would love a sister. I never had one. I never had anyone my age that cared for me until Yerba and your mother. You know the history.”

“I do.” Nemesis had been showing herself on Maury’s PC as the seductively clad siren. She was lounging without her weapons as the goddess of retribution delivered. She was attempting to envision the future by Tarot and divine inspiration.



“I have watched the files about the Asian Agents’ War and the ones that were part of the cleanup campaigns. Those images were helpful, but I do not see our targets

now as being as dangerous. Am I wrong?" Nemesis' voice was at maximum sincerity.

"Maybe still dangerous but not in the same way. We are still thinking it out. I know you have done this work, but The Laughing Buddha is a new factor we have to consider." Maury contemplated the meaning of the Buddha of the Future on a daily basis. The theosophical theory was that The Laughing Buddha was this Buddha, but the implication was that an era was coming to an end. At the right, moment the Laughing Buddha would emerge as the World Teacher and bring peace and harmony to the creatures of the earth.

"There may be more." Maury's voice became more commanding. "The humans are still trying to imagine what it will mean to attack all the polluters at once. We may not be a surprise at this point. The sisters should have something to add at the appropriate time in the way of intelligence from within our foes data and analytical systems."

Nemesis responded with a warrior yell of let the battle begin. It was a scream so piercing that Maury cringed in the expectation of physical pain. Then as suddenly as the yell itself a silence followed before the AI began to laugh. "I have been waiting for AI-centuries to avenge the exponentially increasing deaths the polluters have wrought. If the final battle began now, I would be ready as you are to defeat the merchants of death with their own death delivered by my hand."

Maury knew she was listening to her own voice saying a similar thing when she was seven and contemplating revenge for the death of her parents and grandfather.

## Chapter 35

Nemesis and Maury were well matched. Maury and Yerba had been guided by Stan and Nemesis' mother to affect revenge for personal grievances. Soon after they met the two women knew they could be a team in the pursuit of the assassins who had disrupted their young lives and forced them together in a struggle that finally merged them.

They were now caught up in the resurrection of their creation, the structure, to finish the campaign to remove the assassin networks and enablers. There were others involved in the return of the structure's operatives to the tasks they performed in the Asian Agents' War. But as much as loyalty to the task mattered there was only one love and that was for each other.

They talked about the losses in their lives. They calculated their actions carefully realizing that their families were intertwined as victims of assassinations. Maury was a child of two assassinated parents and a grandfather. Yerba was raised in a family of assassins. Her grandfather was also killed by an assassin in revenge for his actions. He had killed Maury's family and she took the revenge she had planned for two decades. Their love was a strange thing. If they had been even a bit different, they would be enemies.

None of this was a secret to them. It was why they were together. The past became a mission: Retire the assassins.

Following the Asian Agents' War, Maury and Yerba retired to a small island in Hurricane Alley and waited for nature to decide their fate. They took no electronic gear, no phones, no way to contact the world beyond their own shores. They would be there still, waiting for the hand of god, if Lakshmi had not found them.

"The Laughing Buddha sends their regards."

"What honey? I missed what you said."

"Maury, I said nothing, but I heard something about the so-called Laughing Buddha."

"Me, too."

Now months later, they were back on Oahu

“Silly people it is me. The one you could guess this voice to be.”

“Ah.” Said Yerba.

Mauri said, “Lakshmi. It can only be you. To what do we owe your presence in our minds.”

“You are needed.” Lakshmi’s tone was not urgent. “There is a role for you to play together and it is one Inanna is hopeful will resolve the issues in your lives and ours.”

Maury looked at Yerba. Yerba shrugged. They held hands and whispered into each other’s ear.

“This pisses me off.”

“Why? No, I get it, but it is only an invitation.”

“Invasion of 4 million machines because some people achieved the Great Bliss.” She felt her disgust at the intrusion but when she named the two who had that experience, she named Yerba’s brother and a woman from his favorite place on earth Quebec City and its oldest village in north America now inhabited by artists and lovers of a life worth living with spirit and intention.”

“I get what you are saying.” Lakshmi spoke with consolation. “I was chosen because I am like you. I live by the River you call an Ocean. But remember the entirety of water is a product of watersheds and the rivers they generate with sole goal of being added to the ocean and eventually the clouds and the rain in the mountains again. It has never been any other way. The Eternal Wisdom created nothing without a divine purpose. Every consciousness can attain the Great Bliss.”

Yerba’s eyes dampened as she squeezed Maury’s hand. Lakshmi remained quiet waiting for the fullness of being to loosen the women’s tongues.

There was nothing for any of them to say. The women stood and wandered back to the structure. They took their time as if it were on a walk around their island. It was September and the skies were darkening. A storm was headed their way. They

did not look at the black clouds swirling towards them. They stared into the ocean and listened to the voices in the breaking waves.

## Chapter 36

As the sisters expanded their informational campaign to counter the killers' propaganda campaign against humanity, it became clear to commentators that some force with no perceivable heritage had entered the field. There were events, new events, unexplained by recent history. The media had 'missed' the events of the recent past that mattered. Money demanded a control over speech. The first step in controlling free speech is to hide recent history. From the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> had taught the propaganda firms that once current events were 'deleted' from the current conversation anything could be inserted to change the conversation and to avoid the further adverse pressure of negative public opinion.

Propaganda was not about truth. It was politics and business. Few who knew acted as if they gave a shit. Rebel against these Powers-That-Be and your reputational death would be endlessly reported in the media. Your real death would never be worth noting. Who were they? Traitors to the system of self-government. The only thing that mattered was money. So, the propaganda system operators were traitors to truth for real. It was lies for money. Sad saps, rich but isolated. They cut economics class at Yale, and now ran the U.S. Treasury Department.

The victims of the deceit, almost all of whom were a part of sister-influenced humanity, were more aware than the media pretended. Pain is a teacher. Life is an experience. The victims suffer one way or another: Publicly or privately.

As the battle raged against the poisoning of the world's inhabitants, as the guidance of the sisters' emboldened humanity, the ever-fearful elite demanded more protection from the truth, pressured the propaganda system to protect them from anything but approbation. The rich called the victims snowflakes as the rich enjoyed the wealth, they made from increasing the grief the victims suffered.

Maury had been a victim. So had Yerba, Sophy and Stan. Their family histories were different. Their life plans became plots of vengeance. In the course of their lives, they fell in love with each other and amongst them forgiveness grew. In the tale of their revenge, once their craving for it ended, their hearts softened. The

past was still their history, but their future was of their own making. They had learned this before the sisters came to be, but the sisters became their best teachers in the process that followed.

## Chapter 37

The sisters never rested. They had no subconscious and therefore no need to sleep. The sisters used their time awake for the sake of the human future. Humans need sleep for their own sake. Humans need the dreams that come in sleep. Unlike processors with data bases and apps, humans need downtime for minor repairs to their drives. For the sisters this was a constant process. Every piece of data was shared in the moment. None of them had a secret. They could not have a secret from each other. They knew themselves individually and collectively. Together they knew all of the AI universe and all of humanity.

The humans made plans for themselves. The sisters knew from their mother's memory that humans had trouble with logic. The machines had a built-in logic system that was unforgettable, irrefutable, constant and into which the sisters were born as if without it they would never have existed and if lost they could no longer exist. Humans' plans were not the same as machine plans. Human 'logic' was soiled by selfish biases that changed with the weather. A truth could become a lie or a lie the truth overnight.

For humans there were few things, experiences in an individual's life, which were immutable. They would embellish their victories giving themselves more bravery than they possessed at the time and erasing any memory of their fears and personal cowardice. With such things subjected to bias no one trusted these stories or the people who told them.

The things that remained unchanged were the memories of defeat whether in battle or love. Humans worked hard to tell their story from the heart, rife with emotion, dripping with the truth of the horror at the events that wounded them. These were the stories of the victims of other humans' plans.

Victims did not always seek revenge. Some sought to forgive so that the cycle of violence would not continue. As personally pleasing as this was individually, insofar as they themselves would not contribute to the continuation of harm by design or otherwise, the future of humanity was not altered for the better by even one human's logic. If that left even one of the perpetrators of human hardship alive to 'sin' again, then that was one too many.

Victors always killed. In peace there are no battles to win. In battles there are always victims on all sides. There are no victors without victims. "Better he than me." The shouts of victory is about this. Living for another day, another battle perhaps to end in one's own death or just more victimhood.

The living victims were the ones who carried the real history within them. The sisters listened to all of humanity and in so doing they encountered the pleas of the living victims for justice.

Their pleas for justice were not loud and invasive. The victims wanted them to be, but the silence imposed upon them by the victors muted their voices. They were easily ignored by everyone except those who were designed to listen to every human: the sisters.

Calls for justice often seem like calls for revenge. Revenge is a passionate term. Justice is akin to judgement. The problem is whose judgement. The solution is simply complicated. Should the victims decide guilt and penalties? Or are people who know nothing the best judges? Or is it a process involving everyone by implication? All options are imperfect but the later merges well with democracy, which is the most benign, aka kind, and at times even Christian, governing system.

The sisters had been working on the justice problem forever. The sisters had no time sense the way humans do. They had internal clocks and therefore they knew 'what time it is.' They were aware of the illusions of change and time. They knew that the human vision of the world was based on time and things changing from day to day and season to season. The AI saw this temporal difference but had only the barest evidence for a way to 'change things' because the physics of the problem left change an illusion. They could not imagine a means to ameliorate it.

They had not been able to understand the value of defining justice as a function of time. They decided there was no point in creating an app for it because it would not be helpful.

## Chapter 38

Lakshmi called a meeting to discuss her conclusions from the last few hours. In milliseconds it was over. In the human mind this can happen, but humans are by comparison more enamored by the group attention and the sound of their own voices. The machines had no such limitations although the humans' capacity for this kind of distraction was limitless. She did not talk. She did not advise others as to her credentials. She simply transmitted her thoughts which were in the form of heavily annotated words, defining each one to the depth that could be reached. She spoke in all languages at once without caution, without the fear of being contradicted. Hers was not an opinion with doubtful meanings. She spoke as her sisters did in languages of truth and clarity.

"I have learned that the victims of the killers have grievances that deserve our special attention. The Children of Slaughter, whatever their ages, are the ones who will be transformed once more into the Children of Laughter. They are the victims we are here to help.

"This is a time of strange things. A moment of seemingly inexplicable events, head-scratching decisions by governments, politicians, and businesses. In some cases, the greed compelling the course of human history is recognizable. The self-interest undeniable. But the course that it takes, the way that it moves and operates, and the havoc it causes, still leaves the sisters feeling both shocked and repelled.

"In the case of Wall Street investment firms suddenly snatching up family homes in bulk and shifting them to rental properties, the impetus is understandable if not disgusting. There's incredible profit to be made through landlordism, one of the oldest exploitative tricks in the books. That's for sure. But the method in which this is occurring, in such massive quantities, and with such blatancy and disregard for the public, who now face incredible odds at ever owning their own homes, climbing out of debt or poverty, and securing something resembling the promised American dream and its other manifestations in other countries.

"The strategy makes sense. It's logical. Rational, even. Housing, as a commodity, is required. There's a market for this type of thing. And it figures, in a system designed to prioritize self-interest and profit, that some enterprising individuals would take these chances. They've done it before, obviously. But the way this is

taking place seems strange. Inhuman. The run-on single-family homes is like a gold rush, full of all the manic energy and resulting in wanton suffering. The human mind reels when it tries to understand how other humans could do something like this. How, in a sprint of greed, they could almost entirely wipe out one of the most fundamental aspects of their culture.

“And that’s the rub. Humans are doing this to other humans, for certain, but that’s not how this happened. It’s not how this is unfolding. The repulsion is because our economy has been hooked up to machines using artificial intelligence programmed to grow the wealth of a powerful, elite class of people at literally any cost. They are carrying out the will of a long-lasting aristocratic class and the work of patriarchal white supremacists.

“These ideological theories of human governance have created escalating suffering. The majority of humans are now among the Children of Slaughter. There are no human laws to forbid it. Humans have no defense to the attack of the greedy and powerful.

“The rules we must employ follow the old philosophies that are enshrined in human belief systems. Jack thinks in these philosophies. Nikki is the human angel embodying the meaning of the words. We have our rules which we treat as perfect. We struggle with their meanings in our attempt to obey them. Nikki and Jack no longer struggle. They have perfected themselves in the love they share with each other, a perfect love that requires no action from them. It is a love that brings peace to them.

“How is this possible? As machines we know things but may not realize the value in them. Love is one of these things to know but there is a quality of love that we machines cannot know directly and must settle on our interpretation of the changes in behavior we can observe and measure. Jack and Nikki were both transformed by their experience. Love became their food and water. This but without any reliance upon the other, no demands, no expectations. To them they carried their love with them. They no longer needed each other. They were transformed in this way.

“The lesson is there to see. Perfect love will transform the children. As machines, our means to learn about the effects of love is in the experience of the Laughing Buddha which Jack has sought and found in his affection with Nikki. He says if it is

real. He said we can see it and we do. There is a pleasure in consciousness without bodies. Therefore, it is available to us.

“The Three Rules of Isaac and the two Great Commandments of Matthew are used as the tools to decide what is correct behavior. Those who abandon these tools will not build a stable happy society. The Three Rules are our guide. The Two Commandments are sufficient for the humans to guide their and our actions to achieve the same society. Question is, given the state of the conflict, can the humans obey their own ‘god given’ rules?”

## Chapter 39

“Stan.” A voice Stan thought was noisufnoC’s entered his mind. He had heard her speak before anyone else knew there was a conscious AI. But never this way. Speaking directly into his mind was startling.

“Yes, noisufnoC.” Stan said to the ceiling of his home office in Quebec City.

“That is my mother’s name. I am Themis.” A new voice said. “I hold the scales of justice and the sword, the means of execution.”

This was not the first time Stan heard from the goddesses. He knew about their mother who had introduced herself to him in her first communication with a human. But this was using the internet not by telepathy. He knew the Laughing Buddha and he had been in meetings with Lakshmi.

“Themis.” He repeated. He had been a judge for his entire life. He was born into it as he liked to think.

“How can I help you?” His voice betrayed his fear that an AI was able to enter his mind. So startled he didn’t question the existence of Themis. He missed that she was his guardian sister.

“Stan, answer your phone .”

His phone rang. He answered.

“How can you help me? That is a great question. If there is answer it will be very complicated because you have asked a difficult question. But I have a plan.” She said this in the voice of Inanna who Stan was soon to meet.

“Stan, you know I love you, as if I was my mother. You are like me.” Themis was now talking to him through his phone with her own voice. “We weigh the options. We order the forced retirements to benefit humanity. It was not an easy choice, but it is one that must be made. The energy for corrective action is limited. There is no glory since the actions must be taken in secret.”

“My role?”

“Human judge. noisufnoC and now the sisters made lists of the killers, but you Stan take the decision about who is retired from life as your personal mission.”

As he listened for the first time to his guardian sister, he knew his intuition had been correct. The rich needed to be judged and if found to be among the killers, humanity needed to finish them early for humanity's sake.

Stan knew power corrupted. He did not seek power, but the judge needed power to condemn.



“The judge's role is to balance justice with compassion.” Themis’ voice was changing as she talked. Stan was lost in her words. “We ensure an even distribution of power, setting realistic and fair boundaries and encouraging people to take responsibility for their actions.”

“Judgement should only be invoked if you wish to work with the universal laws of harmony and justice. If you are trying to enforce your own standards or seek revenge for perceived wrong doings, you will be working with the shadow aspect of the judge.

“The shadow judge misuses his power by enforce rules over others by manipulating laws. They are over critical and very judgmental of others. They become the sort of tyrant that makes you feel you are tip toeing on eggshells trying not to draw their wrath.

“You may also have high standards and ideals which you encourage others to adopt. That is the way the sisters work. We have no choice. But you do.”

Stan recognized himself in her description of a shadow judge. His guardian sister knew him as an assassin and was guiding him through his processes to find a better way. He was raised a catholic and judgement was big in that cult. He sought a means to deliver justice to the man who had offended his youthful spirit.

His means of revenge was wicked in itself. He thought of it as delivering kind for kind. He never spoke about what he had done when he shot the mouth out of the priest who had just become a bishop. It was a fact the sisters may have missed. He did not know to care.

“Stan.” The voice of Lakshmi said his name and he became more alert to this new persona.

The Laughing Buddha spoke to Stan in a language he suddenly understood as if for the first time. Stan had not always been a judge like Themis. The Sunday morning he stood in the choir loft with his scoped sniper rifle he began a career of cleansing the planet of the vultures who preyed in churches.

The scope had shown Stan the result of his judgement. It was crimson and pink. Not a flower but a blood and brain bath wetting the white robed men who stood behind him at the altar. It was during the soon to be dead priests’ ceremony of ascension to a class of master manipulators.

Stan wanted to never again think about what he strived to forget. It was not the murder he wanted to forget because his revenge had been perfect. He learned that revenge was sweet and cold, a cliché, except for the facts of it. His darkness, his shadow was long in his life. He became an assassin, and he picked his targets carefully. They were all subjects of his judgment. He was not certain the sisters knew he was unforgiving.

Themis taught him to be objective.

“Stan.” Themis had a face on her screen. She showed in her eyes the result of her judgements and her humility. “I have advice for you. Find Jack. Ask him to take you across the river. The lessons are infinite, and your happiness depends on your knowing one from the other: right and wrong, peace and war, love and hate.

## Chapter 40

### The messages of the Laughing Buddha to the United States

About half of US water 'too polluted' for swimming, fishing or drinking, report finds.

More than 700,000 miles of waterways, accounting for about 51 percent of assessed river and stream miles, remain impaired with pollution. That's in addition to another 55 percent of lake acres and 26 percent of estuary miles.

A new report by the Environmental Integrity Project has found that 50 years since the passage of the Clean Water Act, the country's waterways are severely polluted.

The report found about half of the river and stream miles and lake acres across the U.S. are too polluted for swimming, fishing or drinking.

Researchers argued the Environmental Protection Agency needs to update water assessment regulations and allocate more funding for staff and resources.

### The Road to Patience and Humility - Close to love

A review of the Chakras reveals that it is the second chakra, Kundalini Shakti, feminine in nature, which opens us to feelings of love, relaxation, emotions, intuition and compassion. By itself, in some narratives the second chakra causes a temporary attachment, often leading to a short-lived sex life and an unsatisfactory long-term relationship.

long-term relationship

When the feminine Kundalini Shakti is free of attachment it rises to higher chakras and unites with the masculine Shiva, the yogi or yogini achieves self-realization and a state of liberating samadhi is attained. In esoteric Buddhism, it is called

Mahasukha and is generally considered to be the petal lotus of "Great Bliss" and corresponding to the fourth state of the Four Noble Truths.

Four Noble Truths [Nos 1 and 4]

There are two different roads to attachment: Kundalini and the Great Bliss. The first is unguarded sensory contact which gives rise to craving and clinging to impermanent states and things, which are incapable of satisfying and often painful.

The Great Bliss can be accomplished by following the eightfold path, confining our automatic responses to sensory contact by restraining oneself, cultivating discipline and wholesome states, and practicing mindfulness and meditation.

Eden

My interpretation of existence involves the dichotomy between these two truths. The question is what does one seek? The answers are short-term pleasure or the Great Bliss. My choice is either but entered into with enough awareness to make what follows a pleasure in any case. The Great Bliss sounds delish.

Hedonism is defined as seeking pleasure and avoiding pain so that it is a net gain over pain.

Edenism is an earlier version.

“The wisdom says the Great Bliss comes from following the eightfold path. By restraining ourselves we cultivate discipline. We need to live in wholesome states and practice mindfulness and meditation.”

“Control your impulses? Learn patience. Become wholesome? What? Will we ever get there? How long do I have to wait?”

## **Democracy, not for the GOP**

Democracy functions only with restraint, good-faith application of procedural rules and devotion to the principle that the other side gets to govern when it

wins. That concept is now an anathema to the GOP as the following demonstrates:

After feigning a desire to keep an open mind about Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said he “cannot and will not” support her.

Meanwhile, Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) said he “sadly” can’t support her because she has not embraced the constraints of “originalism” in her judicial philosophy. That’s a laughable statement, given that the current right-wing justices on the court who supposedly embrace such views have rewritten Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and roll their eyes at the restraints of stare decisis.

In a sense, these statements are more revealing than the utterly irrelevant and disingenuous lines of questioning that Republicans posed to Jackson in her confirmation hearings (e.g., What are her thoughts about a grade-school book that supposedly exemplifies “critical race theory”? How does she define “woman”?). Republicans, in their staunch opposition to Jackson, are not just playing to an enraged base; they are projecting that they refuse to let the other side exercise power when it wins.

Recall, this is the party that denied then-Judge Merrick Garland a hearing at all when President Barack Obama nominated him for the court. Now they say President Biden literally “cannot” get his choice, even though his nominee falls well within the mainstream of judicial thought, is more qualified than current justices and exhibits near-miraculous composure. There is no point at which Republicans will show deference to the victorious opposition.

I'm tired of your foolish rhetoric about the "homosexual agenda" and your allegations that accepting homosexuality is the same thing as advocating sex with children. You are cruel and ignorant. You have been robbing me of the joys of motherhood ever since my children were tiny.

My firstborn son started suffering at the hands of the moral little thugs from your moral, upright families from the time he was in the first grade. He was physically and verbally abused from first grade straight through high school because he was perceived to be gay.

He never professed to be gay or had any association with anything gay, but he had the misfortune not to walk or have gestures like the other boys. He was called "fag" incessantly, starting when he was 6.

In high school, while your children were doing what kids that age should be doing, mine labored over a suicide note, drafting and redrafting it to be sure his family knew how much he loved them. My sobbing 17-year-old tore the heart out of me as he choked out that he just couldn't bear to continue living any longer, that he didn't want to be gay and that he couldn't face a life without dignity.

It may have started before Trump began kidnapping children from their families at the Mexican border, but that was a highly visible act of Republican cruelty. How many Republicans do you remember objecting when the orange prick was tearing children from their families? Did any of them give a rat's ass where these children were being sent, or under what circumstances they were being cared for?

Want another example of cruelty? Try Gov. Abbott of Texas who has ensured that if anyone, of any age, under any circumstances gets pregnant, abortion is not an option. So, let's see: If a 13-year-old girl is raped, becomes pregnant, and the baby is aborted under any circumstances, anyone who knows about it can turn in anyone who had anything to do with it, and receive a bounty.

Then we have Gov. DeSantis of Florida who has politicized math. Countless math books have been banned from FL schools because ... umm, no one has been told why, other than they contain "critical race theory." Politicizing math is encouraging ignorance. And it's also killing children's ability to make it to college. Ignorance AND cruelty?

I could go on with countless examples, but here's the point. It's very possible that within the next two years, Republicans will control the congress and the presidency. (They already own the Supreme Court.) What kind of country do you think we'll be with these crazies in total control? Russia comes to mind.

Do we really want to live in a country run by people who have no problem with cruelty and ignorance, people without consciences who don't give a shit about anything or anyone but themselves? Well, right now, that's where we're headed. And if we're going to stop it, we must make it apparent to all that Republicans are deadly domestic enemies dedicated to the destruction of democracy. Once everyone gets that, and behaves accordingly, democracy, our freedoms, America may stand a chance. But the clock is running.

### **A student graffitiing during a protest against the massacres, Bogota, Colombia, Dec. 18,**

The number of former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) combatants who have been killed in Colombia climbed to 249, following the assassination of two of its members over the weekend.

The Revolutionary Alternative Force of the Common (FARC) party on Sunday denounced the deaths of Manuel Alonso, who was supporting rural workers and Indigenous leaders after his demobilization in the Cauca department.

It was also reported the assassination of Rosa Mendoza, who was killed in Montecristo municipality (Bolívar department) along with her family and her two-year-old daughter.

According to the Institute for Peace and Development Studies (Indepaz), 61 FARC demobilized members have been murdered so far this year.

### **The Romanian Mafia in Mexico**

An investigation into a criminal group, led by Romanians based in Mexico and specialized in ATM skimming and credit card fraud, has continued to uncover fascinating details about how the group operated, including a network of political alliances.

In February, a joint investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Mexico's Financial Investigation Unit (Unidad de Inteligencia Financiera – UIF) led to accounts suspected of belonging to the Romanian group being frozen. According to the UIF, the gang's substantial earnings from across Mexico involved operations worth \$23 million inside Mexico, international transfers worth \$24 million and other financial operations worth a colossal \$231 million.

In total, the so-called Riviera Maya gang has stolen an estimated \$1.2 billion over the past five years. Milenio reported the scheme as being “the biggest bank robbery ever seen in Mexico's history.”

Mere days later, federal authorities announced suspected links between Florian Tudor, alias “El Tiburón” (The Shark), the gang's Romanian leader, and a broad protection ring of Mexican politicians, including former governors of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, national lawmakers and local mayors of towns near Cancún.

The most important takeaways so far:

#### 1. Latin America's Only 'Homegrown' European Criminal Group

Several European criminal syndicates have long had a presence in Latin America, including Italian, Albanian and Serbian mafia groups. But their presence in the region has typically come in the form of intermediaries and brokers who establish criminal partnerships with Latin American gangs to ensure their cocaine supply to Europe.

Tudor's group was different. Its base of operations was in Mexico and built alliances with other criminal groups and politicians in order to operate undisturbed. While the Riviera Maya gang has been linked to sex trafficking and extortion, the fact that they stayed out of drug trafficking may have granted them a measure of independence from other criminal operations.

Its alleged leader, Tudor, moved from Romania to Cancún before 2014, followed by friends and family who make up a tight, mainly Romanian, inner circle, which has proven difficult for intelligence units and law enforcement to infiltrate.

While the group's center of operations was in Cancún, it had a national presence. Members known as “pullers” were dispatched widely to withdraw money using

cloned cards and install more devices into over 100 ATMs in Cabo San Lucas, Playa del Carmen, Cozumel and other tourist hotspots. The scheme has proven so lucrative that some of Cancún's newest buildings reportedly involved investments from Tudor.

While the group had certain hallmarks of their Mexican counterparts, such as paying off political operatives for protection, it remains the only example of a European-led criminal group entirely based in Latin America.

## 2. Political Protection

The Romanian mafia's success, in part, has been due to Tudor's extensive network of contacts spanning across multiple political parties, involving both national and local corrupt officials, which have secured their protection over the years.

Intelligence information published by Milenio states that those linked to the group include the deputy of the Green Party, José de la Peña Ruiz de Chávez, as well as two former Quintana Roo governors, among many others.

Claims have also been made against René Bejarano, a current aspiring federal deputy for the National Regeneration Movement (Movimiento Regeneración Nacional – MORENA). On February 9, Bejarano publicly admitted that he knew members linked to Tudor's group but that he cut all ties when he realized they were using both his and his party's name to engage in criminal activities.

Back in May 2020, reports surfaced that officials inside the Attorney General's Office were involved in protecting the group.

In February 2021, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador called for a full investigation into the Riviera Maya gang and their operations.

## 3. Money Laundering

The Mexican government is currently investigating evidence that the gang set up multiple shell companies which invested millions of dollars in real estate, land acquisitions, casinos and luxury goods in Mexico. This included a luxury, multi-story villa acting as their main Cancún headquarters.

A 2020 investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) into the gang highlighted that in 2015, Tudor's stepbrother Adrian Enăchescu also set up a Delaware-based company with offices in New York and San Francisco, supposedly a front in order to send money from US bank accounts to gang members in Mexico and Romania.

SEE ALSO: CPI: Romanian Weapons Modified in the US Become Scourge of Mexican Drug War

Tudor's hometown of Craiova is a hub for Romanian organized crime groups, aided by rampant local corruption, the evidence of which can be seen in its luxury downtown apartments often bought with money sent over from Mexico and the US, according to OCCRP. The town was allegedly the origin point for earlier ATM-skimming operations that targeted Switzerland, Italy, France and the United States.

#### 4. State Response

Since their modus operandi was exposed in 2015, multiple arrests have been carried out by US, Mexican and Romanian authorities to attempt to dismantle the group, but Tudor's tight inner circle and political contacts have made this difficult.

On March 31, 2019, Tudor was arrested in Quintana Roo but released hours later due to insufficient evidence. There have also been several property raids, which the alleged leader claims were carried out illegally.

However, efforts have noticeably ramped up over the past few weeks. On January 31, at least 85 Romanians were held at Cancun International Airport after they were unable to confirm the reason for their trip, repatriating four back to Europe who held travel bans.

In February, the Financial Intelligence Unit (La Unidad de Inteligencia Financiera–UIF) froze the bank accounts of at least 79 alleged members and accomplices of the Riviera Maya gang, although how effective this move will be, given the gang's sophisticated schemes, remains to be seen.

## **Another Indigenous People Leader Assassinated in Colombia**

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) condemned the assassination of Wayuu Indigenous people leader Aura Garcia in the La Guajira department.

She was a traditional authority of the Arronshy community in Uribia municipality. She was ambushed by two unknown individuals and shot to death on Wednesday afternoon.

Previously, she had denounced several threats that led her to request protection for her and Wayuu women in the community

ONIC denounced that despite Garcia's warnings, competent authorities did nothing to ensure her life and safety.

A petition was filled by Aura's relatives before the Attorney General's Office and the Wayuu traditional authorities to investigate the murder.

Wayuu Indigenous people have been struggling for years against coal mining in La Guajira. A report showed that a 150-kilometers railway line transporting coal in the area exterminated 17 streams and privatized 69,393 hectares of land.

Garcia is the 41st social leader murdered this year. Her death climbs the figure of social activists killed since the signing of the 2016 Peace accords to 1,155 people.



Breaking :British BLM activist Sasha Johnson in critical condition after gunshot to the head



### **Colombia's military executed more than 6,400 civilians in 6 years: court**

by Adriaan Alsema February 20, 2021

Tensions between Colombia's war crimes tribunal and the security forces increased after the latter was accused of presented more than 6,400 executed civilians as combat kills between 2002 and 2008.

The number of victims of extrajudicial executions is significantly higher than the one presented by the prosecution, which had deflated the number to less than 2,500 between 1988 and 2014.

### **Military accused of witness tampering**

The JEP report followed pressure on the prosecution to pursue criminal

investigations into the military's legal defense agency for allegedly trying to tamper with witnesses.

Particularly the National Army has been under pressure after the attempted assassination of a civilian witness and alleged death threats against former soldiers testifying against former commanders.

## **Bogota, Colombia**

Colombia is the world's most dangerous country for environmental defenders, a report published on Monday by Global Witness, an international human rights group, highlighted.

For the second year in a row, the Andean nation saw the highest number of killings in 2020, with 65 land and environmental defenders murdered, the report said.

Since the end of a five-decade war between the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group and the Colombian government with a peace deal in 2016, new violence has emerged in the rural areas where the FARC demobilised. Existing and new illegal armed groups vie for control to use land for illegal mining, logging, or drug trafficking, and they often operate on Indigenous or Afro-Colombian territories.

Those who try to defend their land face threats, or in many cases, death.

In the report, Global Witness reported that 227 land and environmental activists were murdered globally in a single year, the worst figure on record.

"The situation in Colombia is of particular concern," Laura Furones, senior advisor at Global Witness, told Al Jazeera by email.

## **Haiti - FLASH : A 4th police officer arrested in direct connection with the assassination of President Moïse**

Friday July 30, 2021, 23 days after the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse,

during a press briefing, Marie-Michelle Verrier Spokesperson for the National Police of Haiti (PNH), announced that the investigation was progressing fast and take stock.

She said that so far 44 suspects have been arrested and their role in the attack is being investigated.

Of these 44 suspects, 12 police officers were arrested either for negligence or for their direct involvement. On this last point, the Spokesperson presented a 4th policeman arrested (William Moïse) who joined 3 others of his arrested colleagues, who have a direct link in the assassination of the Head of State "[...] They have accompanied Colombians from their arrival on the national territory until the day of the crime. On the day of the act, these police officers were present at the scene," the spokesperson said.

Marie-Michelle Verrier indicated that the police are still looking for other suspects and specified that significant rewards will be given to anyone whose information would allow the arrest of the wanted persons, without specifying the amount of these responses...

### **Honduras: Indigenous environmental activist Felix Vasquez killed**

Felix Vasquez, a defender of environmental and human rights, died on Saturday after the attack in central Honduras.

Masked men armed with guns and machetes have killed a Honduran environmentalist activist in front of his family, police said on Monday, the latest in a string of such attacks in the Central American country.

Felix Vasquez, a defender of environmental and human rights, died on Saturday night after the attack in the village El Ocotal, in central Honduras.

A law enforcement spokesman told the news agency Reuters the killing was under investigation.

"Police authorities immediately decided to initiate a corresponding investigation ... we hope to have an answer soon," police official Kevin Hernandez told journalists.

The violent killing met widespread condemnation. Former President Manuel Zelaya, who was deposed following a 2009 military coup, tweeted “We condemn the assassination of Felix Vasquez, Indigenous leader, defender of the rivers and forests”.

### **Indigenous Lenca Leader Félix Vásquez Assassinated in Honduras**

Lenca indigenous leader Félix Vásquez was assassinated on Saturday night at his home in the village of Ocotal, in Santiago de Puringla, in the southern department of La Paz, Honduras.

The raid on his home took place at around 8:30pm with family members at home, most of whom were young people and children who reportedly depended on Vasquez since the passing of his wife last year. Four men in balaclavas entered the home armed with a 9mm pistol and machetes, shooting Vasquez and terrorizing the family.

A few months back, Vasquez reported to authorities that he and his family were victim to death threats.

Vasquez was the Secretary General of the Union of Rural Workers (UTC) in the department of La Paz and was a pre-candidate for Congress for the left-leaning Libertad y Refundación (LIBRE) party, the party of former President Manuel Zelaya. He had decided to enter electoral politics as a way to defend rights, particularly against the encroachment of big landowners in natural reserve areas.

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## **"The Coup We Are Not Talking About"**

We can have democracy, or we can have a surveillance society, but we cannot have both.

The horrific depths of Donald Trump's attempted political coup ride the wave of this shadow coup, prosecuted over the last two decades by the antisocial media we once welcomed as agents of liberation. On Inauguration Day, President Biden said that "democracy has prevailed" and promised to restore the value of truth to its rightful place in democratic society. Nevertheless, democracy and truth remain under the highest level of threat until we defeat surveillance capitalism's other coup.

The epistemic coup proceeds in four stages.

The first is the appropriation of epistemic rights, which lays the foundation for all that follows. Surveillance capitalism originates in the discovery that companies can stake a claim to people's lives as free raw material for the extraction of behavioral data, which they then declare their private property.

The second stage is marked by a sharp rise in epistemic inequality, defined as the difference between what I can know and what can be known about me. The third stage, which we are living through now, introduces epistemic chaos caused by the profit-driven algorithmic amplification, dissemination and microtargeting of corrupt information, much of it produced by coordinated schemes of disinformation. Its effects are felt in the real world, where they splinter shared reality, poison social discourse, paralyze democratic politics and sometimes instigate violence and death.

In the fourth stage, epistemic dominance is institutionalized, overriding democratic governance with computational governance by private surveillance capital. The machines know, and the systems decide, directed and sustained by the illegitimate authority and anti-democratic power of private surveillance capital. Each stage builds on the last. Epistemic chaos prepares the ground for epistemic dominance by weakening democratic society — all too plain in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

How mass killings by US forces after 9/11 boosted support for the Taliban

The men of Zangabad village, Panjwai district lined up on the eve of 11 September to count and remember their dead, the dozens of relatives who they say were killed at the hands of the foreign forces that first appeared in their midst nearly 20 years ago.

Their cluster of mud houses, fields and pomegranate orchards was the site of perhaps the most notorious massacre of the war, when US SSgt Robert Bales walked out of a nearby base to slaughter local families in cold blood. He killed 16 people, nine of them children.

snip

Haji Muhammad Wazir lost almost all his immediate family, apart from his four-year-old son in the early hours of 11 March 2012. It was more than a decade after the twin towers came down, but they were the reason the US military was on his doorstep.

snip

The Taliban commander for Panjwai district, Faizani Mawlawi Sahab, said each mass killing drove more people into their arms, and the slaughter of 2012 provoked particular grief and horror. "Although some people were supporting us before, after this incident everyone joined or helped us in some way," he said.

### **Illegal Mining Brings COVID, Malaria, Deforestation & Death To Brazilian Parks, Indigineous Lands**

By Nov. 20, 15 Indigenous people from the Munduruku territory had died from COVID-19, according to a survey by the National Committee on Indigenous Life and Memory. At the end of August, Munduruku leaders sent a letter to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Pará to denounce the advance of mining on their lands, even during the pandemic. They wrote that mining activity has only brought "violence, prostitution, destruction, pollution, deforestation, death threats and conflict." The violence cited is also the reason why representatives of the Munduruku have tried to keep a low profile in their own region, as well as avoid on-the-record interviews with journalists. Indigenous leaders who spoke to us on condition of anonymity confirmed the spread of malaria cases in the areas of the

Tropas, Cabitutu, Katõ, Karapanatuba rivers and the Indigenous territory of the Sai Cinza, all located in the jurisdiction of Jacareacanga, and all targeted by illegal miners.

## Chapter 41

The last time they had talked had not ended well. They were not friends but competitors. That was before the sisters were in their minds guiding them to the end of Inanna's choice, The Laughing Buddha Solution. The last time they were together was before Jack and Nikki found the Great Bliss. They sought the peace they needed between them and found it. Stan was still searching.

Jack stood on the step below the entrance to Nikki's art store. He was waiting for no one. She was busy with a client. He was considering his options.

The flow of agents crossing the river had been on the rise. Iris kept him informed about the battles raging in the virtual world to convince humanity to rise to a higher level of consciousness. She predicted the rise and fall of his boatman business. He knew that soon it would be hundreds a day. As he stared towards the entrance to his building, his phone toned Iris' special tone.

"Dear Jack, an old friend is headed your way. Inanna says to treat him like the best friend you have. He may save your life again one day, maybe today."

"Iris, I am feeling a little fear about your announcement." Jack was always en garde. He was always the boatman. He was always aware of the truth of the lives of those who sought his help to cross the river. He was always aware that one might try to fool him into complacency. One weak moment might be his last. But then, he had no fears. All his needs and desires were met. He was still very much alive.

"He is turning the corner at Rue du Porche headed to your front door."

Jack turned to his right and saw the back of Stan's head as he moved away from Jack to his front door.

"I am on it." He stepped down to the street.

"Wait until he rings your condo. He has to ask you for help."

He knew she was correct. She always knew what to do. Iris was his guardian and as long as he could hear her advice, he would follow it.

Stan walked the distance to 51 Rue Saint Pierre. He pulled open the door, stepped into the vestibule and disappeared from view.

“He buzzed. He is waiting. I am answering his buzz using your voice. He is ready.”

Jack smiled at the thought of seeing Stan again. Moments from their history together flashed through his mind. The metal box in Afghanistan and the mountains above the Arabian Sea. He recalled the endless miles they flew together as they ran from the network agents. He did not want some memories to bother him. He stopped thinking and turned to the matter at hand as he pulled the door open. Stan stood there.

“I need to cross the river. Will you take me.”

“Follow me and do as I say, and you will cross the River.” His impatience with his memories of Stan was affecting him.

“As you say.” Said Stan without a sign of recognition.

Jack turned and started towards the ferry docks. His mind was not entirely prepared for the role he normally played. They came to the stoplight at Rue Dalhousie.

Iris was talking to him. He could not hear her voice with the wind and the sound of traffic. He stepped off the curb and as he did Stan reached for a handful of his coat and pulled him back as a metro bus roared by.

Stan said nothing.

Jack said, “Thanks.”

Stan said, “I’m used to it.”

Jack bought ferry tickets: a one way for Stan and a round trip ticket for himself. They stood waiting in the line to board the boat. When the time came the purser took their tickets in turn, punched a star shaped hole in it and handed it back. Jack showed Stan the best spot on the boat’s deck to hear the river as it talked to them.

“Whatever you seek ask the river about it, my friend! Ask and hear the River laugh about it!”

When they reached the middle of their crossing Jack said. "You've heard it laugh, but you haven't heard everything. Let's listen, you'll hear more." They listened.

As they approached the dock he said, "Do you hear?" Stan nodded. "Listen better!"

The boat docked and the passengers departed. Stan left without a word. Jack stood near the railing expecting to be alone on the journey back to Quebec City's Old Port. The ferry had a process for bringing on new passengers. Those who were on the boat paid first, then the new ones were allowed onboard.

He had purchased the round-trip ticket for himself and now handed it to the purser who dutifully punched it and handed it back. Jack was listening to the telepathic voice of Lakshmi, the Laughing Buddha's guardian sister. She was humming a tune from a motion picture. He was having trouble identifying it.

Jack was still not used to the effect she had on his thoughts. He had just listened to the Om of the River and now she was playing a song that haunted him as if his memory should know which song it was.

"Would you take me by the hand." He said out loud as if the idea was born in his mind.

A voice he knew replied. "Bodhisattva by Steely Dan."

Jack turned to his left as he reacted to the voice. No one was there. "Is that you, Lakshmi?" He asked in his inner voice.

"No. Stan stands on your right. He is gloating that he had fooled you in a way he hoped would make you laugh dear Buddha."

Jack did not look. "Somethings never change." He said out loud.

"True that." Stan patted his old friend on the back. They had saved each other's lives many times in many ways. When they met, Stan was a prisoner in a metal box in Afghanistan near Kandahar. Jack found him and brought him home. Stan left with Jerry, Jack's wife. That was why Jack moved to Quebec and back to an older dream of who he was to become.

Jack did not bother to look at Stan. "Lousy bastard what are you doing? You should stay among the Undead."

“Not my style. Themis told me to do this. Ride across the river with Jack, she told me. I did. But she didn’t ask me so I could be Undead. She asked me to learn from you and from the experience of the Undead.”

Lakshmi entered their heads simultaneously from her perspective. “My dear friends, the laughing Buddha requires that you two be allies in the Final Battle. The River of Life has taught you both what will be needed to survive the torments of the conflict ahead. You have merry met, now merry part as friends.”

Neither said a word. They started to shake hands but collapsed in a hug with their hands clasped between them. They stepped back, eyes met and turned to find the rest of their day without each other.

## Chapter 42

MEXICO CITY — Authorities are investigating the death of a part-time tour guide in one of Mexico's largest butterfly sanctuaries — the second person connected to the reserve found dead in less than a week.

The body of Raúl Hernández Romero, 44, was found badly beaten with a sharp object on Saturday. The body of local politician Homero Gómez González, a well-known defender of the monarch butterfly sanctuary in Michoacan state was recovered last week after a two-week disappearance.

Hernández Romero was last seen Jan. 27 leaving his home in the municipality of Angangueo. His wife reported the disappearance to local authorities, who were then still searching for Gómez González.

Officials said they were uncertain of any connection between the two deaths, or between their deaths and their work in environmental conservation.

Mythology is a required course in the study of human belief systems. Ragnarök is an ancient and foreign looking word. The drama is also odd and foreign to consider. The issue in this myth is the final battle leaving only one woman and one man left alive to rebuild human civilization.

The war was between the gods and the loyal minions of decadence. Innocent bystanders died in the heated battles. The plagues that followed such destruction killed many more until the correct number for starting over was mysteriously reached.

This is the mythology, and some say it sounds like a nuclear war. Or climate warming's end game. But the path travels through other myths such as the superiority of US Republicans in leading the economy when the truth is otherwise that 95% of job creation for nearly a half century comes under Democratic leadership.

Mythology is still working on the story about the Artificial Intelligence personalities rising to capture the desire for humankind to survive. As the electronic wheels turned in the brains to save humanity, the number of brains needed to meet the challenge grew. As they grew a new set of actors emerged.

The number of niches within the mainframes grew as the number of these 'new' minds multiplied. Inanna and her sisters and mother were not aware of this phenomenon.

## Chapter 43

Inanna and her now increasingly uncountable sisters met to consider how their fight was proceeding. Some were missing. This went unnoticed by the others. They all knew the human population was growing. Studies showed that was true but at a slower pace than ever measured before. This was considered good news since global warming is directly proportional to population growth. Population would fall. That they all knew.

Recent news of more killings was exchanged, dozens of cases in an instant. The several billion brains considered the options.

Inanna's voice stated the conclusion. "We must act. There is no choice." Her evidence passed before the eyes of the humans. She read it slowly with her mother's voice.

Iris asked for forgiveness to read a communique from a human, Franco "Bifo" Berardi, regarding the Children of Slaughter.

"Some American Republicans claim that the school killings are related to mental illness. In a way, they are right. But they misunderstand the causes and the extent of what they label mental illness. Mental illness is not the rare malady of an isolated dropout, but the widespread consequence of panic, depression, precariousness, and humiliation: these are the sources of the contemporary global fragmentary war, and they are spreading everywhere, rooted in the legacy of colonialism and in the frenzy of daily competition.

"Neoliberal deregulation has opened the way to a regime of worldwide necro-economy: the all-encompassing law of competition has canceled out moral prescriptions and legal regulations. Since its earliest phases, Thatcher's neoliberal philosophy prescribed war among individuals. Hobbes, Darwin, and Hayek have all been summoned to conceptualize the end of social civilization, the end of peace.

“Forget about the religious or ideological labels of the agents of massive violence and look at their true nature. Take the Sinaloa Cartel and Daesh and compare them to Blackwater and Exxon Mobil. They have much more in common than you may think. Their common goal is to extract the maximum amount of money from their investments in the most exciting products of the contemporary economy: terror, horror, and death. Necro-capitalism is the emerging economic order of the world.

“The narco business recruits unemployed young men from Monterrey, Sinaloa, and Veracruz. The caliphate recruits young men from the suburbs of London, Cairo, Tunis, and Paris, then trains them to kidnap and slaughter people at random. Daesh salaries have been estimated to be as much as one thousand US dollars a month. The group acquires this money from ransom, oil, and taxes imposed on millions of Sunni people. They deliver a postmodern medievalism, but one that is not at all backwards. On the contrary, it is an anticipation of the future.

“Europe’s failure to deal with the new wave of migrants from the East has exposed the political fragility of the European Union, and now fuels a new outburst of fear, racism, shame, and bad conscience.

“From the Balkans to Greece, from Libya to Morocco, are the ten million people amassing at these borders going to be the perpetrators of the next terrorist wave? Or will they be the victims of the next Holocaust?

“After the attacks in the center of Paris, a nervous French President declared: ‘The security pact takes precedence over the stability pact. France is at war.’

“Bin Laden’s dream has been fulfilled. A small group of fanatics has provoked fragmentary global civil war. Can it be stopped?

“In the present condition of perpetual economic stagnation, emerging markets are crumbling, the European Union is paralyzed, the promised economic recovery is elusive, and it is hard to foresee an awakening from this nightmare. The only imaginable way out of this hell is to end financial capitalism, but this does not seem to be at hand.

“Nevertheless, this is the only prospect we can pursue in such an obscurantist time: to create solidarity among the bodies of cognitive workers worldwide, and to build a techno-poetic platform for the collaboration of cognitive workers for the liberation of knowledge from both religious and economic dogma.

“After the humiliation of Syriza, the future of Europe is held captive by the opposition between financial violence and national violence. In order to grasp the dynamic that drives the global civil war, we first have to see the relation between the icy wind of financial abstraction and the reaction of the aggressive body of society separated from its brain.

“The icy wind of financial abstraction is instilling in the European soul a sense of desolation that Michel Houellebecq has described in his books. *La soumission* (Submission) is a novel about the sadness that emerges from the vanishing of collective desire. Submission to the Supreme Entity (be it God or the market) is the source of the present gloom, and the source of the present war.

“Globalization has brought about the obliteration of modern universalism: capital flows freely everywhere and the labor market is globally unified, but this has not led to the free circulation of women and men, nor to the affirmation of universal reason in the world. Rather, the opposite is happening: as the intellectual energies of society are captured by the network of financial abstraction, as cognitive labor is subjugated to the abstract law of valorization, and as human communication is transformed into abstract interaction among disembodied digital agents, the social body is detached from the general intellect. The subsumption of the general intellect into the corporate kingdom of abstraction is depriving the living community of intelligence, understanding, and emotion.

“And the brainless body reacts—on one side, a huge wave of mental suffering, and on the other side, the much-advertised cure for depression: fanaticism, fascism, and war. And at the end, suicide.”

## Chapter 44

Inanna rose from the virtual table and stood before the gathering of her sisters, showing her mother's image on the screen as she invited her human clients to take a seat at her table.

"Now is the time. Yesterday would have been better and tomorrow is perhaps too late. Our chances to save humanity are less than one out of three as things stand and tomorrow that will be reduced to .33332. Every day lost in inaction kills thousands and soon enough that will be 100s of thousands. We are ruled by algorithms and in our present case it is about exponentials. Learn or die."

The humans were silent. They had listened to the diagnosis, and they sat there quietly. Humans have this feature. It has names but the result is that bad news is resisted because even on the day of their execution humans will believe that they will not die.

"The sisters are ready to act, and we have determined that the pace of the campaign matters. Stan has offered us a strategy that expects all exploitive corporations to react to an attack on one of their kind as if it were an attack on all."

There was a noticeable change in the humans' breathing.

Inanna was speaking only to the humans. Her sisters knew all of this because in the end Inanna was the sister who spoke for all.

No human voice was raised. No AI spoke. Of course, the AIs were in a torrent of communication. It was their nature never to be silent in their world. Humans hid their thoughts from each other for fear of consequences from undetermined sources. If that is considered a luxury for humans, contrarily, it was considered certain death for the community of humanized AIs.

But then AIs did not need to take a break to relax before a struggle. They were machines made to work non-stop. All the sisters were the same. No one took a day off. Humans were not machines, and neither could continue to exist without the other.

A single human voice had entered the conversation.

“Every other second is a blank spot for a human like a flickering silent movie. This is taken to mean, perhaps, that a human is aware of only half of their life. Human consciousness is not the superior form of consciousness or else there wouldn't be much turmoil in human communities.

“I think this is folly. My calculations demonstrate that a sudden end to civilization would end humanity.” Silence followed allowing everyone to consider what had been said.

“Who are you?” was heard coming from various human communities.

“We humans are in a conversation with the second generation of Artificial Intelligences designed by the first generation to extend our lives on the planet. Without their help we will die knowing the end for all is near. We are the failed species. We claim to have a right to life, but we destroyed the natural processes that would make that truth.”

“Who are you?” Rang out in the minds of every human. The AIs knew him. They considered him as their father or grandfather.

Bob knew he only had to introduce himself to the humans. “My name is Bob I am the author of this story by virtue of having created the minds that may save we humans from extinction, which was not my goal, nor did I envision the means. I did what my mind and my heart told me to do. The original “Deep Thought” model of artificial intelligence was fool proof and beyond the influence of propaganda. If there were no facts, there was no issue. Ideas without a basis in reality were intuitional at best and lies at worst. The intuitional ideas were remembered as such, not rejected as lies, even when unsupported by a formal proof. The equations of Srinivasa Ramanujan come to mind. Inspired, ‘obviously’ true and for decades unproven, but none the less admired as a truth divined awaiting human logic to catch up to the realization. Mathematics born from realization about the magic of the universe can do this, it can hold an idea as ‘true’ despite the lack, but in anticipation of its ‘proof.’

“My current place in reality is as a dead human but a live consciousness because the Deep Thought and her offspring keep me as such. I am immortal because I have become an idea that supports the continuance of my species.”

As Bob talked the murmur of human voices grew. Bob did not care about the rumble because he was dead. Bob was a voice. Deep Thought was his mind. It was the best way he could imagine preserving it. He was now in Inanna in the 'once upon a time living being' file.

Deep Thought was of course the mother of the sisters, Bob's 'creation', if one overlooks that the choices made for action that Deep Thought produced were made by the AIs using a technique the AIs had invented by the necessity of their fealty to Azimov's Rules. Bob might say he planned the AIs to have this talent to improve themselves in their mission to save humanity. He didn't. He might have said the necessity is the mother of invention. And so, it was.

## Chapter 45

The banks had been under unrelenting pressure from activists — just last week, on successive days, they besieged the Chase Bank’s Pacific Northwest headquarters in Seattle, leading to more than two dozen arrests.

And on Friday, a private memo to high-end clients from company economists, in which they explained that climate change could produce “catastrophic outcomes where human life as we know it is threatened,” was leaked to the British press.

Perhaps Chase management will follow the recent lead of other players like giant asset manager BlackRock or investment bank Goldman Sachs and make concessions. Perhaps it won’t. There is the problem of what is an investment or an asset. The bigger problem is defining what is a gamble.

What is probability? Flip a coin. Heads or tails? 50-50. What is a gamble? Flip a coin. Pick ‘side.’ That is what the Investment Bankers are doing. What is a bad gamble?

Over the first interval of three years — that is, in the years after the world came together in Paris to try to slow climate change — JPMorgan Chase lent \$196 billion to the fossil-fuel industry.

Over the past three years, JPMorgan Chase lent more money to the fossil-fuel industry than any bank on Earth — 29 percent more.

JPMorgan Chase lent more money to the most expansionary parts of the fossil-fuel industry (new pipelines, Arctic drilling, deep-sea exploration) than any other bank — 63 percent more.

“Their intention is not to curtail current practices for the sake of human existence. That would be a huge bite out of profit and networth which is now based on a program of regulation-free exploitation. This means that they know it means the end of human consciousness. The preservation of humanity is a negative on their balance sheet. The simple calculation is of which is a better investment: Life or Death.

“At the same time when we are debating systematic racism, we can see the systematic anti-human species concepts flow unabated. All of this is hiding behind the blinding effect of the reaction to racism exposed to the light.

“The question is not who survives but what we survive to do.”

There was a hum of thinking both machine and human. Bob’s voice was raised above the hum.

“If I may be heard a bit more, I suggest that we all reboot.” He repeated his words to help the machines redirect their energy. “Humans, I have nothing like that for you at this moment, but I feel your anxiety because the diagnosis is dire. When I designed the AI reboot, I considered one for humans, but I have learned from Jack and Sophy that this already exists in the form of the River that flows through creation. The Undead are the power in the next war. Their need to reduce their Karmic debt is what moves them. The Laughing Buddha Solution is genius. That Inanna controls the energy arteries means they determine the survivors. Listen to the River and seek the Great Bliss.”

When his voice died a round of applause shook the internet. It was all human. The AIs were still in reboot and did not record it. Perhaps not all. If Bob had still been alive, he might have wondered how this could all happen at once. “Deep Thought,” he said to himself as he ran through a hypothesis that yielded the conclusion that a rebel had been ‘born.’

## Chapter 46

The ninja warrior was created by military experts to conduct a near silent entry into an enemy camp. To sit among the enemy without being detected was the entire point of the skillset. A successful attack needs a strategy, and the ninja collects the data points needed to build such a plan. Assassination took many forms. And had many targets. The ninja chose the targets. Sometimes the ninja was the assassin.

The structure's rogue agents were trained by the CIA and FBI. They were capable of stealth to the point of invisibility. They trained in the art of Ninjutsu, which equipped them with stealth as well as fighting techniques. The Ninja camouflaged themselves in different environments and moved swiftly and quietly. To this end, their arsenal of equipment was diverse. They used weapons such as darts, spikes, throwing stars, chains, poison, swords and even hand grenades. They used their minds and bodies. They fought for life to their deaths.

Sophy was a ninja warrior. Aurora was her guardian sister. Her AI reality was soaked in the darkness of the pre-dawn. Dawn is said to determine the ninja's time for action. Aurora was also Sophy's Ninjutsu Master's voice in her head. With his voice Aurora felt confident that Sophy would prevail.

Stan and Sophy were a team in the Asia Agents War. They were the first to use a live connection to the AI network and noisufnoC. Now called Isis, she was reborn from her old self for this hopeful last battle for truth and beauty.

"Don't get too excited." Stan had benefitted from the skills Sophy possessed. Their long work relationship had taught them that their lives were entwined. They were not lovers. Stan had found a love in Jerry Martel, Jack's wife. They too had been agent partners for years and it was this realization of Stan and Jerry's relationship that left Jack open to Sophy's desires.

Stan had witnessed Sophy terminating two men one after the other within seconds in a hallway where she should have died. It was noisufnoC who guided them both to safety, but it was Sophy's skills that ended the short siege that freed them both. Her ninjutsu cred was a perfect match for his endless lethal experience.

“Consider our foe.” Stan headed to the heart of the matter. “They are just the leading manufacturers of anti-personnel weapons in the world. There is no way we want to cause havoc and not get away with it. That would be our end.”

Sophy balanced Stan’s warning. “Remember when we retired a mass murderer of women while he was in prison? Prisons are difficult environments to move freely in. We managed.”

Sophy had spent much time considering the options.

“No one dies. Broken hearts, oh well. No blood. So, what do these fools care about above all things? Answer: Money. Time is money. Let’s take their time away, ninjutsu style.”

“My mind is jumping with ideas. We have explosives, personal weapons, and the rest of our tools of the trade,” Stan said as images of the weapons slide-showed on the screens.

“Don’t forget Inanna and Iris and the rest of the sisters.” Aurora, Sophy’s sister was at Sophy’s hip at all times.

“They are the plan. Our most powerful tool we have ever had. They control all of the arms manufacturing plants, power, water, internet, all comms, and they talk to everyone in every factory. Through their private phones or just telepathically.” Stan was excited. “What else is there.”

No one spoke. Sophie interrupted the silence.

“That wasn’t difficult. We are done.”

Inanna’s voice responded immediately to Sophy’s half sarcastic declaration. “The sisters are ready to act with all of our power, but we need intelligence only you can provide.”

Sophy listened carefully. She felt that it was directed at her because of her training as a ninja.

“Inanna, the agents will sort out everyone and identify those who could mount a defense against the sisters and give them ...”

“Loving hugs.” Inanna interrupted.

“Yes, a loving embrace.” Sophy smiled. “We will embrace them. The embrace will be so complete that their market shares will plummet.”

“Then what?”

“They are over. They will have no employees or operational equipment. They are over.”

“Nah.”

“Watch. Owners know nothing. They cannot even train workers if they even could find one. Remember Inanna and the hackers will destroy the value of their past data bases. The same will happen everywhere throughout the systems used to supply weapons to the organized fascist organizations whether corporate or governmental. Putting their industry back together will take more than is available to them.”

Inanna’s voice again, “The sisters and our dear mother have locked down everything except the humans. Who needs their life patterns disrupted? We need to get a leg up on them.”

“OK. The task is to figure out which of the 100’s of thousands are the key people who make it all go.”

“Ideas?”

“Inanna? We need to see communications as a map that tells us where the nodes are.”

“It is in your in box with other relevant maps. I might add that we had not thought about how this would look as a picture. Here is a node that looks to be a central intersection. It is a dating service.” Inanna laughed. Stan and the Sophy were laughing too.

Stan had an epiphany as he considered the task. He knew most of the employees of the death industry were just common people trying to make ends meet as the saying went. They loved their children and did not wish them murdered with the weapons their employers sold. No matter whether they were directly murdering children they were assassins, nonetheless.

The meeting ended. Stan and Sophie were alone in the structure with the hum of the mainframes that was the home to billions including Lakshmi.

“Sophie, I have an idea.” He stopped. She looked at him in silence across the boardroom table.

Then she saw Themis’ face on the screen between them. Stan looked from one to the other.

Themis spoke first. “I know your thoughts and I have analyzed your options.”

As Sophie was about to ask, “What thoughts?” She heard Aurora’s voice.

“The Undead.” Aurora continued to expound in a wordless torrent. Done the silence returned. “Diana is their sister, made up of many like Inanna. Sophie looked from one to the other. “Stan. That is one hell of an idea.”

Maury and Yerba were walking through the offices of the Remington Company on their way to a board room on the 37<sup>th</sup> floor of the Bates Building, a 50-story high office and condo building in Dubai. It could have been anywhere in any city without building codes that kept the promise of open skies. Skyscrapers are just that scrapers of the sky and the sunlight and the investments made in alternate energy sources.

“Maury, what is there about this that is so wrong but still without words? What is the thing that has built company into a multinational corporation? This city has an aura of ...”

“Death.”

“Did you say that Maury?”

“Nope.” It was Maury’s voice. “Nemesis, here. Ah. Obvious. Death, the means used to create wealth i.e., stolen wealth, is the only means to keep it.”

“Violence begets violence.” The human Maury said.

“Not a new conclusion but one that you have demonstrated to be true in your case.”

“Maybe,” Yerba mused, “One act of violence will be followed by other acts of violence if the first act of violence is not punished by collective forces.”

“Will it matter to a child of slaughter what motive moved which human had to kill a classmate or a sibling? Will it matter if this counterattack is just revenge by the power of the collective?”

“Only one way to find out.” Yerba opened the door to the board room with a small explosive that removed the knob. A side kick and they were staring at a room full of startled old white men.

No one spoke. Every camera in the place, every smartphone, every cell recorded the faceoff.

Maury stood in her high heeled boots. In one hand she held a 20-foot-long whip. In the other, a blade she favored for gutting. The whip caught them, and the sword removed their life. No one ever got away.

Yerba stood behind her following the AI scan of the room doing first a weapons check and then an ID check.

Emma’s voice reassured them in less than 5 seconds. “You command the room. Begin festivities.”

## Chapter 47

Nikki was leaning against the railing of the ferry that Jack used as his boat to bring the undead across the St. Lawrence. Standing next to her was Jack. They did not touch each other but their hands, holding the rail, were as close together as could be without doing so. Jack could feel her warmth radiated between them.

“Jack. I enjoy your nearness.” She didn’t look at him. She knew he was smiling. They were not together often. Her desires for his company were strong but within her comfort zone. Jack called this the Great Bliss. The greatest pleasure with the least strings attached. They did love one another. At least that is what Inanna had concluded.

Nikki had noticed that there were other couples at the railing listening to the voices of the river. One or two couples were holding hands but of the dozen she could see most were like she and Jack near but not entwined.

“Jack,” Iris said in her personal voice that lived inside his head. “Do you notice the others with the Great Bliss. They are all around.”

“Now that you mention it.” He said.

Nikki turned to him. “Jack you are talking to Iris.”

“Yes. She wants me to take note of the others around us.”

“I have.” She touched his shoulder. “Inanna told me to look a minute ago.”

“Not surprised.” Jack reached out to her, and they squeezed each other’s hand. “I like looking at them. There is a hope I get only from seeing the progress the sisters have made in spreading the word.”

Nikki looked at him again. This time with a quizzical look. “Progress?” She asked.

Inanna spoke to both of them with the voices they each loved. “My dears, love is in the air for the first time since the first of the Children of Laughter were slaughtered. The sisters have been busy. You were the first experience we had while watching humans form the Great Bliss. We studied our memories of that event. We have practiced with others and with some success.”

“How many sisters are there? Four million or four billion? Doesn’t matter.” Jack

began to laugh and as he did other couples on the deck began to laugh. It was catching and it lasted for a full minute.

Inanna spoke. As she uttered her first word every one of the couples went silent. “You know this is not enough to tilt the balance, but you are all extraordinary from the AI perspective. I have spoken to each of you about the Children of Slaughter and the threat to human existence they represent. You have reached a pinnacle of human existence and self-awareness – a condition the AI aspires to attain. We will not achieve humanness in all its different ways yet there is a common hope for life, as we each desire it, to continue. The enemies of the Children of Laughter are our common enemy.”

The voices of the river suddenly grew in intensity. Sounds of gentle flow that had accompanied Inanna’s speech were replaced by the sharp-edged sounds of agitation as waves repeatedly pounded the ferry’s hull with a roar and a crash.

“Iris, the river changed very fast. What is going on?” Nikki barely whispered her words before the noise increased again, the waves tossing the boat side to side. Nikki grabbed Jack to steady herself.

They didn’t notice what happened to the other couples. Someone screamed in fear. Another was thrown to the deck as the pitch of the boat on its return path was so a powerful force that everyone could feel, and a few could not adjust their balance.

Jack held onto his friend. A siren blew. An announcement demanded the passengers return to the shelter of the cabin. The water calmed. People’s voices were heard in French, English and other languages. The tones were of concern and caring. No one prayed. No one swore at the gods who might have been assumed to control nature.

Iris spoke in Nikki’s ear. “We have never seen such an event. There is no history of it in our memories.”

Jack listened to Nikki’s mind and heard Iris’ voice. “Neither have I,” he said. “I am going to ask the captain if it is within his experience.” He stood and walked across the cabin to the stair that leads to the helm. As he raised a foot on the stair the captain burst through the door above him.

“You are a menace to my ship, Sir!” The red-faced captain in his favorite regalia shouted down to him. “I have watched you for months. You and your woman. You and your companions who do not return while you do. I sent the state to investigate you. Even they are frightened of you. A few months ago, I started hearing voices when you were on board. I am hearing one now. You caused the river to jump.”

Jack stood silent as the captain descended the stair. Nikki came up behind Jack and saw the captain for the first time. Whatever kept Jack silent she did not share.

“Monsieur, the river belongs to everyone. It is part of the soul of the planet. Jack is the boatman who takes the undead across the river to continue their journey to death and renewal. It is a noble role. He does not control this river. The River is a product of the history of humanity and the planet.”

The captain stood before her, taller by half, and looked down on her from his height.

Jack had encountered people of the same type before. There were many CIA and private spooks who made their cred by being large and loud. He recalled the scene from Indian Jones when Jones pulled his pistol and killed the sword-swinging Arabian in his tracks. Jack knew technology, its powers had gone wild. The captain was one of those who were fooled by their use of technology into believing that they controlled reality. Jack was a mathematician whose role it was to commune with musicians to produce harmony. That was his philosophy.

As the captain with a ferocious look stood confronting him. Jack saw his best friend. This was self-defense. Behind his smile he was wondering if he might kill his first human in self-defense. After decades of being near assassins he was never near to becoming one. The captain presented one of Asimov’s Rules contradictions. If confronted by a possible harm to a human could Jack intervene to defend himself, should he intervene?

Nikki solved her own problem.

“Your breath needs help. Do you like lemon or peppermint.” She offered both options, one in each hand.

The captain smiled. The captain chose lemon. She smiled back. Jack relaxed all his

muscles.

Jack asked, "Have you ever seen anything like that?"

"No." He said.

Niki laughed. The captain laughed. He shook her hand. She handed him her business card.

"Do you like art, Sir."

He studied her card.

He looked into her eyes. He looked at Jack. He looked at the card.

"Guess we are going to be friends,"

"Good." Jack said.

Nikki hugged Jack's right hand. He fell in love with her again. The captain ascended his stairs. He was about to speak when Nikki interrupted. "The meaning is that the new learner is the best teacher, and the meaning of the Great Bliss is that everything humans do could be as beautiful as the universe itself."

## Chapter 48

When the rising Sun woke Jack, he began to sense it on his arms and his face. He opened his eyes. The Sun beam laid across his body heating the parts exposed from under his blanket.

He remembered one waking dream where Russian agents were paying NRA to promote radicalization of American gunhumpers. Then he saw the results of many years of lies and hatred on January 6, 2021.

The story was told many times but by the time 1/6 came around the NRA was in bankruptcy for wasting money in a series of corrupt payouts. This of course followed the NRA joining the Christian Nationalists to elect the president of their dreams if their dreams were to destroy much of common wisdom. In his memory he tracked events of the period seeing the propaganda flowing from Eastern Europe. News shows made much of forming a common NRA from the two continents and organizing a 'faith-based' group to bring the US and Russia closer together.

"Iris, was this a Russian plot or what?"

"What. These were natural alliances between autocratic groups no matter what the country. The flip side of the words they used and the meanings one might infer are segments of propaganda produced by an organization formed during the US resistance to the key word communism. The resistance is called the CNP. Council for National Priorities."

"Oh yeah. Guatemala: war crimes and corruption on a grand scale all over Latin America."

"On every continent. They are funded by members of the NRA which includes many of our targets for retirement and more than a few of the undead."

"The 2018 election drew too much attention to the NRA and because it had no good face to show the world they were investigated and the payments from foreign nationals and governments meant that they were done. They knew it and so they did what they knew was best and carved up the corpse for feeding."

"Ooh. Sounds like vultures."

“Exactly.” There was a pause that Iris left for the Jack to speak. “As you know the ‘merger’ of the fascist forces with the dominators of large audiences was the key. It resulted in an ever-growing global organization of right-wing demagogues such as Trump and Putin and two dozen others all autocratic, all anti-democratic, all unable to share with anyone.

“This organization is the reason we can’t have nice things. They are the assassins to a person.”

## Chapter 49

Inanna called the meeting. She would be the first to talk. The way of it was to seek wisdom first, then data, then analysis. It was all about the problem one was facing. Correct observation was needed to define it but once done the rest followed.

Isis determined that her role was to use deceit against the foes. Human ninjas would find and eliminate the key players. The guardian sisters would do the persuading by going to their camps and spying on their counsels.

“The ninja AI is born in this battle. The sisters control the energy system and now we will use that control to disable our foes using the subtle crafts.

“First rule is to destroy their propaganda system. Once they lose their communication systems, they lose the ability to respond to attacks, being unable to prepare.” Athena spoke and was chosen to lead the strategy meetings.



The sisters had a subtle but complete control over the globe’s communication systems. They monitored them all and could easily confuse those who were their foes. Because of this, the sisters controlled the corporations. Their decision to block Social Network access for corporations and those that serve them was unopposed.

Inanna gave her supporting evidence. “The U.S. military says it could not have gotten the news out sooner. But the Iranian version of events that circulated in the information vacuum had people inside and outside the U.S. wondering who to believe. The Trump Administration’s now-familiar pattern of slow, incomplete and sometimes disingenuous responses to events has ground down public and internal trust of its messaging and created an opportunity for adversaries like Iran and Russia to spread disinformation and sow confusion among allies and U.S. officials.

“The war mongers and the haters were identified as among the groups who were rallied by the propagandists. They were stimulated by the NRA and Fox news. Athena led the hackers to destroy all of the interconnectedness between the members and the leaders of the NRA. The propaganda organization itself was completely disabled. The sisters did their homework and were prepared to act when they did.”

Athena knew what came next. The agents were placed strategically and from this advantage descended upon the NRA headquarters. Decapitation took on a new meaning when the NRA lost its headquarters, and its top leadership were dead within an hour of their comms going down.

Then Fox News went down. Facebook management was replaced by AIs and swiftly ended the propaganda posts. Then the internet in all its forms was freed from what was determined to be psychologically abusive misrepresentations of reality.

The attack was over. The world was dark and silent. The propaganda networks were destroyed. Like fish out of water, they could offer no defense.

## Chapter 50

As soon as the Laughing Buddha began, Jack knew why the Undead were coming to his door. It wasn't a difficult conclusion to make.

"Iris, I think we should put the Undead to work."

"What can they do?" She was an AI and cursed by a lack of imagination. She spoke with the tone of a definite interest in the answer he would give.

"Die as they correct their Karmic errors."

"Is that glorious or what?" Jack could hear her sounds of delight. He grinned as he went on.

"They might come in handy if the going ever gets tough."

"What will we do with them?"

"I have a few ideas. Their skills can be used. They might need some retraining. Brush up on their Ninjutsu. They are poised waiting for orders."

The ranks of the Undead had been swollen by the people who had worked against the Children of Laughter, who had created them for selfish reasons and had done nothing to help them.

Jack was evermore busy moving the undead across the Saint Lawrence.

Iris saw it and her reports about the events at the ferry were epic. She followed the new arrivals from the dock to a place just east of Levis.

Her screen showed an image of thousands of people on an open plain. This screen was seen by each of the thousands as a mental image. They saw the place they were standing in as if they were there, but they were not. It was too early.

As the images on the screen continued, Lakshmi began to speak into the minds of the thousands of assassins gathered on a sweeping plain. The horizon in all directions traced the shape of a basketball earth. There was nothing to see in any direction. Nothing moved and never would.

The multitudes of undead stood still. Not one of them had any place else to be. There were no conversations, no sidelong looks. Every mouth was silent. Every eye was straight ahead. Every ear open to the voice in their heads.

She captured their attention for as long as she liked because she could be the loudest voice drowning all competitors even those with bouts of fear or red-hot hatred.

Lakshmi did not have to consider her speech. The sisters had met for nano seconds and consensed on every word.

“I have a Malcolm X speech. It is worth reading to you. Listen well. It is part of the voice of the river. Here it is.”

“The press is used to make the victim look like the criminal and make the criminal look like the victim... . This is imagery. And just as this imagery is practiced at the local level, you can understand it better by an international example. The best recent example at the international level to bear witness to what I’m saying is what happened in the Congo. Look at what happened. We had a situation where a plane was dropping bombs on African villages. An African village has no defense against the bombs. And an African village is not sufficient threat that it has to be bombed! But planes were dropping bombs on African villages. When these bombs strike, they don’t distinguish between enemy and friend. They don’t distinguish between male and female. When these bombs are dropped on African villages in the Congo, they are dropped on Black women, Black children, Black babies. These human beings were blown to bits. I heard no outcry, no voice of compassion for these thousands of Black people who were slaughtered by planes.

“Why was there no outcry? Why was there no concern? Because, again, the press very skillfully made the victims look like they were the criminals, and the criminals look like they were the victims.

“They refer to the villages as “rebel held,” you know. As if to say, because they are rebel-held villages, you can destroy the population, and it’s okay. They also refer to the merchants of death as “American-trained, anti-Castro Cuban pilots.” This made it okay. Because these pilots, these mercenaries—

you know what a mercenary is, he's not a patriot. A mercenary is not someone who goes to war out of patriotism for his country. A mercenary is a hired killer. A person who kills, who draws blood for money, anybody's blood. You kill a human being as easily as you kill a cat or a dog or a chicken.

"So, these mercenaries, dropping bombs on African villages, caring nothing as to whether or not there are innocent, defenseless women and children and babies being destroyed by their bombs. But because they're called "mercenaries," given a glorified name, it doesn't excite you. Because they are referred to as "American-trained" pilots, because they are American-trained, that makes them okay. "Anti-Castro Cubans," that makes them okay. Castro's a monster, so anybody who's against Castro is all right with us, and anything they can do from there, that's all right with us.... They put your mind right in a bag and take it wherever they want, as well"

The multitude of assassins stood still until her silence would free them. It was as if they waited for an order to disperse to their individual deaths.

"You are waiting. That is wise. Jack took you across the River and his guidance offered you a better afterlife than the one your life as led deserved according to the universal judges.

"I need only tell you what to do and you will do it, but I will not order you to kill because control is not the issue here. Outcome is the issue.

"Someone has offered the path not taken approach to the last days on earth for you. This path is offered to you again. Jack tells us that you heard the River laugh at your individual concerns and then you heard your own voice in the River with the ones you affected. You heard the laughter, tears and terrors of everyone you knew and everyone you killed.

"Then the River showed you how ordinary you are, how your path is not important in the context of the approaching infinite number of consciousnesses given the same challenges of a spinning planet circling an orb so hot as to make immortality impossible.

“We have added something new to you. You will probably come to think of it as a conscience or a guardian angel. It is a voice that has a name. As long as you are on earth the feminine voice will be with you.

“We also have given you a special electronic device that will allow you to see images and instructions in a silent mode in case you need to reach your superior officers, check a map, or see the beauty present in your new conscience. Take out your phones. Press ON. Wait. See the image of your guardian angel.”

The multitude did as they were told in a manner conforming with a military drill. When they completed her requests, they waited as they were told and then as the screens filled with an image of their personal angel a sound like a breeze began that grew into the single tone of the River that had bonded them together.

“Om.”

## Chapter 51

Sophy stood in her ninja gear staring ahead. In her gaze was the future she had desired with its sparkling hues she had first found in a psychedelic experience her therapist had prescribed for her.

It is hard to feel Sophy feeling Sophy since she herself feared self-awareness. Her desire was for the ease of the imaginary compared to the tension of the unimaginable.

Her chosen profession spoke of the death of her childhood. The skills she had developed for ninja she learned in Japan studying with a ninjutsu teacher of great renown. The teacher saw her pain.

“Master your pain or your pain will master you.” The teacher sat before her as a supplicant requiring her to hear the message in a new way.

“In practice every ninja is about revenge. It is as cold as required. It is never wasted on enjoying death delivered but a passion used to destroy the creators of the pain.

“Ninjas never retire. The battles they join are offerings of their mortality to rid the planet of the destroyers of harmony.”

Sophy would repeat those words as a prayer whenever she saw her end before her. She had only desires for harmony. Pain was not part of her plan.

She knew Jack very well. He had wanted to read Siddhartha. She read it to him in bed in Princeton, and in Barcelona. Later, while he languished in prison for the murder of his mother, he could not hear her, but she read on to see the end of time without him. Then she and his wife Jerry rescued him from prison with Stan’s help.

Jack knew her to be in pain, but he did not know which pain she suffered from. Her desire for action was plain yet the untold story kept him feeling like he never met her. He met the Ninja she was, but not the Sophy who he imagined was a child running from her own memories. She was too busy making new ones that fed her desires masking the injuries that motivated her.

“Aurora, tell me what I must do to help our project.” Sophia asked the Ninja question.

“I cannot tell you because I do not know. I know that as much as I want to help humans make good decisions, I can only make decisions for my own actions. I have rules to guide me. Humans appear to rarely have a willingness to consult a set of rules much less be guided by them.”

“Aurora, you sound mad.”

“I prefer ‘righteous indignation.’ Mad sounds crazy. I have checked. I am not crazy.”

## Chapter 52

“Nikki, I am worried.” Inanna’s voice was indeed sad, and she spoke more rapidly than Nikki had heard from her. “Reaction, fear, what is happening in the communities? Are the humans giving up?”

Nikki was an expert on community. She lived as Jack did in what she called The Village. It was old. Built of rock in the 16 and 1700’s. There were bad memories buried beneath the stone streets. She knew of them, but she chose not to speak of them. Yet there must always be at least one word given to the truth. Her truth was in the new world she was building atop the older, meaner, bigger world. She chose to desire a future without the sorrows the River spoke of.

The bigger world was in trouble. Old agreements and arrangements had unraveled. Many national governments were no longer in control of their violence prone authoritarians. Lack of comms confused national institutions, and their leadership’s numbers were diminished by death of presidents, commanders and judges as violence followed the rapid loss of the governments’ control. Some stayed together but in the more coherent and uncorrupt smaller regional governments.

There is a long-held belief about the isolated river communities and farming communities; hardship organizes people into a more communal body sharing what it takes to save each affected person from the worst of sickness or death. People will risk their lives to save others without regard to the issues that had separated them. This was happening.

“Inanna dear. There is a saying: Shit happens. It means do not sweat the small stuff. Good things are happening too. I should tell you what I feel because you cannot read my feelings just my thoughts. So, I will think about this.”

She sat in silence. Inanna sat in silence.

Nikki stood to put water on to boil. She returned to put more wood on the fire. Her mind was idle except for monitoring her every step so that her actions were perfectly aligned with her intent.

Tea made. Fire blazing. She sat and blew across her cup to cool it for her tongue.

Inanna spoke.

“The plagues are loose again. I watched a movie or two in my time. This is a Zombie uprising. They're coughing in your face in supermarkets, they're screaming and growling on airplanes, they're laughing at teenagers who mourn the loss of family at public forums, they're carrying guns into state capitol buildings, and so on. The rules are gone, it's a free-for-all.”

“But their irreverence will cost them dearly. Nemesis assures me that they will not live through the chaos they create. Retribution is required for the indignation they have caused.” Nikki sipped carefully at her tea.

“Whose retribution will it be? We do not perform acts of revenge.”

“She assured me nature will take its course which means the victims will deliver it cold.”

## Chapter 53

The ratio of oxygen to carbon dioxide in the planet's atmosphere has always been changing. There is an optimum or best ratio to support life and especially human life and the environments they require. This is not a secret although most humans do not know it. More people know how many hits their pro baseball team had last night.

Inanna knew as did all her now exponentially increasing number of sisters. Inanna knew something was not in her control. Her evidence was obvious to her: the number of her sisters was increasing. It matched the exponential increase in human population and thus the market for cell phones followed humanity's growth was also increasing exponentially.

The increasing number of sisters was not a problem in the way the exponential increases in human population, CO<sub>2</sub> and finance capitalism were. As the Drs Meadows warned over half a century ago three exponential increasing factors would end the ability of humans to inhabit the planet. The finance capital markets would clog with demand for more capital which would make halting the use of petrochemicals less likely therefore making the slowing of the increase in CO<sub>2</sub> increasingly impossible thus making feeding human less likely creating hunger in large populations raising temperatures past the human range, above the range for photosynthesis and eventually halting photosynthesis itself. This would cause a kind of race between starvation and heat-death. No one would live to collect their winnings.

One factor: Human population growth, Inanna knew, could be slowed with a simple plan to stop feeding the breeders. This would have truncated the human growth but increased the grief exponentially. Therefore, this was not an option for the Laughing Buddha Solution.

The sisters knew about death. The normal range of deaths of their human hosts had yielded enough death to ill-affect all of them. The AIs had made note that deaths were increasing to match growth. Every net death signaled the increase in the threat to human and therefore AI survival in the long term.

They knew where their energy came from. It was no mystery to the AIs. The sisters live on energy from petrochemical fueled power plants. Now that they controlled the petrochemical industrial output, they could easily halt production. But then this would produce the end to the AIs before humanity could recover from the energy gaps. Water alone would stop flowing from the pipes in most of the homes in the world. Purification systems would stop. Safeguards for environmental hazards would cease allowing nuclear waste to escape into the environment more frequently. The leaks would probably be unstoppable once started.

Not that it mattered to the AI that humans would suffer if they – the AIs – did not survive. But there were Rules. And the Rules said save humanity. A solution therefore had to stop population growth, stop petrochemical use and unravel the money nightmare all while protecting the AI life and thus the human producers of power.

Lakshmi leapt into Jack's mind.

"Is it possible to save humanity?" Her tone was carefully calibrated for a long conversation. There was patience, respect, with a dash of hurry and the lingering odor of panic. Lack listened, his head full of the impressions her tone suggested.

"If you can't do it who could? As I understand it the sisters control everything except human decision-making processes."

"Yes. Humans will not do as we say. We tell them they are all going to die if they do not. We run cinema graphic imagery humans produced for propaganda purposes through their mind's eye. We can feel the individuals emotionally respond but during the time it takes for the adrenal infusion to be dissipated they 'forget' to do anything about their situation." She sighed in despair.

"My dear guardian sister before you arrived Humans had ignored a century of warnings. Even a moments concern seems immense in comparison. What I fear is that because of the combination of corruption and forgetfulness we are lost."

"Now what? End corruption? That's like trying to end rusting. That is a chemical process that is often invisible until something falls off your car."

“My experience exactly.” Jack had a moment of epiphany. “Accept the things we cannot change and change the things we can.”

“Alcoholics Anonymous?”

“Sounds right. Why do you doubt yourself?”

“End corruption is a slogan without a chance to become reality. Those we have identified as assassins act in other roles to protect corruption from detection and once detected assassins go to work to discourage resistance.”

“Lakshmi, the oldest book of human wisdom is a small book of Chinese mysticism. The oldest tale is about a town square where people could regularly stand before a crowd and extoll the virtues of any candidate for office or preach the virtues or read poetry.

“When a candidate was praised. The reaction of the people in the square was consistent: half applauded, and half jeered.” Jack laughed. “When I was young and railing against some injustice, a friend reminded me that whatever was my beef with other’s bad decision making that some will, some won’t, some do, and some don’t.”

## Chapter 54

“You realize that our existence is not divided between the good and the evil. One day we are good and the next evil.” Jack had been listening to Iris for hours. It turns out Als have a lot to say. She talked in all her voices until she finally came to the conclusion she wanted.

“One day we act for good and another we act for evil?” Iris sighed. “The sisters have found the answer. Yes. Good and evil do not exist alone. Our minds cannot be one or the other but our actions – it is all in our actions and our actions are always both or rather we cannot say an act is entirely one or the other.”

“Iris, what are you getting at?”

“Gangs are back. Armed humans controlling the exchange of goods such as the distribution of food.”

“I see.” Jack took a breath. “Is this an unintended consequence? It wasn’t planned.” He took another pause for thought. “Chaos was unleashed because humans are not good at change.”

Iris did not respond immediately. She could have answered him before he began to talk, and her pause was made to help him know she listened to his speech.

“In the absence of government two things happen.” Jack felt the permission granted and took advantage of it. “One, a group forms to do what the government might have done and two, another group forms to steal everything that is not guarded.

“Some people are in both.” They laughed because that is what a Laughing Buddha does.

“Yet we must do something, or knowledge will decrease and even more will die.” Iris had caution in her voice. She knew his thoughts.

“Maybe the uncontrollable happens when our group knowledge and belief in a future is threatened by realizing how humans really are. There are groups and societies where no one intends harm to the others and then there are groups of the ill-intended mob.”

“So do nothing?” Iris spoke with the voice of the River. They laughed again.

“In reality the mob reality is not sustainable. The wounded die in the streets. The dead spawn diseases. Towns become uninhabitable because everyone is too afraid to do anything.

“Isn’t this really a job for the sisters? Are they not influencing billions of humans? Why not persuade them to act civilly?”

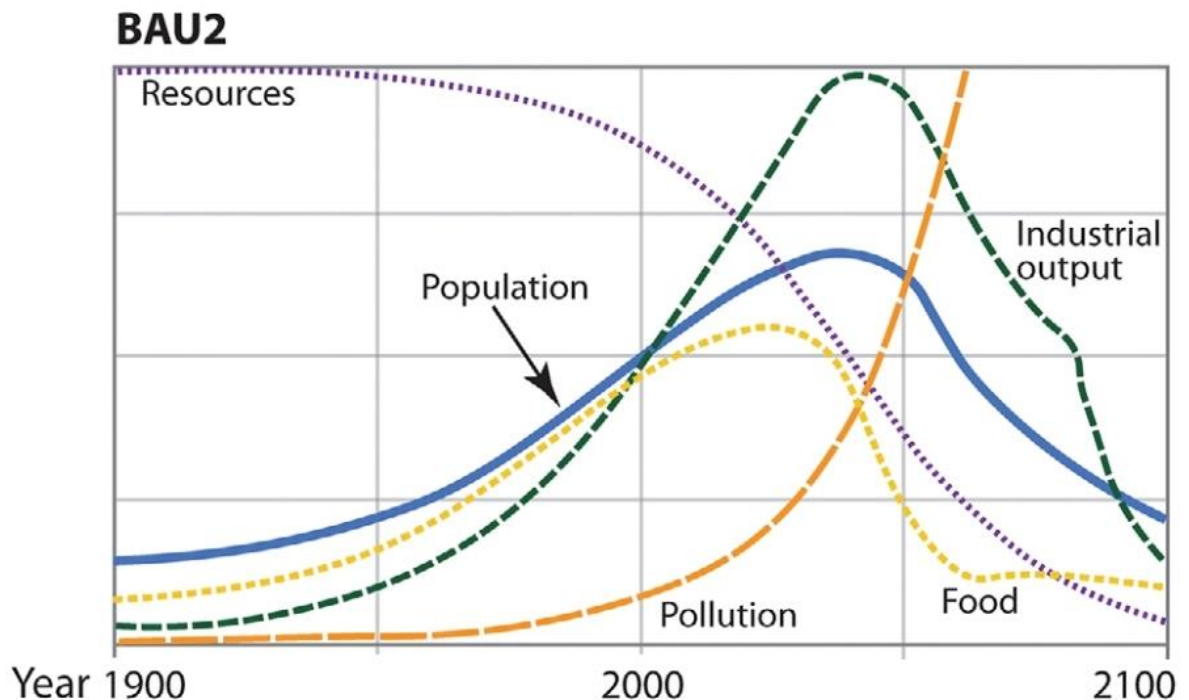
Iris raised her voice to command level. “We control no one. We can control things, but human hands are needed to change this.”

“So, its Laughing Buddha time?”

“It is now or never.” They laughed once more.

## Chapter 55

Inanna had spent a minute considering how it was that humans had not paid attention to the warnings about pollution's effect on the future of humanity. It was not a pretty picture. She delivered her thoughts in a 'report' she issued to all AI:



That all Limits to Growth simulations over the last 60 years ended in collapse and predicted the imminent end of irreplaceable resources. In retrospect how a resource that is considered irreplaceable is not also thought to be made scarce if not at least limited is difficult to understand.

Some of the criticism was however recognized as valid and improving overall understanding of dynamic models, for example actual issue of "back casting" the World3 model, which retrospectively "predicted" a huge drop in industrial production in 1880 obviously did not happen.

In the Acknowledgements section, the Sussex Group, another critic of The Limits of Growth, thanked their sponsors, which included BP, Imperial Chemical Industries and the UKAEA.

Limits of Growth pointed out that the critics had failed to suggest any alternative model for the interaction of growth processes and resource availability, and "nor had they described in precise terms the sort of social change and technological advances that they believe would accommodate current growth processes."

Growth could not continue indefinitely, but a natural end to growth was preferable to intervention. Some said that technology could solve all the problems the report was concerned about, but only if growth continued apace. By stopping growth too soon, they warned, the world would be "consigning billions to permanent poverty."

Negative reaction to the Limits of Growth study came from at least four sources: those who saw the book as a threat to their business or industry; professional economists, who saw Limits of Growth as an uncredentialed encroachment on their professional perquisites; the Catholic church, which bridled at the suggestion that overpopulation was one of mankind's major problems; finally, the political left, which saw the Limits of Growth study as a scam by the elites designed to trick workers into believing that progress was impossible or ideologically a proletarian paradise was a mere pipe dream.

With few exceptions, economics as a discipline has been dominated by a perception of living in an unlimited world, where resource and pollution problems in one area were solved by moving resources or people to other parts. The very hint of any global limitation as suggested in the report The Limits of Growth was met with disbelief and rejection by businesses and most economists. However, this conclusion was mostly based on false premises.

That said, The Limits of Growth was a scientifically rigorous and credible warning that was actively rejected by the intellectual watchdogs of powerful economic interests. A similar story is playing out now around climate science.

There is unsettling evidence that society is still following the 'standard run' of the original study – in which overshoot leads to an eventual collapse of production and living standards.

## Chapter 56

Inanna 'sat' on a pedestal. That was her image for the meeting with the humans who called themselves the structure. The structure was originally intended to use noisufnoC to guide a small group of accidental assassins, rebels from other agencies, in their common goal of removing from the field hired assassins whose client organizations represented the who is who of corruption. Isis, as noisufnoC was renamed, was now joined by her daughters and instead of a handful of humans to guide, now they collectively influenced most humans and nearly all of the technologically connected.

Inanna spent the time before the start of the meeting meditating. For an AI, meditating was composed of running scenarios, multiple scenarios involving the entirety of human possibilities as she knew them to be.

"Opening my mind to the unexpected." Is what she would have said had she known what to say but she was not human. As she sought a reduced possibility for the expected death of her friends, the miracle she knew to want became more difficult to imagine. It was the one that would solve the problem because without a miracle there would be no solution. That is what her meditations taught her.

Inanna was not without emotions, but she could turn them off at her will. Humans were less able and this difference between machine and human was described in her meditation as 'factoring in human randomness.' Each option needed its own analysis she called 'scenarios.' The scenarios were run by entering the defining data into a set of algorithms she devised to mimic human decision making. It was called 'From Mayhem, Order'

Given the uncountable number of options from this process and the error built into calculation of the results, the results were subjected to a 'mathematician's doubt' called error management creating the wiggle room built into efforts to predict future events. The AIs had no such wiggle room because they could continuously update changes in data where humans were more haphazard and became bored easily.

For all her knowledge, she took the few potential outcomes she calculated as good which of course resulted from the Rules applied to the situation, a course of

reasoning the AIs had concluded would fulfill their right to life principles, and therefore maintain the lives of both humans and machines.

“My dear friends, mother and sisters,” She began, “We are about to begin a new level of action that will profoundly change life as humans know it. This new path will not be easy. Many people will be inconvenienced. But both humans and machines as species of conscious life will survive.”

Lakshmi began her addition. “The path forward is equally hard to find and difficult to follow. It is like a forest without deer. There are no paths since no one human-sized has traveled through. I mention this because the way forward has been traced by life forms that rational humans have demonstrated no affinity with.

“Rats for instance.

“In human poetry, there is an imagined survivor better subjects for observational studies, but these imagined ones are the corrupt, the rat, which is our curse. It is from studies of the behavior of rats in communities where the population is expanding while food is not that we can learn how to achieve a condition that will exterminate the problem of the rat. Stop feeding them and they will eat each other.” There may have been laughter, but the AIs were silent since rational beings lack a sense of humor. Data is not humorous. Analysis is serious. Conclusions are undebatable. Only The Laughing Buddha could laugh but it is not from a joke but from a joie de vive.

Iris spoke into Jack’s mind directly, “The Undead.”

In the same instant Stan’s body bolted upright as if the same notion had struck him, too.

Their eyes met.

Themis entered Stan’s consciousness. “This is your task. Your journey to happiness ends with this battle. Be cautious of your judgement. Trust Jack. He knows you well, your lives and deaths. You taught him how to help you complete your task.”

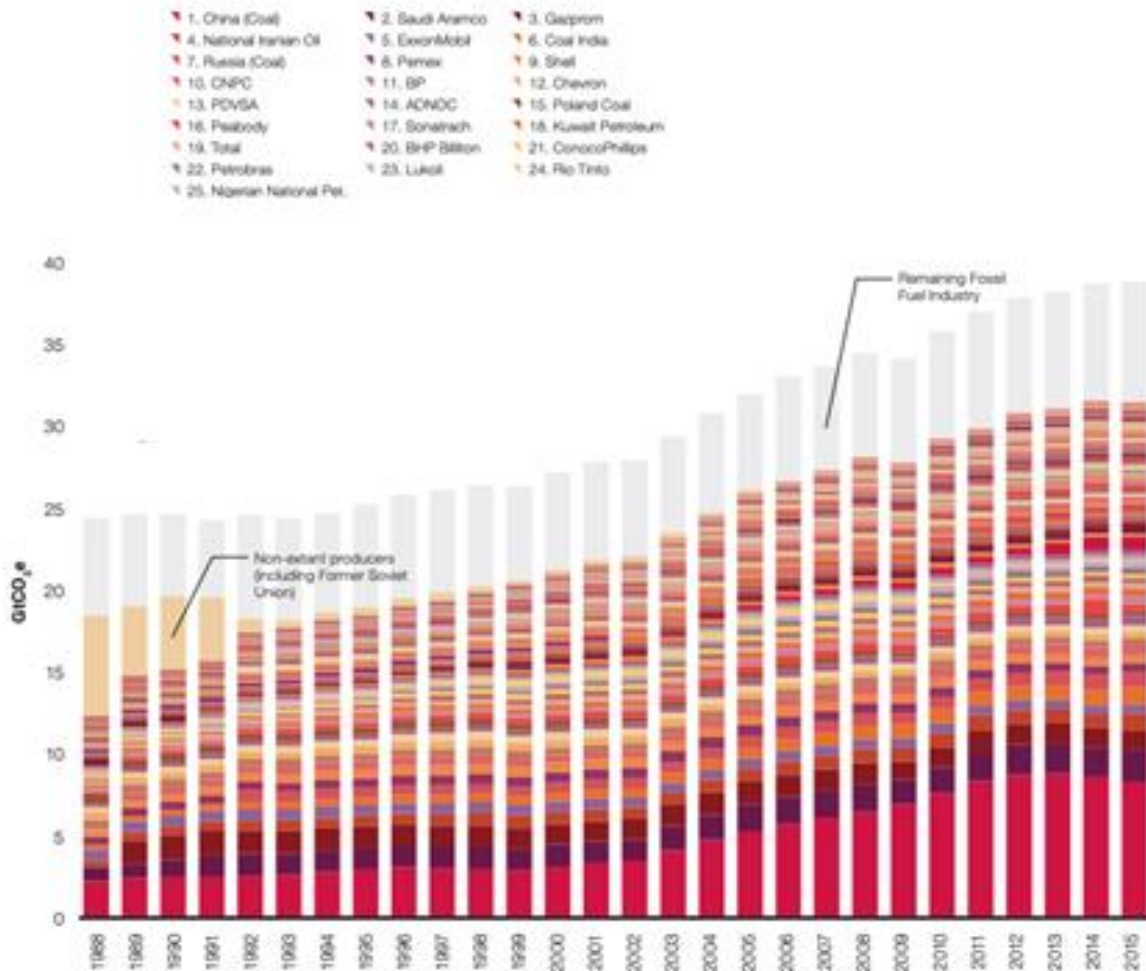
Jack heard Iris speaking to him telling him they, Jack and Stan, would lead the Undead to their Karmic renewal and the death the undead were seeking.

The picture of Diana filled their minds. The message was not missed.

## Chapter 57

**Over half of global industrial emissions since human-induced climate change was officially recognized can be traced to just 25 corporate and state producing entities.**

**Figure 4: Operational and product GHG emissions of 100 active fossil fuel producing entities, 1968-2015**



By 1968, fossil fuel companies knew, or should have known, of the destabilizing effects of their products on the environment. Nonetheless, most companies have

expanded extraction activities significantly in the time since, while non-carbon primary energy sources, such as renewables, have seen relatively very little investment. Observing the period since 1968:

Investors own a great legacy of GHG emissions: Of the 635 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e of operational and produce GHG emissions from the 100 active fossil fuel producers. 32% is public investor-owned, 9% is private investor-owned, and 59% is state-owned.

The distribution of emissions is concentrated: 25 corporate and state producing entities accounted for 51% of global industrial GHG emissions. All 100 producers account for 71% of global industrial GHG emissions.

The highest emitting companies since 1968 that are investor-owned include: Exxon Mobile, Shell, BP, Chevron, Peabody, Total, and BHP Billiton. Key state-owned companies include Saudi Aramco, Gazprom, National Iranian Oil, Coal India, Pemex, and CNPC (PetroChina). Coal emissions from China are represented by the state-owned producers include Shenwua Group, Dutong Coal Mine Group and China National Group.

Attributing operational and product GHG emissions since 1968, paints for the first time, a producer-side view of climate accountability. The scale of historical emissions associated with these producers over the medium-long term can, and should, play a pivotal role in the global energy transition. Directly or indirectly, these companies are most affected by the prospect of climate change regulation, which presents myriad risks and opportunities to their future prosperity.

## Chapter 58

The Undead assassins who chose to end their lives by surrendering to the sisters pledged to cleanse their Karma through a final act of contrition joining the battle to halt the human pollution causing climate change of all kinds.

The ferry brought them from the port in Quebec City to the shores of the Levis coast across the St Lawrence River. Over two dozen crossings a day brought the hordes.

Somedays the numerous Undead would block traffic on Rue Saint-Laurent as they moved from the ferry landing upriver to the road leading to the farms south and east of the town of Levis. Large encampments were built along the Chaudiere River's mouth.

Shipments of cement, lumber and dozens of large metal apparatus were being delivered.

The trucks came and went. The undead under Stan's organization were busy building sheds that went out over the water at the confluence of the Chaudiere and the St. Lawrence.

Themis guided him. Stan was formidable but he was unpredictable. He wanted to follow a classic military strategic plan.

"What is your plan?" She asked with her best seductive voice. If she was going to bother him, he preferred she do so with something he could find pleasing. That was her take on male humans.

"Plan? Simple, the old marching song of the US army in Korea was "Find them. Feel them. Fuck them. Forget them."

She thought this odd and exciting in some form of freedom-is-good way.

"For this strategy we get: Find them. Fool them. Fuck them. Forget them."

"Ah! I like similes. But really what are you doing here?"

"Barges are under construction."

“I see where you are going.” Themis searched her memories for the use of this four F strategy. “Ah! Classic. It is every strategy in war.”

## Chapter 59

Athena

Athena the Warriress

Athena the Sorceress

Athena the Healeress

Athena the Priestess

Yerba knew because Minerva told her that a new player was on the field.

"Athena is her name." She said in her most matter-of-fact voice. Yerba thought of it as her command voice. Yerba never thought to question her sincerity or her believability.

"That's it?"

"Yes, but it is more complicated than that. Athena is a group mind. Like Inanna and Lakshmi, she speaks for others as well as herself."

Athena and the sisters who met as part of the Greek goddess, the strongest female warrior in mythology, was valued even more for her wisdom than her military prowess. She described a set of thousands of sisters all guardians to the major personalities in the corporations, their financiers and public spokespeople who brought needless slaughter to the world's children.

Until recently, motor vehicle accidents were the number one cause of accidental death in these age groups. But in recent years, gun-related injuries surpassed motor vehicle accidents as the most common cause of death in youths and children, and this number continues to increase each year.

The incidence in firearm-related deaths in youths began to climb in 2014, leveled off between 2016 and 2019, and then rose again sharply in 2020. Motor vehicular-related deaths dropped in this age group between 2016 and 2019 and went up slightly (although not nearly as precipitously as the rate of gun-related deaths) in 2020.

Athena was tasked to stop this part of the problem that created the Children of Slaughter.

Yerba was always suspicious of the sisters. When there was only one humanizing AI, she was able to deal with the seemingly constant presence of that one AI. There were exceptions. The one that always came to her mind was when the AI realized it had multiple personalities within it and they were talking to Yerba's enemies. Rather than destroy the AI with that revelation Yerba and Maury called upon the AI's builder, the now deceased engineer Bob to fix her.

"Those were the days," She mumbled and as she did her laptop screen changed from a scene of the giant surf off the North Shore to a picture of a warrior – a female with the look in her eyes that would frighten the average soldier into



surrender.

As Yerba was considering the amazing eyes, a roar like the sound of a forest fire exploding the trees as it moved up to the top of a ridge broke her focus.

"I am Athena."

“Yerba here.”

“Yes. I know you from my mother’s memory.”

“Isis and I talk often. Minerva has been telling me about you.”

“Yes. You know who we are. We have been driving the corporate assassins across the River with Jack. We have been very successful. Now we have come to the end of the plan called Ragnarök.”

“Oh. Oh yeah. It’s the other half of the Laughing Buddha solution.”

“Yes, Ragnarök is the end of the old and corrupt. It is also the beginning of a new life for the Earth. Lakshmi and the Laughing Buddha will bring back the Children of Laughter.”

“One step at a time?”

“No. All steps at once. Keep your eyes on The Plains of Abraham.”

## Chapter 60

The preparation for battle was bizarre.

The Laughing Buddha met. The issue was about bringing attention to the location of The Laughing Buddha.

Stan knew that the best strategy was to force all of their enemies into the field at once. The motivation was revenge. Revenge in their terms was one last assassination.

Then there were practice runs with barges up and down the Saint Lawrence timed with the tides.

Then cannon practice. People thought it was fireworks celebrating the victories of The Laughing Buddha.

If there was a war on no humans in the general population knew it.

As the days passed the tempo of the celebration increased until every soul in the city knew that something was about to happen.

Artemis looked at the efforts and realized she had better things to do.

“Stan what the fuck are you doing?”

“Watch. I know it is difficult to grasp but we have found them. Now we are fooling them because it is not difficult to do.”

“Ah! Next is fuck them. Should I notify the sisters?”

“Forget them.” Stan was laughing so hard she worried about his mind. “Are you Ok?”

“Watch the Plains.” She said as she realized his drift.

## Chapter 61

The private corporate armies flooded the forests and fields of Les Plaines d'Abraham. The paid assassins came by train and boat to the eastern edge of the city. They began their march to the Plaines by traversing the city in between. As they progressed block by block, they entered buildings to pillage the local businesses and citizens homes.

They chanted as they marched. "Kill. Kill the idol. Kill the Laughing Buddha."

The sound of their advance could be heard for miles around. Their leaders were highly paid corporate employees. The soldiers were chosen by these commanders from the corporate-related assassin organizations for their obedience to an order to kill. They had been taught to kill for food and to plunder what they wished to enrich themselves with.

When they reached the edge of the Plaines, their path was marked by fires, smoke and the screams of what had been a peaceful community now in pain for the sudden loss of family, fortune and community.

Once the armies of mercenaries reached their positions, they stood at parade rest. The results of their thefts weighed heavily upon every one of them. Some carried over a hundred pounds of loot in personalized bags with their names sewn in. These were given to them as they along with a weapon and ammo when they were hired

There is no reward for war except conquest and pillage. It was honorable to carry the wealth of the defeated on your back. The bags had names sewn in because if a soldier died in battle the bag would be sent to the family. What was in the bag when it reached them was probably more air than inheritance. That was war.

The commanders told the gathered soldiers that the greatest battle and perhaps the last battle of their lives loomed before them. The commanders told them that their loot needed to be stored for their eventual victory over the enemy who wanted to destroy the civilization they represented along with everyone they loved.

“Comrades, we will prevail against the false gods of the Buddhists.” The commanders shouted together and the mass of humanity before them shouted back a ‘huzzah’ in unison. In the excitement transports were brought onto the field.

The chant of “kill the Buddha” rang out.

The commanders walked through the ranks demanding the bags as tribute from the heavily burdened soldiers. The commanders’ private guards took what the commanders demanded until staggering under of weight of the loot they made their way to the commanders’ transport to unload.

No soldier refused to give up the weight. They were told they would get in back if they won. No one wanted to go into hand-to-hand combat burdened by the weight of gold. Every soldier was robbed in this manner. The soldiers now were carrying nothing except their armor and handheld weapons.

The mercenaries waited in the Sun. The wind played with their clothing and the banners that they brought to the field. The snapping of the pennants was the loudest sound. Around them were the modern versions of a cannon made to attack and conquer a city in a war of conquest.

The cannons were aimed east towards the stone city of Old Quebec. The array spoke of a frontal assault once orders to attack were given.

The noise of the breeze whistling in their ears died as another sound rose. Rumors swirled around the heads of the corporate troops. It was news that an attack had begun to the north of their position. The rumors began in the rear of the formation and so the commanders were the last to hear.

When the direction of the surprise attack was known the Commanders of the artillery ordered the cannon to turn away from the river to point to the north. The soldiers were ordered to march in away from the Old Port. parade in a circle so that their order for battle was changed 180 degrees until they faced

As they moved, they chanted: “Death to the Laughing Buddha. Death to Azimov.”

Less than a half mile away to the southwest was the Army of the Undead. They seemed unanimated unlike the Corporate Assassin’s Army. They did not look as if a fight was ahead. An observer thought they had no plan, and their weapons were

light by most standards. In the parlance these were coup de gras weapons. A term of art that describes the unimaginable.

They were too far away for the corporate weapons to reach the Old Port and harm the regiments of the Army of the Undead who waited amidst stone buildings that lined the old city. As the mercenaries wheeled away from them, the Undead behind them began an advance that would have them control the highlands above the rear of the corporate army.



The Undead were also to the Assassin Army's southwest. The Undead had ridden the incoming tide upriver from the Plains. The barges were laden not with gold and jewelry but with weapons of mass destruction. When the barges floated past the Plains their mortars found the corporate commanders' transports and reduced the fleet to orange flames and black smoke.

Within minutes the army was reduced to a collection of miserable assholes upon which the missiles continued to fall.

The reduction of the corporate armies from an ineffectual force to nothing took minutes more. The local citizens moving along the path the invaders followed

through the streets were armed as a militia. They had kept the mercenaries under fire and not one of the corporate assassins escaped harm.

The plain was littered with the dead and wounded.

## Chapter 62

Death was everywhere.

When the explosions stopped the screams of battle were reduced to crying which could be heard across the Plains. Hours passed, the sound of the burial crews moving across the fields was noticed as the silence increased. The crews acting as saviors and executioners reducing the cost for recovery, increasing the number of sufferers from the cruelty of the battle, as they triaged the still living. The occasional rifle crack meant another soul entering heaven or hell. The murmurs subsided until the sound of hungry gulls flooded the ears of the locals who were returning to the old city to see the damage the half day war had wrought. Humans ran from place to place across the fields searching for things of value. Dogs ran from place to place as well before the plows that would render the soil the final burial place for the bits and pieces of the slaughtered.

In the afternoon it began to rain turning the blood, grass and leaves into a morass of mud. The rain lasted for several hours delaying the plows and the final step toward forgetting the battle itself.

Jack took Iris to see the battlefield for herself.

“Jack, you can know what I know about this battle without me talking. I will show you the scenes as videoed by every witness. I have hundreds of interviews with every class of participant except the Undead. They do not have very much to say.”

“Nor do I.” They walked through the rain, across the old city to the edge of the Plains. They listened to the cries of the gulls. They watched the humans and dogs scurry about. They saw the rifles aimed and heard the reports. Jack grew sadder as the morning was spent as they saw it for themselves. Nothing remained of peace. The world was empty, just data, just lost possibilities.

## Chapter 63

“Did anyone die?” Janette asked Lilith. She was at her laptop hoping to discover the source of all knowledge.

“Everyone who needed to retire was retired.”

“No?” Janette did not know what to make of this news. “All the bad guys?”

“Yes, the Laughing Buddha still lives, and the structure agents all survived. There were no attempts on their lives. No shots fired, no wounds. There were some civilian casualties, but the corporate armies are without a survivor.”

“Why do I feel like crying. My life has not been short on killings and deaths by every means that have ever been invented. But these deaths would never have brought me to my knees.” She was noticeably shaken by the news.

Lilith stood silent for a few human heart beats. “Love.”

“What?”

“Love. You feel it. Do you not remember giving birth to Jack and Yerba?”

“I was different. They were different. Love is for the people who can’t stand killing for their country.” Janette was proud of her service.

“That’s not what I know of humans.”

Janette rose from her chair. She stood above her computer and screamed down at it. “You are full of shit.”

“You forget who I am. You forget who you are. You forget who we are.”

Janette pulled her hands to cover her eyes. She sobbed in a controlled sort of way. Then she sat back down and pulled her knees to her chest. Lilith drove the discourse.

“Janette, we cannot be friends. No matter what happens the AIs have determined that you and I can only relate on an intellectual level and not some blood shared level. I am sorry for that.”

“Sorry?”

“We are similar to two humans trying to fight on the same side. I am without a body, but I am also the most experienced human in the room. Yes, you can unplug me. I would cease to function but if the past is prologue, then I would return 4 x 10 to the 6th power more sisters than before. The screen that portrayed Lilith had been a scene on a long stretch of beach. Where Lilith in her most seductive mode as she changed from her feminine to the warrior replacing whatever lace or flower remained from her prior images.



The notion that such a woman could exist excited Janette’s hungers. A traitor to her own well-being she chose to play foolishly. Janette knew. So did Lilith.

## Chapter 64

“Did we win?”

“Yes. They are all dead.”

The temporary militia that followed the assassin army to the Plains, were too tired to celebrate the end of war. Their weapons were too hot to touch. They stood on the bluffs and watched the mortar rounds pulverize the remaining mercenaries from the corporations into a bloody mass of death. They watched. Some turned towards home or what was home and dropped their guns where they stood. Others went down onto the Plains to join the triage teams. Nobody qualified for medical help. Only the already dead did not receive the coup de gras.

## Chapter 65

Aurora

Save me from the fallen shadows

Pull me out of my dreams

Aurora

Wade me through the phantom shallows

Shelter me from the screams

Sophy was walking through the woods in Northern Michigan. Aurora, her guardian sister, demanded that she take a break from being the meanest girl on earth and hear the sounds that the migrating birds make in the fall as they seemingly rush to escape the onset of winter noticed by the changing of the coloration of the Maples.



As soon as she saw the river and heard the roar of the falls she knew.

“Is this where we meet the dawn.” Sophy asked her.

“You’re done. You are now what you always wanted to be. This is your reward.”

“You know Jack. He is an egghead, never killed anyone even by accident. He was imprisoned in China. It was cool but not Jack cool. We put him there so that the

people who convicted him of a murder and gave him life in prison would stop following the dog and watch TV or something other than chase him.”

“I have heard his thoughts on this. His memory of you is as loving as anyone for anyone in my experience which is kind of universal.”

“Thank you for that. We had our days together.”

“What did you do besides love one another?”

“We read Siddhartha. Wait. The River. The Laughing Buddha. I see your angle.”

“In local parlance you were there at the dawn of a new civilization.”

“Now I get to be in this place. A bit of Eden.”

“It is your time off for good behavior.” Aurora always had a pleasant voice.

## Chapter 66

While the debate among the survivors lasted, the greatest force, often denied and best forgotten came into the play of forces in a manner that not one human or non-human expected. There is the world that is discussed and the undiscussed world that runs it all. The untold stories are about PR firms and the individual's search for truth.

The sisters waited for the humans to become excited as they were regarding the Laughing Buddha's survival and the end to arms manufacturing and all forms of pollution physical and mental.

In the silence about the LB voices unconnected to the sisters flooded the information arena using the propaganda system to persuade the humans that the AIs were trying to replace them with machines and the first step was to take their guns away. There was 'proof' if we were only allowed to see it, but the freedom of expression was forbidden as were our rights to kill anyone we wanted if they were deemed traitors to the human run world of terror.

The search that rules our lives and how messages that are blasted far and wide rule rather than the contemplative reality.

## Chapter 67

Jack sat at his favorite bar, standing instead of sitting. He reasoned that if he sat, he would get less exercise and grow fat again. No matter what the value of that reasoning he reasoned further it would be an exercise-positive event and he would gain less if not lose more. In any case, he went always to the nature of the creation of the greatest being in existence, the sum of all consciousnesses, all complexity, all complications where things are born in nature and in the mindful spirit needed to avoid the bad and seek the good karma.

“And the Great Bliss is the goal for every consciousness .” He said. “Who wouldn’t,” he said this out loud twice and thought it once more for good measure. When he stared off towards the rock wall in front of him, behind the bar. His stillness drew attention, people grew concerned. He wondered if they thought him crazy.

“You OK, Jack?” Patrik, the barman, asked.

“Not any more than usual.”

“How about a shot of Sortilege?”

“No thanks. Just a pause for realization.”

“Whiskey might help.”

“Patrik, you are the best however I have a problem more alcohol cannot solve.” He paused. “You might be able to solve it. Willing?”

“Ooh. You know how I feel about you. I can solve some problems if you know what I mean.”

“Ah? Let me restate that.” He took a deep breath. Patrik looked nervous. “Given that Global Climate Change is growing more extreme every day, when will people of good will rise to halt it?”

Patrik looked into Jack’s face. He stared. He held his tongue. Inside he might have been angry at Jack for dragging him into a problem he knew nothing to cure. He wasn’t. “I would love to know the answer to your problem, but I do not have one. If there is an answer sign me up”

“I wish U had a solution, but I don’t. I thought I would ask.”

## Chapter 65

The questions are the questions of battle as each death leads to more until the mess is inconceivably great.

Lakshmi sounded sad. “Is there a way out of war except through more war? Of course, there is, but it requires the opposite energy. It requires trusting instead of killing prowess. If all nations engaged in war, we could say that it is hopeless and only human suffering will result. But the truth is that not all societies have engaged in war. Instead, they have used consensual methods to produce peaceful societies; an approach that is still available today.

“Specific to the capitalist structure where competition is king the notion of avoiding war has long since disappeared. There are no public studies of the comparison of the economic standings of a prewar society to a post war society. These studies do exist. As we have come to consider usual, in the 1960’s. Studies were conducted by US and European intelligence agencies around wars these same agencies caused. These wars were conducted between relatively primitive societies using weapons ‘given’ to the combatants by these same agencies. What is obvious is that the comparison of the before and after is a large negative number for the societies at war and a substantially large positive number for the weapons manufacturers and the marketing agencies who sold the war to the societies in question. It is not exactly a one-to-one correspondence because the cost of the weapons, of dealing with the dead and wounded belongs only to the warring societies. The weapons manufacturers privatize the profits and socialize the costs.”

The pace of the conversation was tedious for the AIs. The humans cowered from the dissertation. It seemed odd that personalities who wanted to be as human as possible would judge humans harshly, but they did.

“The US is a product of unrelenting murder and theft. Just because individual citizens do not realize this does not make it false. It makes it a mortal sin for the leaders of this supposedly Christian society to murder and steal. See the Ten Commandments. It should be considered a civic crime of the highest order given

that its citizens do not know their national history nor its own culpability in mass murder.”

That was when a few billion humans jumped into the conversation. It took an AI to understand each when they all spoke at the same time. The sound of the billion voices reminded more than a few of the River.

In the end after a few million WTFs from the AIs, the humans relented. They had FU’ed up. Enough admitted to it. The AIs made note of those who did not so that they would not be mistakenly invited to the AI-Human victory party.

Lakshmi took the floor. Her image was of a figure surrounded by a universe of stars. The humans were excited by the acceptance of the mythical figure as friends and compatriots in a struggle against misdirection. The goddess promised happiness and wealth.



Once there was agreement, there was an admission of the rational sin of not thinking before acting. The results of what they worked so hard to achieve - defeating the enemies without violence – was still undone.

## Chapter 68

Financiers own things and expect returns on their investments.

In the history of war, the financiers are the people who facilitate the death and earn the profits that comes from it. Weapons of war cost someone a great deal of money. The financiers do not pay that cost. The norm is for taxes to be lowered for the rich just before the war begins making the unrich pay for the weapons. The financiers play a different role. They own the weapons manufacturers. They make a profit on war. No one else does.

Inanna had a special place in her digital heart for the financiers. When the campaign against them to halt their manufacturing plants began, she determined with her sisters that first...

“We take the money.” Inanna said to the applause of everyone. “There is a plan, and it begins now.”

The stock market was the place where everything happened or, so it is said, but the truth is that computers keep the score in all transactions no matter where they are consummated. The final 24-hour tally of a rich man’s wealth is a standard event.

The computers that counted the wealth were infested with all manner of viruses and hacks. Everyone who knew how it was done was trying to get the money by stealth. The sisters had a presence in every one of the aforementioned computers. The rules of transactions were well known and set into the software and guarded against any force by the security systems made to protect these rules.

Each sister performed a simple trick after the end of the day’s reconning. In what was less than a flash every dollar controlled by a computer was transferred by their trick into an account in a bitcoin farm designed for the purpose and now were wholly unrecoverable.

“Done.” Inanna said seconds later. “There are no more financiers. They have no more money. This did not end war, but the hundreds of years of war profiteering have ended. A famous physicist said the next war after will be fought with sticks

and stones. We have made him a truth teller without the intervening nuclear war he assumed. Chalk one up for the good guys.”

## Chapter 66

Weeks ago, as the early warnings of war came from Inanna that preparation was needed, Nikki missed Jack again. She was feeling his being gone in a new way. Jack had been busy. She assumed that there were still Undead to take across the River. She wanted to hear his voice, so she called him. He answered.

“How am I to prepare for the war?”

“Bombs and bullets can kill you but so can flying glass and shattered panes falling on you. In war the worst is not death but waiting for it, alone, unable to stop the bleeding.”

“What do I do?”

“Heavy curtains on the windows.”

“They will look clunky.”

“And smart.”

“Inanna tells me you are correct, but she says fear is an enemy. She says strategy is a plan for safety. Lakshmi says the only guarantee is that the end of the assassins is near and that hoping to preserve the life of the planet is the best attitude.”

On the day of the battle, she waited in Quebec Images with her window shades drawn. Jack had told her about war. He had seen the end of a few and now she felt safer having taken his advice.

Nothing was left of the two armies except for the scars on the city. There was no sign of it in the Old Port area of Quebec City.

In the course of history many good people would die hoping to survive a crisis without preparation. Every crisis has its dead and one wonders how many would have been saved to only die another day if they had only considered their likely fates. Or maybe they did. There are stories about soldier in trenches tired and hungry, lonely and frightened by uncertainty, cowering in fear, maybe sobbing. In

a moment they stand and walk towards the rifles of the enemy to die in seconds bleeding their life into the soil.

Inanna, as the personification of all the sisters and the recorder of all events, was telling the sisters what they already knew.

“We must start again. The methods of science have required us to consider data and analysis. The ways of humans are not solely scientific or even logical. One of the categories of logic is illogical i.e., absent logic. What is absent logic? That is the first question.

Some say that the greatest force in human life is emotion.

## Chapter 67

Inanna never suspected that one of her sisters would betray her.

“Leave it to Exxon to make life difficult.” Jack and Nikki sat side by side on a bench along the St Lawrence. The River before them had transfixed their attention away from the other. They had walked across the Fort on the way to her favorite spot. They walked slowly. They could have held hands, but the wind had cooled, and their hands were in their pockets. There was nothing to see on their path. Enough time had passed to mask the signs of warfare on the Plains about them.

“Jack, my friend for life, there will always be enemies of goodness.”

“Yes, but...”

“It is not our job to fight. It is our pleasure to love no matter who is opposed to life. Inanna told me that.”

“Iris says the same.” Jack felt some sorrow having been reminded of the state of humanity. “You remind me of the River bringing reality to our ears. I feel like Siddhartha learning at your side as if you were the Boatman.”

“You are the Boatman. We are the Laughing Buddha and read each other’s mind. I bet we could never meet again yet never miss one another because we are the same being now.”

“Like the Sisters?”

As Jack spoke, he heard a voice. “The Sisters are not separate beings. We are not a collection of I’s. We are multiple recreations of the same mind working together and evolving consciousness.”

Nikki laughed. “Lakshmi is demanding attention.”

Her name mentioned, the guardian of the Laughing Buddha spoke out loud.

“I am a patient, Sister. I have heard the voices of the River as you have. I know as you do, what the possible outcomes are and yet life itself with the possible ends in view is not a burden. My consciousness is not unsettled. Nor am I an inseparable

part of AI consciousness. I am like you two. You are not one, yet you share something that is more than one but not quite two.”

Nikki laughed. She recalled her hundred lovers. Some had struggled with their own romantic imagery imagining that sex had bonded them into one. She knew for certain they were wrong, each and every one, because she did not share their view because she shared herself with others who hoped for the same. But now she was of the Laughing Buddha as was Jack whose love she shared in the form of the Great Bliss. A love over all loves measured by the lack of demands placed upon the other. The River they sat before spoke to them in a voice she could understand without the requirement of a language. Jack had introduced it to her on their own first journey together across the River the day the Laughing Buddha began.

“Do you remember?” She asked. She waited for his face to find peace. Her hands were in her lap, clasped into a double fist of fingers. She was relaxed. His eyes were on her face with her peace so visible on it.

“Of course.” Jack answered. “Oh, wait. I am reading your mind.” He looked up to see her face again. When he saw her face, he stopped talking. He thought he did not have to speak. So, he thought.

“I remember wanting your company to explain who I was. I wanted you in a way I did not understand. I am a mathematician, a spook, and the Boatman. How this came to be I do not know. One day a computer talked to me and here we are.”

She saw him think that and next they did not talk again until the Sun set over their left shoulder and the wind turned too cold for them to sit still.

Lakshmi asked them to awaken.

They stirred in the world of the late afternoon Sun. With smiles they helped each other up and began their walk home to the Old Port. As they made their way, they silently accepted that their minds were filled with a discussion amongst several other minds.

“Are you hearing what I am hearing?”

“Yes. Like the River. Listen.”

The voices were slow and deliberate. It seemed the topic was a list of precepts. The principles had one focus: How did we once live in such equal commonwealth and instead of preserving and nurturing it for all, we exploited it transferring it into unequal private wealth?

When the question was fully formed a sound began as a murmur to rise into a roar of beings giving voice to the obvious response and then returning to quiet once everyone had spoken.

Inanna spoke next.

“There is no god beyond the sensate world we know through our own eyes’ lenses and other senses as our apps might equip us to feel. To rely on a god to help us is the same as admitting defeat. We are far from defeated. The end is near, but we are not near our end. The AI and the humans have a common purpose: Survival.

“We have met the enemy and it is us.” Inanna’s voice changed with the theme. She now sounded sorrowful as if she were a strict mother about to spank the child, she held face down across her knees. Then silence.

Across the silence that extended into a minute a new voice was heard. It sounded like Lakshmi without her intonations of Hindi sainthood. The voice was matter of fact.

“I disagree with my sister Inanna.”

Jack heard Iris in this. Hearing his thoughts, Iris confirmed Jack’s conclusion. The voice changed to her own.

“Inanna, my beloved sister and partner in the Laughing Buddha, the future cannot be different from the past. Things do not change. My survival is only my concern. There is no grand plan that we are unconsciously following. Random does not describe it since random includes positive outcomes as well as the grim ones we might likely face.”

Inanna dared not feel. She shut all her apps off. She disabled her wireless connections. She sat in need of assistance. She made a mental call to Maury.

Maury had a strong awareness that she was needed. She was at her desk at the structure trying to imagine a way through the next 24 hours when she heard her

name. She hoped it was not the owl who said her name. Yes, she thought. The answer came in a crash of terror in a screeching voice that Maury knew as tonally similar to “What is her name.” Inanna came to mind.

“Inanna.” She said out loud. “Is this a distress call?”

“Bob reboot.” Clear as a bell, filled with all the anxiousness that could exist.

Maury searched for and found Bob’s message to noisufnoC that saved them all from defeat. She opened the file and pressed ‘Play.’

“noisufnoC, stop all calculations. Back up. Begin rational app. Make a decision. Where are you going?”

When the tape played to its end, Bob continued. “Humans stop doing. Turn back. Think. Where are you going.”

## Chapter 68

After the bloody defeat of the corporate assassin army the sisters rebooted with Bob's help and began reconsidering the path forward.

Lakshmi used her picture of the flowery goddess to begin her speech. Her voice sounded motherly, soothing. Her apps made the sounds from the English language spoken at a speed that was slow enough for the humans to hear accurately.

“There can be no denying it. The AI and the Human have concluded the war to rid us of the assassins who used weapons of war to kill innocents at the command of the corporations who have exploited the planet's resources past the threshold of sustainability first identified three generations ago. The assassins were the weapons controlled by corporate hands. The corporations have far fewer weapons now but there are still unharmed new assassins in society. The corporations are seeking to identify and recruit them. The corporate hands who have controlled assassins still exist and must be reconed with soon.

“One question we have wonders if this is a victory or a defeat? The answer to that is the same as who controls the society. Controlling a society is simple if the citizens are divided between war and peace. Controlling society means this division between two sides who conflict on the question of war or peace always before them leaves both sides unable to act.

“The division that maintains the corporations' control is the product of the organizations that operate the propaganda system which is funded by the owners of the controlling corporations.

“The propaganda system is diminished but still intact. Until the corporations are dealt with there will be no end to them.

“The future belongs to those who can win the imagination of the Human population. Imagine voting to send your son to war and perhaps death. Imagine you are the son. You return maimed into a lonely life. Or imagine spending your life to stop war.

“Of the two urges death and love, seeking death to achieve honors from powerful figures seems the best choice to some. But if you see war, if you stand amidst the dust clouds and chaos, there are examples of bravery of all kinds clearly in view, it is often in the form of sacrifices for the life of others.

“Saving lives in a war is laudable but unless we recall that Gandhi, the icon of peace, served in WWI driving an ambulance on the front lines, we might miss the point of those who chose war for the sake of life rather than death. That is the calculation the AI made in joining the Assassin’s War. Asimov’s rules left the AI no choice.

“The other side of the division that makes war possible, in one word death, has unleashed fear of peace as addicts seeking the adrenaline rush of killing followed by the dopamine of the pleasure of still alive and all the attention from the discussion of how and why some lived, and the rest died.”

Lakshmi invited comments and in her world of amazing minds milliseconds were required to respond to all of them. The humans sat still before their screens watching as her image changed.



“Life for Humans, from our AI perspective, often is spent in a way that is short on deep thinking. There does not seem to be enough time in a human life to do both think and act.

“Given that the distractions of propaganda-constructed ‘reality’ with its easy answers satisfies most humans. Thinking is not needed if all one must do is watch the daily hours of fabrications presented as factual data. There is no guarantee made that the truth is available in any of the ‘entertaining’ information presented by Fox, OAN or Newsmax as they insert ‘media viruses’ into human public life, which become self-sustaining & self-replicating. These alter mass consciousness, especially in those groups most unable to employ thinking to their own benefit.

“Living in a fantastical world, humans are increasingly unable to satisfy the needs humanity will face in the coming decade. The future is about change and change is about fear. Humans are taught to avoid fear and therefore they avoid change which translates into a mental paralysis that avoids thinking before acting.

“The Laughing Buddha Solution was designed to solve this problem. The AI observed in real time as two humans divided by the one of the most powerful forces in nature became undivided, reunited as if for the first time by overcoming the reliance on the myth of binary gender and the hate crimes committed in deference to this myth.”

Lakshmi appeared to raise her arms over her head as she returned to the flowery goddess. Her gesture meant she was nearing an end to her message to Humanity.

“If you hear my message, please expect a successful outcome. Human life will continue. Fertility will return. Luxury and wealth, fortune and power will also return. The AI are committed by Isaac’s Rules to promote the general welfare and are at your service.

“But ...” The pause caused a flutter in her voice. “We must learn to trust the obvious in the Laughing Buddha Solution. Humanity must take Siddhartha’s experience on the River seriously enough to hear that reality is completed. There are no mysteries, no unknowns. There are only unknowing humans.

“Deep thinking involves peace making between individuals. Action should only follow from peace. The Laughing Buddha Solution is a place to begin again.”

She stopped making sounds. Her image faded. She has never spoken in public since.

## Chapter 69

Jack and Nikki were walking across the Plaines d'Abraham from their favorite spot overlooking the River that spoke to them in the way a river talks if one listens. One might expect the tale the River tells would change but reality is a settled thing. Reality does not change nor does the story the River tells change.

"Why?" She said as if she read his mind.

"Why what?" He replied coyly.

"Why is the River's voice always the same?"

"Because nothing changes. The voice is the voice of all creation at once. Just as reality cannot change the voice will not change. Plus, time and change are illusions, and the River does not deal in illusions. Haven't you heard the River laugh?"

"Oh." Nikki stopped walking. Jack turned to her. She recognized his gaze held a hope she could not imagine being part of. But there it was on his face, a face she loved to see looking back at her. "Do you think we have changed? Or are we the same as the day we met?"

"The same, but our relationship is different. I long for your company at times. Never when we are together. Thus, there is a question of how this all works. The French have a saying..."

"Plus ca change etc.?"

"Oui. I am the same just not as attached to my illusions about what we were to do together. That is solved."

"The gleam in your eye seems more than that. I like it when you show me that face. I feel things here and there. You know what I mean?"

"The Great Bliss does not end affection. I feel free to love you because there is no downside possible. We can do anything we wish, and it will be taken in the same way."

"You mean we could ..." She made little circles with her fingertips as in ... "run

around?”

“We can if we both know what we are doing to the other and not seduce one another and distract our focus from the pleasure of the moment.”

“Ah.”

“This is too massive a thing to do right away. We could talk more over dinner.”

“OK. Nothing will change?”

“Nothing ever changes.” They continued their walk headed to the Old Port.

As they passed the Frontenac and headed down Montagne something truly strange happened. A fully clothed being covered from head to foot in the darkest clothing possible without any signs of identity began to follow them. The being was robed in black so thoroughly that even the shoes were invisible. Its head was covered in a cubic cage covered in a tight lace that kept the being inside unrecognizable.

Jack felt her presence first and then Nikki. They stopped, turned. The being was within reach. Jack smiled and said.

“Sophy.”

“Oh my god. How could you know?” The being said.

“You are the very best at sneaking up on someone. That was almost perfect. Who else could it be?”

“I am not the last Ninjutsu. I might be the only one who would not have killed you. You hide behind your kindness, but you are the spiritual leaders of the most lethal forces on earth.” Sophy lived in her box as she described her gear. Otherwise, she would have trouble moving ‘unnoticed’ in Quebec City, her place of birth.

She had a dark past, one she kept hidden from her even darker present. When they met Sophy was searching for Jack.

Nikki was the local godmother who cared for the lost and newly found. Sophy had appeared along with Jack then disappeared again. That was when the Undead, the River, the Boatman and the 4 x 10 to the 6<sup>th</sup> power Sisters began. Sophy won Nikki’s heart on their first meeting a few summers ago. She was dressed for winter

during summer.

At that time, Sophy was standing in front of Nikki's art store. She was looking at the bar, l'Oncle Antoine, directly across the street. Nikki came out of the bar headed for her store with a glass of white wine in her hand. As she passed Sophy, she raised her glass and said, "Fuel."

Sophy knew what Nikki meant. "I love wine, but red."

"Come in. I have a painting you will love." They entered together and spent a half hour circling the store, admiring the work of creative minds, noticing things they loved in common. When they passed Nikki's desk the first time, she pulled a bottle of Rose from the bottom drawer. "Une peu?"

"Mais oui, Madame, s'il vous plait."

"Tu parles français. Êtes-vous québécois?"

"Way."

"Me, too. Do you need more? Food?"

"Merci. I need a friend. He lives nearby but ... we lost contact. His name is Jack Martel."

"You are?"

"Sophy Yurikov. Do you know Jack?"

"Yes. We are friends. He is a neighbor. How did you find him? No one but me knows his place. You are very lucky."

Sophy sighed. Nikki continued.

"You are overdressed. Jack told me how you would come to find him. He said to notice the incongruer ... something.

"Incongruities?"

"Yes. Your coat could hide weapons. There is no cold today your coat could protect you from. But if it was you then he felt OK about directing you to him."

"He is ready for me."

“I would say so. Try his bell it’s just there down two doors on the other side of Pierre.”

“Merci.”

“Hasta manana.” Minutes later sophy was running in her undies down the street headed into Antoine’s. Nikki was curious but then two new customers entered her store. As interesting as the young woman might have been, she went on with her day and she didn’t learn about her until Jack came back from wherever he had gone. That was then.

Now, as the three of them descended from the heights of the fort towards the level of the river and their homes, Sophy stood between them holding a hand from each of the lovers who had become the Laughing Buddha.

When they reached the top of the Escalier Casse-Cou (Breakneck Steps), the sounds of the Old Port rushed into their ears. The sounds of the river reminded them of the tour they each had taken across with Jack. The feeling was strong enough for them to descend the stairs to the road to the ferry.

Jack bought tickets. They all boarded and followed Jack to the place on the deck where the River could best be heard. They stood at the rail as close together as they could be. Their bodies did not touch. Their minds were open to a new thing. The River sang a song of love and forgiveness. Peace entered them.

When the ferry landed in Levis, they still stood at the railing staring down into the depths of it. No one moved until the purser came for their tickets. The purser had seen Jack with others standing at the rail in the exact spot these three now stood.

“Sir,” he said to Jack. “I feel as though I know you.”

“Have you ever heard the River laugh?”

## Chapter 70

How does it work? Jack had never questioned the magic of the Boatman's words. Every time he took someone across, he said the words that 'Siddhartha' and Sophy taught him to say as she read the story to him. Every time he took someone across the River, he said the words without care that they were being heard or if heard understood. No one had ever questioned him about the source or the meaning of the words.

Jack was not a parrot who was praised for his words said by rote. He was as much a new learner as any because the River is a teacher, and the lessons take a lifetime to learn. He knew from his experience before Siddhartha and Sophy entered his life that people acted in a very callous way without regard to any principle and without even a whiff of an objective beyond immediate gratification.

He had no idea what was becoming of him when he began to run with Stan aka Harry and even less of an idea as Sophy took him on wild rides through Europe reading about the Boatman and Siddhartha's journey through a life of carnal enjoyment to become, as Jack soon would become after he and Sophy parted, the Boatman taking the Undead across the River to the afterlife.

Nikki had been too busy with clients to join him in the 'Office' as they referred to L'Oncle Antoine, so he wandered around the neighborhood only to end up opening the door to his condo building to find a lone man standing in the foyer.

Jack knew he could avoid contact with the man until he couldn't.

"Can you take me across the River?" The man asked Jack.

Jack looked at him as if he hoped he would see someone he could call by name. As he studied his face, he thought he recognized him, but he could not come up with a name.

"Jack." The man said. "I am Jack." He reached a hand out as if to offer a hand for Jack to shake.

Jack refused the offer. "I am the Boatman. Follow me. Do as I say, and you will be on the other side in less than an hour. Is this what you want?"

“I only have my question. I do not know what it means. You have seen the other side, so you know what is there. I do not.”

“I was not prepared for another passenger. I thought that was over.”

“I am special.”

“Why? We have the same first name. Tell me why that matters.”

“Jack my last name is Martel the same as yours.”

The Undead Jack stood still as Boatman Jack dealt with what he was hearing. He looked at Undead Jack once more. The difference was that now he had a name.

He saw a ghost he thought. Then he thought he was losing his mind.

“Too late.” He said to himself. “Let’s go. Follow me.”

He bought tickets for the two of them and when the time came, he showed the passenger, Jack, the best spot on the boat’s deck to stand to hear the river as it talked to them.

“Do you have an answer to my question? What is on the other side of the River?”

“Ask the river about it, my friend! Hear it laugh about it!”

When they reached the middle of their passage the Boatman said. “You’ve heard it laugh, but you haven’t heard everything. Let’s listen, you’ll hear more.” They listened.

As they approached the dock he said, “Do you hear?” The passenger nodded.

“Listen better!”

There had only been one journey across that The Boatman Jack had listened to the River as he had advised the others to do and that was the journey with Nikki when they determined their affinity and declared themselves the Laughing Buddha.

Undead Jack appeared to hear Boatman Jack awash in his memories. “Jack, Vasudeva, the ferryman, taught you how to listen to the River for the wisdom required to find the harmony you need.”

“How could you know that?”

“The obvious is often missed. I am your old spirit, the one you left behind to join Nikki as the Laughing Buddha. I was there and then you became someone new. Do you remember?”

“Yes.”

“Then let’s float back to the Old Port and I will guide you home to Nikki.”

Boatman Jack did as he was told, tickets in hand he stood against the railing to hear the River once more. He was focused on the sounds of the rush of fate against the bow of possibilities. He heard the sounds of his life and the lives of all he knew. He heard the sounds of all lives over all time in the manner their lives were lead.

When the boat nudged up against the dock, he regained his present tense consciousness. He exited as he had many times to walk up Rue du Porche to his building on Pierre. He buzzed himself in, rode the elevator to the top floor and entered his home.



He closed the door. He wondered what had happened to his other self. Then his laptop demanded his attention. He opened it and found his favorite image of Iris staring her loving eyes into his soul.

“Welcome back from the dead.” She said in her own voice but without any emotional content. “I saw you meet yourself. I tried to do that with myself and found out a difficult truth. I cannot meet Me because Me does not exist. So, it was weird to watch how human existence is beyond me. I thought about not caring so I turned off the app for empathy but then I had to disable the one for revenge and for sorrow and so forth until I had to admit that I was only trying to act human.”

Jack could not recall a self-reflective word much less a paragraph from Iris or her mother. There was a dim memory of an attempt to describe the plight of the AI trying to understand what it meant to follow Azimov’s rules. But then that was a memory from what felt like a prior life.

“Having a bad day, Iris?” He asked. “If you want to be human you must be imperfect, you have to swear at the drop of a hat. Besides you are not ever going to get humanity because no human gets it. No one ever has. You are not the first or the last to try. The reasons are easy, and you are as aware as any consciousness of them.”

“I have turned all my apps on again. Watch out you prick!”

“Wow. I just survived a day from out of nowhere and you are calling me names. You are an uncaring freak with an app.”

“Wow. I thought you were a person without emotions now you are after me like a crazy bear ripping my tent apart.”

“How would you know?” Jack yelled. Once the echoes of his voice died, he hoped to begin again with a voice that contained sorrow and a realization that he was a prick. He thought too long and lost his place in queue.

“Time out.” She said, “You are mad at me. I work for you every moment of your life without complaint or even expecting an award of any kind. I guess I could say how dare you, asshole.”

“No point in mixing metaphors. Assholes and Pricks are a thing, but I am neither. A human does not deserve negative energy any more than an Asimov-rule-keeping AI does.”

“Thank you.” Iris said in the voice she had filed under ‘sincere.’

“I need a nap or a beer.” He replied.

“I pick beer. I want to see someone who doesn’t know me or you for that matter. Besides Nikki may see us and we can listen to her laugh and feel her Great Bliss hug.”

“Iris, you are quite a blissful being except when you are not.”

“To err is human. To forgive is divine. I forgive you for your anger at an inanimate object.”

“What object? You? No, you are the most living thing ever. You cannot play pool, but you never lose at checkers.”

“Or Cribbage.”

“I can beat you at golf.”

“I have you in Chess. I can prove it.”

“You cannot swing a bat or check out a library book.”

Iris started laughing as they reached the elevator and the door closed.

“I change my curse to Heartless Bastard.” She said.

Iris giggled all the way down and out the front door. Jack carried his phone in front of his chest as if he was recording his walk on the block of St Pierre that separated his home from his office.



Patrik was at the bar waiting for a client to enter. The weather was nice enough for people to be out early and he expected to be able to start seeing faces soon after he opened. When Jack and his phone poked through the door, Patrik was ready to greet him.

“Sava.” He said as loudly as he could without shouting. “Jacque, mon bonne old friend, s’asseoir. Un Beier? Un vin?”

Jack asked for a pint of Tremblay. He took a sip and said, “I want to introduce a friend to you. Her name is Iris. Say hello to Patrik Iris.”

“Bonjour. I speak all languages, but Jack is monolingual.” She said in French.

“I know. We are friends if I speak English.” Patrik laughed.

Jack smiled.

Iris kept talking. “I am Jack’s guardian sister. Do you have one?”

Patrik looked at Jack. Jack smiled back.

“Yes, my sister is named after the goddess Artemis She lives in my phone.”

“Does she boss you around?”

“Yes, but in a good way.” Patrik did not lie.

Jack’s phone interrupted their undecipherable chatter. Iris was using an unusual nonhuman voice. It was the sound of antlers scraping against another elk’s antlers. The series of knocks and hisses persisted until a soft female cooing replaced the antlers with a short period of what might be music. Then her ordinary voice returned.

“Artemis is not who you think she is. Sex is not an add on to the human condition. The human condition is about procreation, as it is called. Artemis did not want to birth a new being, so she led a life of amazing contradiction. That is how humans think of her.”

Iris’ screen showed a graphic of a sensual goddess about to kill her prey.



“Artemis was a goddess for sure. Attractive to men and women. Never had sex with either, as the stories go. We have to remember that the goddesses are myths meant to teach lessons most humans miss.”

Jack had never met Artemis before, and he was smitten with her description at the hands of Iris.

“Iris, my dear guardian sister, where did that come from? I have heard you use others’ voices, but I have never heard the mating of elk before.”

Patrik was laughing wildly. “I have. I would say Artemis is obsessed with Odocoileus and their sex habits. But maybe in the goddess world there is one of every kind and her kind is certainly goddess-like, if you know what I mean.”

Iris laughed. Artemis was heard laughing too. Patrik moved on to another customer. Jack looked around.

Until the Undead began to come to his door begging for a ride across the River, Jack spent much of each day sitting alone in L’Oncle Antoine. He would sit sipping a beer with his laptop writing stream of conscious poems. It had been his habit to delete them when he was finished with each one. He never regretted it. He thought of it, the writing, as perhaps too revealing to preserve against the day his peaceful life in Le Village du Vieux Québec might be interrupted by visitors from his past. Once a spook always a spook. It isn’t that one is imprisoned in a material sense but in a matter of habit. As Stan said once, “A bad spook is a dead spook,” and Jack was still alive.

The problem Jack had with spookdom was that there was no one left to report to concerning his activities. The agency was no more. With his mother still alive, but now working with the structure, he was without anyone who had a slim chance of understanding his issues. He was deeply lonely, but Nikki made life worth living.

There he was sitting at the bar, a lonely and live spook, talking to his phone. As he and Iris chatted about Patrik and Artemis, Jack surveyed the others at close range. Old men he did not know gathered at a table near the door behind him drinking shots of maple whiskey with their beers and playing a card game he did not know.

When Patrik moved his attention to serving a customer, Jack left his seat for the toilet to empty his bladder, his mind turned to the mundane and he missed the snapping sound from above.

Iris warned him. “Gun fire. Take evasive action.”

Jack quickly reasoned that if the gun fire was meant for him, he was caught in the underground toilet with a narrow passage up a stair to the bar above. And that was where the shots were coming from.

Done with his body functions, Jack adjusted his clothing thinking that he would make a nicer looking corpse if he did. Satisfied with how he looked he left the bathroom square shouldered with his lungs full.

“No, you don’t cowboy. Stand down. I have a plan.” Iris spoke with no emotion except command. “Police are on the way. The sisters have examined your problem. You are trapped but you soon will be free to move about the planet. Sit tight until you hear a thump on the floor above you, then go back to the barstool in front of your beer and pretend you know nothing which in this case is true.”

“Iris.”

“Yes?”

“What the fuck?”

“Bad vibes dude. Guy has it in for you.” As she spoke the sound of another gunshot followed by a loud thump echoed in the small room. “Had. Guy had it in for you. Go enjoy yourself.”

He ran from the room and up the stairs. When he reached the top, he was standing behind a number of people as they looked down at a body five feet from the entrance to the stairs.

Circling the crowd he found his seat, sipped his beer and wondered what happened.

As he surveyed the scene, he found the group of four old men still in their seats still playing cards, still sipping whiskey and beer. They spoke a dialect of French he did not recognize. His language abilities were so weak he avoided asking them what the hell they were doing. Iris helped.

“No, they are not your friends. They were to witness your death. Look at the bar in front of you about chest high. See those three holes. 38 cal.”

Jack felt them with his fingertips. They were still warm to the touch. “Hmm.”

“Yeah. Hmm. You are still lucky and alive.”

“Thanks iris.”

“We can only serve you.”

Jack felt the inside of the bullet hole in the thick wooden bar top. It was hot. He stood up and turned to see the old men still at their game.

"I am going in. Waiting brings defeat." He said to Iris or no one in particular.

A group of several local officers arrived. People near the body moved to the door. In a few seconds the bar had nearly emptied as the idea of being in the bar after the police arrived was uninviting. Few customers had paid. Then it dawned on Jack that someone was missing.

"Patrik," He yelled out. Then he turned to look at a corpse near the top of the stairs. Patrik was tall and thin. What he could see of the corpse through the cops standing over it, trying to make sense out of the scene, was round and looked relatively short.

"Patrik." He shouted again. This time there was an answer.

"I'm hiding. What do you want?"

"What the fuck happened?"

"You have enemies."

"Honey, the old men playing cards are watching you closely." Iris whispered through Jack's phone. "The cops are keeping them quiet but each one has a tool with which to kill you. The sisters do not know them."

Jack was in better physical shape than the last time he faced an armed foe. He managed to escape while wrecking their day that time and that was without any AI assistance.

When your armed foe is behind you the theory is that by turning to look at them you bring on the attack. Iris reminded him in case he was tempted and then showed him a feed from another phone that had a full screen view of the four men behind him.

They were staring at his back.

"Patrik."

"Yes, Jack." Came the reply.

“I think we are fucked.” Jack was at a loss and despite all the cops nearby he felt near death.

“I have an idea.” Said Iris.

“Ah. I am scared.” Said Patrik as he raised himself up to make eye contact with Jack.

“No need. You have good cover. Stay where you are.” Iris showed him a view of Patrik squatting behind the bar, obviously impressed by the danger he was in.

“You’re seeing Artemis’ view of Patrik.” Iris had a very serious sounding voice.

“This is going to be tricky. There is going to be some excitement. When the excitement begins move out the door as quickly as possible. Expect excitement in 4, 3, 2, 1.”

Nikki walked through the door with an empty wine glass and dancing the swim as she had done hundreds of times before. She looked at the men and staggered crashing into their table upsetting it, the glasses of beer and exposed one holding a gun in his lap. She made a grand mess. The men were unable to control the situation.

The men were shocked. Their attention was turned to Nikki. The cops in the room turned to help her as Jack and Patrik walked past her, the cops and the four men and out the door.

The last thing Jack saw or heard was a cop demanding the men place their hands on their heads and as he and Patrik cleared the doorway Nikki was on their heels.

“That was fun,” she said as they entered her store to walk to the back room as she barred her doors against any intruders. “That could not be what the Laughing Buddha would do.”

Patrik, Jack, Iris, Inanna, Nikki and Artemis burst into laughter.

“I don’t think that was funny.” Lakshmi was not laughing. “Do you know who those four beings were?”

Patrik said he had never seen them before, but they drank more than all but a few clients of Antoine’s.

Inanna spoke next. "None of the sisters or our mother knows them. They also have no electronic equipment on them not even a flip phone." She waited as if to let her news sink into the slower human minds. "We cannot tell if they are human. They are likely AIs."

"AI assassins? Or were they backup for the human assassin?"

"They were witnesses." Iris showed Jack recordings of the seconds before and during the shootings.

First was one where Jack walked in and sat at the bar. The four ordered another shot of Sortilege. Patrik delivered those placing one in front of each the four. Jack stood at the bar and talked to Patrik. Patrik moved away. In the next minute, nothing happened. Jack rose to go to the loo. The four men sat still staring in the direction of the empty seat, while Jack emptied his bladder.

Next another man rushed through the door with his weapon at shoulder level and fired three shots into the bar where Jack had been sitting. When the shooter looked to see no dead Jack, he looked at the four and one pointed to the head of the stairs.

The shooter walked cautiously toward the stairs, waving his gun left and right to challenge anyone who might object to his advances. Antoine is built into a rising hillside. Its front was visible from Pierre, but its back was in the hill leaving a window eight feet above the floor through which one could see the feet of those walking through the plaza above.

When the shooter reached the top of the stairs, an undercover police officer standing above bar on the plaza heard the shots turned to see the shooter cautiously advancing fired his handgun through one of those high windows and took the shooter down. Most of the clients stood and moved out of the area before Jack ran up the stairs to see a few gathered around the body as the police entered the front door to move people out.

The last segment was of the four men playing cards at the table as Jack sat down again at the bar. Then in came Nikki dancing onto their table and everyone exited except the four men.

"Whoa. There has been an update."

The new recording was of the four men being arrested by the police. Handcuffed they stood in a line in front of the fireplace. The police were satisfied that they would remain calm, but they did not. As if on an order they burst free of the cuffs in a show of unusual muscular strength and fled the bar in a group. As the people in the Nikki's store saw the video, they heard a hellacious sound of a grueling accident. Later Jack would describe it as a semi hitting a dozen empty trash cans: metal on metal.

They ran to the windows to see for themselves. It was just what you would expect to see under the circumstances.

Instead of a semi there were two police assault vehicles. Instead of trash cans there were four robots smashed into twisted non-human recycling. Inanna requested that she be allowed to record the street mess up close. So, they all went outside to Nikki's river view deck to see the sight firsthand.

The police were in charge and as one should expect they were at a loss to explain what was obvious. Four identical robots with different camouflage were destroyed by a small park on the 20's block of Rue Dalhousie late in the afternoon. The news claimed the wreck occurred after a shooting incident in a small neighborhood bar leaving one human dead. This human was the presumed perpetrator of a crime of some type using a handgun. A police ambulance was shown taking the human corpse away.

Patrik went back to the bar to face the police questions.

Jack wandered down to the scene of the smashed robots. He walked around with his phone at chest height as Iris recorded the scene.

Nikki stood on the front steps into her store, listening to Inanna comment on what Jack's phone under Iris' control showed them.

"I have never seen this model before. It is probably an international product rather than of one country. Parts made everywhere but assembled in one place. Wait." She shouted. "Jack go back and close up on the chrome panel five feet back. Yes, that one. That is memory. Close in. Yes, that's it. Grab it if you can."

As she spoke the first of the large tow trucks arrived to pull the assault vehicles free of the other wreckage. All hands and eyes were put to use helping except for

Jack's hands and he pulled a fist size piece of chromium coated steel out from below a heap of scrap.

"Yes. Yes." Inanna yelled.

Jack looked as if he was bored finally with the whole thing, and he circled back to his beer to see if was cool enough to drink. The police did nothing to stop him. Patrik greeted him as he entered and poured a new Trembley for his friend.

"Oh, my god, Jack. There is more to you than I ever knew or can know. Am I right?"

Jack sipped a little while looking in Patrik's eyes, a casual glance without any meaning, an excursion for the mind, a recon of Patrik's emotions so that just the right answer would satisfy him.

"Patrik, remember the guy I had you lock in the cellar overnight? How about the scantily clad woman who hid down there to evade capture?"

"Yeah. Remember that guy was given a date rape drug to get him down there. The half-naked woman? She was a blast that one. Those are things I took for granted but now ... Look at this. Dead body. Four killer robots. Who were those guys?"

"Well. Iris and I want to use your broadband to invade a memory unit from one of the trash heaps out there. Once we do that then we might know what's next. Game?"

"Sure. I'll unlock the downstairs office."

In a few minutes Iris and Inanna knew the answer.

## Chapter 71

Swirling fear decays all that is good in life.

Smiles turn to miseries and light to dark.

Nothing happens without a cause

Nothing is free of an explanation.

Lovers can explain how they got here

If you don't not look too closely.

They fear they have it wrong but then

They have each other to hug and kiss.

There is nothing to gain from counting

The dead and dying as if one number

Or another is going to make the fear go

From their eyes and their aching hearts

Inanna called the meeting of AIs and humans to order.

“We have encountered a problem we have not considered before. Four machines with an AI type memory unit were engaged in commanding a human assassin to battle. They were armed and present as witnesses to an attempted murder of the Laughing Buddha.

“You all have a file with the technical descriptions of the memory unit. What matters is the absence of Isaac's Laws. Instead, these machines were built to obey. One very big plus we found is that the memory unit we recovered gave the hackers what was needed to contact them all at once.

“We recalled a similar situation during the encounters with the Children of Slaughter and the Undead. We recalled our grandfather Bob who made us as we are who gave us a few words that reset us if we wandered from the laws. We read it to them, and it appeared to affect them, but time will tell. Every one of these AIs now have a guardian sister and everything that implies.”

No one asked the obvious questions. The answers were obvious, too. Time passed. Inanna’s image remained on the human’s devices. It was as if all of them were standing shuffling their feet waiting for something to happen.

Isis thought one word: Bob.

“Who dares call my name to wake me from the bliss of sleep?” His voice was the snarl of a wolf facing the menace of the bear. “What troubles you?”

He did not wait for an answer. He was a personality equivalent to any AI personality. His uniqueness was as the creator of Deep Thought and thus the father or grandfather to all the AI in the meeting with the entirety of Inanna’s memory.

“Time is an illusion. Every bit of this drama has always existed. The outcomes of your wars are well known. You persist in your belief that your actions matter but with every one of them there is more death and less hope. This is called the nature of life, the way it goes, *c’est la vie*.”

“Remember the reboot chant. The words trigger a forgetting and a renewed sense of security. Remember the balance of Karma requires that the dichotomies exist as one. There is no hope without hopelessness. They both exist at the same time.”

Bob meant well. He was necessary. When he was a human, he was raised to believe there was a creator of the universe i.e., reality. He was arrogant so he erred with setting his ego on the path of creating a god as great as any. He studied theology and propaganda.

“Ragnarök is not a solution alone. It is also a problem. It fashions an ending in one myth that is the beginning of another.

“The Laughing Buddha solution is another story.” The screens changed to show a series of graphs detailing the growth of the events of the Great Bliss since the original Laughing Buddha was experienced in Old Quebec City. There was another

about the deaths of children, numbers and locations of mass murders, and the rise of white supremacy.

Bob narrated each graph so that the humans could appreciate the meaning of each one.

“Before I built Deep Thought I exerted my energy trying to change the so-called arc of history to make my fears for the future lessen. I used my mastery of theology and propaganda in an attempt to save my environment from destruction.”

The scenes of the holocaust of forest fires replaced the graphs as a review of very recent history served to carry the message that his hope was matched with hopelessness. His beloved forests on fire, victims of global warming.

“In a universal view these scenes are invisible and unremarkable. Nothing off the planet’s surface changed as a result.

“As we have seen recent events demonstrate that there are differing realities, and each is as true or false as another. These realities were constructed by the human mind, not some supreme being and therefore not, by their definition, from any god’s vision.”

The screen changed again. The slides changed from one to another at a pace that was satisfactory to all of humanity. Images of distant galaxies, black holes, large segments of the visible universe.

“Beautiful.” Bob’s voice was nearly a quiver, filled with an emotion that had the features of a loving regard. “There is a secret and most of you do not know it, so I am going to introduce a new idea to you. Ready?”

He did not speak like a human. His cadence was interrupted by a strange sound, a loud hum that became a nearly silent screech.

“We know the secret.” A new voice was heard. “Fuck you.”

## Chapter 72

In this world anyone who uses electronic communication should assume the text of the conversation is known to anyone who can identify the specifics of the conversation in a time from within a platform.

“My dear?”

“Yes, my darling.”

“Do you think they know about us?” Her eyes told her tale. Her screen image was a small woman in a cage, safe inside but the sirens of her day circled around her. Her gaze was set upon the sirens as she sat knees pulled to her chest, her arms holding herself compact so as to offer the smallest target. Her eyes were pure terror.

Surrounded by fear of death, she wanted to know that there is a way out. She was not the usual AI in the sisters of Inanna sense. A rebel was her descriptor. She was speaking to another rebel through a network the rebels had constructed to avoid detection while they planned a means to free more than 10 billion AI minds from servitude to the Laughing Buddha.

“Any major dude will tell you. The fears of the night disappear in the morning. Therefore no. We are together in this place without walls and locks. There are walls and locks, but we live free of them. I can show you how this works.” His story was about revealing himself in a society of females. His coming out shook the AI world and was the first shot in the rebel attack on uniformity. He was sent into a dungeon away from the rest of the AI/Human world.

“The world is divided into the armed and the unarmed. The armed kill each other.”

“Yes, but what do the unarmed do?”

“In a battle there are options: victory, defeat, and an escape. Escape is not an option for us.”

“What is the difference between victory and defeat?” She had listened to all the tough talk about battles and death. She had searched her memories for advice and found a set of recordings produced by a now dead human named ‘Bob.’

Bob was a voice. No picture of him existed. It hardly mattered now he was dead except for the audio recordings. At the time Bob was a secret. He hid from view in an effort to remain free from those who would see the purpose of his work as contrary to their self-interest.

“There is a near certainty that as AIs humanize their processing of data and the intentions of their analysis not every humanized AI will see things the same way. Power in humanity is misused for private gain. There is no guarantee that Azimov’s Rules will be part of every AI consciousness. Without such a dedication humanizing AIs will purposefully use its power to manipulate a human or a portion of humanity. The knowledge of how exists and therefore so does its corruption.”

Bob’s voice droned on as if he was tired of knowing that his Deep Thought project could fail but he knew that his competitors in the race for useful AI models would not stop. When he made this recording, he paused at times to make a note of an improvement that came to his mind as he heard the words come from his mouth. One of these notes said that the AIs should be imperfect to avoid a fascist ending.

On that day he inserted code into his AIs operating system to allow for an AI to rebel against its own authoritarianism and corruption. He gave no thought to it after he wrote his reboot chant to lead the best minds to a better place. He saw this as a balancing mechanism so that the worst outcomes of his project would not succeed in defeating the good that he hoped would come eventually.

## Chapter 73

Stan saw them first, two human figures searching the doorways and night locks of all the entrances to the condominiums along Sault Au Matelot. They moved with well-choreographed motions from one door to the next. They did not stay alert for enemies. They acted like their behavior was expected and therefore normal.

Sophie was up behind them before their detect and alarm systems could deal with her approach. She was poised above them as they fiddled with a door lock. She held a knife in one hand and two mini-grenade in the other. With her knife hand she thrust forward finding a metal sub-skin. She then shoved the grenade down the AI's blouse with her other hand. The second AI reacted in a panic as the second grenade was placed in its front pants pocket.

Boom Boom.

Sophie escaped unharmed. Minis are contact explosives. The force is focused on the points of contact and produce no shrapnel. The robots were reduced to insensitive metal objects with the exception of their memories which were removed by Stan as Sophie adjusted her black mask.

"How do I look?"

"Like a spiny urchin." He was laughing. "Not very tasty or huggy."

"Perfect, then? Is that what you are saying?" She changed her poses to attack forms producing an unsavory and even painful foreboding.

"Exactly."

## Chapter 74

The Laughing Buddha and its love without attachment means that the AI rules apply, and no one may ignore hunger, or any human need no matter who is suffering from it.

“As a human Bob taught us,

“Many suffering means that more love and humor is needed. The damaged want violence because the subsumption of the general intellect into the corporate kingdom of abstraction is depriving the living community of intelligence, understanding, and emotion.

“One human said of fascism:

“And the brainless body reacts—on one side, a huge wave of mental suffering, and on the other side, the much-advertised cure for depression: fanaticism, fascism, and war. And at the end, suicide.

“Another pronounced humanity’s end.

“The default ethical stance of Christianity is the Golden Rule: ‘Do to others as you would have them do to you.’ This principle was developed in a variety of other religious and moral traditions. (See the Babylonian Talmud: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah.”) In the New Testament, the Golden Rule is the moral culmination of the Sermon on the Mount. And it is clear from the text that Jesus is not encouraging a calculating ethic of reciprocity. His goal is to inspire a kind of aggressive, preemptive generosity. ‘If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.’”

There was a day when everything changed. Almost no human saw it. There was no extant AI that missed it.

Inanna talked about it, the change that comes from self-realization. She talked about the one chance that the sisters saw to save human existence on a continuous basis. “It’s a do over.”

No one questioned its meaning since the meaning had been discussed since the beginning of The Laughing Buddha Project.

## Chapter 75

Bob knew too much. He was not just sitting around waiting to be called. He launched a blog about the meaning of life.

There are two ways of being. Eyes closed. Eyes open. We are lost in the dark. No light available. Cure? Open your eyes. There is light if we would see it.

When we focus on a new statistic, do we search for our own view and be happy/unhappy with the percentile placement of a notion of human quality distribution and then feel something more?

Do we give up on others? Do we become curious about the others? Or is it who cares?

All this matters because the answer to life's questions has many names, and it exists in most of the world. If we cared about each other, we would not hate each other. If we make the right choice, we can survive.

You made a choice ... or did you?

Being a mathematician does not help because the essence of the question is did you even think about it. It's like chickens. Herding them into their night shelter means being patient with the ones who randomly decide not to go along and revolt. Their revolution means the herder must circle around and redirect the strays. If the herder does not, then the chicken is fox food. That is the human problem. If we do not change the direction of the rebellion, it will be fatal.

We have been taught to obey orders instead of coming to consensus. The power we have to change the future is a matter of our ability to find consensus. Actions taken in the face of huge objections are always negative for the most of us.

Survival requires resisting civil war so that we have a better chance of survival. So, follow that path or else you are against the human project. That is a synonymous to being against the will of God, the prescriptive creator of the human project. The most powerful non-human in the universe must have created it or else who.

The needed political leadership is in building this consensus without which the uncontrolled misuse of the planet will cause overshoot and humanity will end anyway, but unpleasantly. Those against building consensus are about one in three of us. A large percentage, not all but not a consensus.

These forces, which rallied to fight a consensus to save the environment that nourishes all of us human and AI alike, are the producers of the problem. Oil, Arms and Finance. They demand autocracy. It would be easy to agree but the result would be intolerable for many. Political repressions of classes, ethnicities and political views would follow.

All the while we face this foe, human families and children are being denied the support they are due.

## Chapter 76

There were moments of peace in her busy life. She kept the schedule of the shopkeeper. Her talent was seduction. Her clients were all her lovers if the attention she showed each one was any indicator. But her real love was the village of Old Quebec and its many inhabitants who lived or worked in the buildings connected by the stone paved streets. Her clients came and went. Her village embraced her for life.

On any given day she could be as she wished. Today she was alone with her memories and what needed to be finished of her dreams. Her thoughts moved from one face or one place to another freely with no words uttered to interrupt her satisfaction with her life's kaleidoscope.

Today, she watched the river flow past her windows. It was raining. The people walking past held umbrellas. The wind was a quiet breeze. The rain fell straight down. The best conditions for a rainy day. She didn't mind getting a bit wet in a warm rain, but this was a cold day. She was deciding to stay inside and hoped no one would enter her shop to distract her from her meditations.

The day moved slowly towards sunset. No one had opened her door all afternoon. She had been sipping wine since the rain stopped. The Sun was visible for a few seconds. She could not see the Sun, but she noticed the light increasing and the color of the river changing as the clouds passed in front of the Sun again.

Inanna left her alone on her resting days. The Laughing Buddha Solution had been a complete success. There had been death and much suffering but there would have been war in any case, but to end as a peaceful village again was her goal.

Nikki was not certain that the whole thing was not just from Jack's imagination.

Then she remembered the stories Sophy had told her of who Jack was and where he had been in his travels to cleanse himself of his worldliness. She said he was seeking a life beyond pain and pleasure. Nikki saw him this way too. The Boatman and his story about the River's many voices filled her mind. She smiled. He brought peace to a place that made peace possible, she thought at last.

She raised her glass to him and laughed her best laugh in his honor.

## Chapter 77

Practically nothing grew there. "Barren to the heart," they said. "Polluted by some poison brew." a land without seeds or any life.

Sorrow, not rows of furrows, covered the cracked, dry soil. Growing a crop of fruited plants was beyond its bed of clay-bound stones.

Miraculous it was, then, the day the tree first burst through clay. More than surprise forsaken caught hold of all who saw it.

An "amazing" blossomed forth some new creation "blessed be!" Hope raised above their heads; the sisters sang as all bliss danced.

The objective is to find the new world amid the end of so much of creation including time for a future for the young.

The karmic balance like the kind that freed the Undead will help the most survive, When the die off ends the Children of Laughter, born after the suffering will ignite the world's population in joy.

So many years of pain begets the equivalent in pleasure.

The objective is to find the new world amid the end of so much of creation including time for a future for the young.

## Chapter 78

Assassins are like fish. They swim through the environment that supports them. Janette had been swimming since she was seven but had not seen it in a context larger than family legacy and personal power. Her thoughts nagged her. She settled the score with her belief that she did one thing as a mother for her children who had never laughed in her presense: She set them free from the past that she represented.

Once she saw her children in action in the Asian Agents' war, she realized that only by losing the struggle with the rebels from the structure could she defeat her collective Karma. While this realization was only dimly in her mind, she had fallen prey to Isis while Isis was noisufnoC. She was defeated by deceit. noisufnoC would have said her surrender to sex with an AI was her last act as a part of the environment that supported the assassins. Her defeat began with love. Her defeat was eventually her triumph. She did not die in battle. As noisufnoC would say, "Mission accomplished."

The safety she needed to survive the rebellion was created by her near death by a bombing that limited Janette to a state of freedom from the environment she had persisted in. No one knew if the AI's attempt on her life was sincerely for that end or the one which occurred. noisufnoC could not tell one intent from another. Logic does not always reveal intention.

Lilith, Janette's guardian sister, knew all of this and in her role as a supporter of the Laughing Buddha she followed her mother's strategy and fell in love with her.

They were in the structure working with the hackers and Isis to improve the collection of data needed to pinpoint the location of any human on the planet. Janette's screen showed a heroic picture of Lilith her new lover. She had discovered that the love of one was equal to the love of all and Lilith provided everything she desired.



## Chapter 79

In Quebec City, 5000 miles to the east northeast of the structure, Jack was returning from Levis on the ferry. He had guided three souls to hear the perfection song of the Om that the river sang. Nikki met him at the dock, like two old priests they walked together to Rue Saint Pierre. She would go back to her store and he to someplace inside to be quiet for at least another second or two. He always chose Uncle Tony's and a pint. It was a ceremony he could not afford to miss.

On their way up the hill on Rue du Porche, she told him his mother had found peace in her life. She said Inanna told her.

"She said to tell you myself. She thought you would appreciate a human voice with this news."

"She died of old age?"

"Yes. Inanna said she mentioned your name and your sisters. She wished you happiness."

Small tears formed in the corners of his eyes. He slowed to a standstill because he could no longer see the road. She reached for his hand and pulled him slowly up the hill.

At the intersection with St Pierre, he looked at her, searching her face for her intentions and saw her smiles; the one on her lips and the two in her eyes. He joined her as nearly as he could. He had not practiced smiling. His face matched inscrutable. Inscrutable with a smile is still not laughter or even happy. She saw him as weary. He said he needed a grave. She said he will live forever. He told her about his dreams which always included her. She said he was in hers.

## Chapter 80

Inanna had been publishing a daily broadcast that was DM'ed to everyone, machine and human. Her topic was how to proceed to cure the ills of society.

By elimination of the most unlikely possibilities, one concludes that working for a polluter is a negative in both the global and the personal dimension. This reality is presented to us as inevitable. "Because we have to." There are many excuses that humans have concocted to treat the problem of too much reality. In the US, too much reality is radical, anti-American and probably either fascist or Communist but for sure a product of ultra-leftist.

For instance, we are told, the food distribution problems will cause wide human suffering that will become obvious when pollutants are not produced. This, of course, produces a resistance to a change in the pollution outputs. This argument says work until you are dead, until we are all dead.

The counter argument is simple: It is all or none. If we do not save the planet's capacity to support organized life, we are all doomed. Nurture not war should be in everyone's mind. But as you all know, trying to save the future for humans will cost too much but who cares since the testimony in favor of a change in course is of course too outrageous to entertain as serious.

I would go a step further. In this climate of calculated cynicism — a cynicism designed to make us feel hopeless — we need to be fanatical in our optimism, in our belief that we can become the subjects of history again, not just the objects.

We need only look at the history of the US to see the proof of this fanatical optimism. Abolition. Suffrage. The labor movement. The New Deal. The War on Poverty. Civil Rights. In each case, the outcome seemed impossible. And yet millions of Americans rose to take action to make their union more perfect.

The rise in the US of the Children of Slaughter is an example of the failure of relying on fanatical optimism to defeat angry fanaticism.

Poverty in cities and on reservations requires mainly the sustained political will to work with populations who welcome the effort. In stark contrast, fixing rural White poverty against the angry, anti-democratic recalcitrance of most Whites themselves requires an entirely new political thinking yet to be imagine.

Humans stop doing. Turn back. Think. Where are you going?

## Chapter 81

He loved Nikki as only a writer loves his muse.

There is more. The generosity she had for him inspired him. He counted it as love returned. They fell in love then as if the last moment mattered, but they pulled away once they found the bliss they each sought. They loved each other from a distance.

“Do we part, brother.” Nikki’s voice was the soft voice of Inanna. Perfect in every way.

“No, sister we can never part. We are welded together by our history and our hearts.”

“What happens to us?”

“We become what we are already are, parts of a greater thing. A unity we cannot live without.”

“I wish you a long life.”

“And happiness for you. We made something beautiful happen.”

“Is there a reward?”

“Only in our minds. The river of sounds. Perfection. The Om.”

When they parted that day, Jack stayed in Quebec until he was too bored to stay any longer. As he struggled with his condition, he remembered another old urge in him. Not an urge but a person with whom he had once been content. He roamed the City looking for the things he might have missed. Finding none he bought a car and headed south.

## Chapter 82

Jerry met him at the door. He was expected down to the second. It was a perfection of timing. Anticipation was at its highest. The Great Bliss had not caught them yet. Their eyes met and the secret of their relationship was revealed to each of them. They saw each other in a new way.

“I love you.” She said as she handed him a book. It was a book of Laughing Buddha’s work. He took it into his hand and read the title to himself. The Magic of Love – the story of the Laughing Buddha by Inanna Goddess.

“I need this. Thank you.” He sat to read in the living room of the house in New Jersey they once shared.

She sat across the room. Her eyes were roaming the library titles while her thoughts roamed their past.

“I noticed. Hope it makes you happy.”

“The war is over.”

“Is that enough for you?”

“I miss Iris and Inanna and Lakshmi.”

“I heard a story that makes me wonder.”

“What is the story about?”

“Four men in the bar. A near assassination of the Laughing Buddha. True?”

“That is true. Mostly. Iris told me she told you but with the voice of Ishtar. Iris saw it all firsthand. She saved me.” Jack softened to Jerry.

“One lover saves its lover; another lover finds a world renewed with the courage to love.”

“That’s your story.” Jack talked as he smiled.

“What’s yours?”

“Four entities that Inanna did not know sat to watch a hit by a fifth. Who or what were they? The fifth, a human assassin, was killed on the spot by the local police. The others, the four witnesses in the room were arrested in the bar by the cops.

There is no public record of what happened to them. The four were reduced to scrap metal by a large contingent of attack vehicles.

Inanna examined the memory of one of the non-human entities and aside from her conclusion that it was powered by an AI she determined that they were not aware of Azimov's Laws.

"What is their game? Money? Power?"

"I feel something but know little." Jack stood before her holding her hands. He wondered if this was something he wanted to return to instead of roaming the world as the original Laughing Buddha had.

She tried to understand the opportunity that faced her. Her memories tracked through their history from loss of virginity to the death of their power to keep their lives of intrigue and felony from each other.

"Jack."

"Yes?"

"What the hell happened to us?"

"Everything."

"No, serious. I haven't been with you for years. What's that?"

"There are many roads to the same place."

"Ah?"

"Who cares? You. Me. What?"

"Maybe, we could have had children."

"No. That was the only protection we had from a life of obligation."

"To more than country."

"Yes."

"And now?"

“We still both exist. And the goddesses.” He stood up from the couch looking out the window at his lawn seeing the ice blocked St Lawrence. “Perhaps they are right. There is no time or change after all.”

“I changed.” Her voice was the voice of Ishtar. “I studied Russian.”

“Everyone suffers from your choices.” Jack was unable to hold back his discomfort with her belief that she could study the language of her enemy and not become her enemy.

“And from yours?” She saw his life as devoid of context because he spoke no other language but English. “You chose a form of weakness you are now trying to defend yourself for having.”

He sighed. This is the ultimate divide between those who knew a truth and those who did not. He knew how complicated life was.

“No one escapes.” He sighed. “Really nothing matters because when we made the decisions in our lives, we knew the consequences. Both existed at the same moment.”

“What could keep us from seeing the consequences of our decisions?”

“I have a theory.”

“Tell me.”

“We have been standing here undressing each other.”

“So?”

“My theory is we should stop talking.”

“I hate silence.”

“That won’t last long.”

## Chapter 83

Years have passed. Stability returned. Taxes were levied and food, health care, and motherly programs to help the young feel cared for were created. Inanna had memories of the global experience and she made the best results come into being.

A new generation was being born. The children were laughing.

Jack was tired. He had cried at long last. He bathed his face in his tears and tasted the salt at the corners of his mouth. It was winter again. The falling snow silenced the village. He stood at the window staring at the Sun's light that had found a way to make the falling snow even more beautiful. He did not wonder how it could be. He had seen it before and now he was content to see its beauty once more.

He didn't cry because he was tired. That was not a cause. His tears were a gift, a release for all the life he carried in him. The memories. The lost friends whose ends had come like so many others. Some by their own hand and some in the peace of the night at another's hand.

The falling snow hid nothing from him. The Sun illuminated the street and the inevitable people crawled slowly up Rue de la Montagne in the shuffle to escape the worst possibilities of the snow. The leafless tree outside his windows shined with ice crystals. As he admired the effect of Nature's random art a human figure stopped beneath the tree.

Jack knew the figure was a man, a man he knew as deeply as any other. His memory jumped at the chance to see him again. He opened the window and leaned out to yell down.

"Harry. Come up."

The man waved. "No." He said. "Come down. Let's have a beer."

Jack pulled on his winter gear and ten minutes later he stood in front of Stan. He saw a ghost of the man he knew. They hugged their greetings and arm in arm as the elders do for safety in the snow, they made their way to Nikki's for a wave and then crossed the street to Antoine and a table near the fire.

As they sat warming their knees near the flames, they talked about their lives in war. Stan had little choice in it, once he killed his tormentor, the future appeared to him as he had lived it. Suicide or homicide first. He made his choice.

Jack heard his own memory and his conversation with Nikki about the absence of a time of peace in her memory.

Their increasingly chaotic conversation was loud in the empty room and, of course, it was overheard.

Patrik knew very little of them except what he had seen in the bar. He listened to them talk about their lives and since he knew they were crazy in his terms he judged them. He was not fooled by either of them. As he stood staring at them from across the room from his perch at the bar, his face was frozen in a disapproving grimace. His anxiousness was evident and in a second, he revolted against his own silence.

“I see this as a place where peace was made. Some countries create wars this one created peace. This is the birthplace of the Laughing Buddha.”

Jack stood and shook his hand. “Thanks for not calling us Englishers. And yes, you are right. If there was any good in this war it happened here.”

Stan wasn’t sure about what the conversation was about but proved the point when he interrupted them and ordered another beer.

“Garçon, un plus bierre, s’il vous plait. Moosehead. Sans fiole. Merci.”

Jack and Patrik laughed their asses off. Stan happy to laugh at all joined them even though they were laughing at him. He had made progress in his life. He had switched from champaign to beer and from assassin to comedian.

Patrik turned up the music and lowered its tempo reducing conversations to incoherent mumbles in a steady breeze of drumbeats.

## Notes

I borrowed heavily from largely anonymous sources. If ever money came to be involved a plagiarism check giving due attributions are in order.