

UNHOLY WARS

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## PREFACE

As a literary presentation, *Unholy Wars* is a self-conscious fiction, which moves beyond metafiction by not merely examining its own fiction as artifact but also the role of the reader, which it discusses through character dialogue, illustrates dramatically, and imitates structurally. *Unholy Wars* is, therefore, a technically experimental fiction, which exposes not only the illusion of reality created by fiction but the illusion of objectivity of interpretative criticism, and dramatically demonstrates the potential dangers of the unethical use of those interpretations to further personal agendas and partisan politics. It is a moral tale of modern America.

### **The Theme**

Authors are frequently held responsible for their objectivity--their degree of emotional involvement toward the subject matter of their literary work--by literary critics. However, if aesthetic distance is a prerequisite for authors, it is even more so for critics. Wayne Booth suggests that "to pretend that we read otherwise [than subjectively], to claim that we make ourselves into objective, dispassionate, thoroughly tolerant readers is in the final analysis nonsense" (147). This *objective fallacy* is the central theme of *Unholy Wars*. The work's function is to create model readers who can both recognize their own subjectivity and acknowledge it--only then, to appreciate the satiric mode and to laugh with the implied author at those readers who miss the joke.

The *objective fallacy* suggests that a reader's interpretation of any text is subjective, and is as much a reflection of the preoccupation, prejudices, pedanticism,

and sources of wisdom of the reader as it is a reflection of the text and its author, if not more so. Simply stated, the central theme of *Unholy Wars* is concerned with how the reader's interpretation of any text--historical, philosophical, literary, or event--is limited by the knowledge and understanding the reader brings to the text. This knowledge most often includes a lack of understanding of the self. Umberto Eco indicates that "a text is meant to be an experience of transformation for its reader" (524). Ironically, the quality of subjective lessons realized by a reader and essential for the transformation to occur is directly proportionate to the level of objective analysis of the text, and especially of the critical examination of the self as a text by the reader. These thematic concerns suggest that *Unholy Wars* is dramatized metacriticism designed to transform the critical reader into the ideal reader. However, it must be recognized that subjectivity and objectivity are not bipolar, but form a continuum, and each reader falls somewhere along the path between the two. Therefore, these transformations are developmental rather than miraculous, and are a continuing process toward the ideal of objectivity rather than a goal achieved.

Often, the metacritic's function is to remind literary critics of their accountability and, by extension, their subjectivity when reading any text. The most perfect medium for such a task seemed to be a literary work since that is the critic's primary object of study. As a student of both literary criticism and fiction, I chose to use a self-reflective fiction to analyze and demonstrate the concerns expressed by many metacritics, including J.R.R. Tolkien, Northrup Frye, Wayne Booth, and Umberto Eco, concerns that suggest the analytical shortcomings of many literary critics as readers, especially when working with complex texts. In the tradition of these critics, *Unholy Wars* is a dual appeal to its intended audience of educated readers, including professors, politicians, and preachers, for ethical criticism at all

stages--reading, analysis, and representation--and to each reader, whether critic or common, to acknowledge his or her own subjectivity as a reader, and therefore, fallibility.

A basic premise underlying the text assumes that reading is ideally more than pleasurable entertainment for a story, or for a simplistic moral lesson for the common reader to grasp as he would an aphoristic truism. It literally takes *the idea of the book*, in the sense of a subject for study, and turns it on the intended audience by assuming that some texts serve as both a lamp and a mirror where the discerning readers may see themselves reflected in a more direct light. *Unholy Wars* is a study in humility and responsibility for both authors and readers. Readers who cannot view themselves with some level of objectivity and recognize the degree of their own subjectivity are incapable of moving toward a more objective reading of any other text. For the genuinely analytical mind, texts are more than entertaining diversions and academic exercises, which are often merely forms of escapism, but are catalysts for continuing stages of personal transformation that prepare the individual for life outside verbal texts.

### **The Structure**

*Unholy Wars* belongs to the literary genre of the self-conscious fiction. As an experimental work, it develops the device of a text within a text common in traditional metafiction, but moves beyond the usual theme in metafiction of a self-conscious commentary on the fictiveness of fiction and the relationship between fiction and reality. Instead, each of the six parts forming the structure of the work is a commentary on the *objective fallacy*, as it applies to both authors and readers: the reader response page, the dedication, the prologue, the genre fiction, the symposium, and the epilogue.

## The Reader Response Page

The reader enters the text of *Unholy Wars* through a *fabulous* reader response page, which serves two functions: as a demonstration of the *objective fallacy*, its central theme, and as an indication of the satiric mode of the work. It indicates to the implied reader the various possible interpretations readers may have of the text that follows and, by extension, any text. For readers to appreciate the satiric function of the page, they must understand the meaning of *fabulous* as "imaginary or devised," therefore, part of the joke created by the implied author, rather than "exceedingly great." Variations of meaning are assumed to be the key to multi-level communication and are frequently overlooked even by the most conscientious readers. Those readers who *get it* realize that the reader who fails to is the target of its satire. An acknowledgment of multi-level meanings is essential for interpreting a novel because as Eco points out a novel "is a machine for generating interpretations" (505), and when the novel is self-reflective fiction and satiric, the complexity of meanings proliferates.

## The Dedication

The dedication of *Unholy Wars* to "the Tenth Muse, Satura and her twin Saturo," gives the naive reader another opportunity to grasp the operating mode of the work. In the classical tradition, there were nine goddesses or muses invoked by poets for inspiration: Clio, Euterpe, Thalia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Crato, Calliope, Urania, and Polyhymnia, each possessed different attributes and presided over different kinds of poetry, arts, and sciences. Without this knowledge, the reader probably will not understand the significance of the tenth Muse as a modern, rather than traditional, source of inspiration, possessing the attributes of irreverence, discrimination, revision, and wit.

*Satura* is a Latin term for both the literary form "satire" and "a dish of various ingredients." *Saturo* means "to satisfy." *Unholy Wars* is, therefore, dedicated to the irreverent, discriminating, iconoclastic Muse and her readers whose literary appetites are best satisfied by variety and the untraditional. The dedication page is a clue to knowledgeable readers that the game is afoot. In his study of the self-conscious novel, Brian Stonehill acknowledges a commonplace of self-reflective fiction: "There is a strong tinge of elitism to the self-conscious novel, a sense that those who do not share a certain body of knowledge are excluded from the implied audience" (7). Stonehill also indicates: "Readers who don't get the jokes nonetheless sense that they've missed something" (7). Therefore, the Latin dedication is also a clue to analytical readers who are willing to play the game by seeking additional information, once they realize the limitations of their knowledge as they approach the text--the kind of reader the text attempts to create through various methods. All lesser readers are summarily dismissed as ill-equipped or indifferent.

### The Prologue

The conventional frame created by a prologue and epilogue is the only point in the text where the implied author's voice in the first person singular may be heard. The poetic prologue is a traditional satiric convention to alert the critical reader to the character and prejudices of the implied author, using the common Menippean motif of the hobby horse to suggest the pedantic nature shared by the implied author and the *philosophus gloriosus*--a term used by Northrup Frye to indicate the literary critic who, as a type of obsessed philosopher, "pretends or tries to be something more than he is" (39)--in this case, completely objective. Frye also suggests: "Satire on systems of reasoning, especially on the social effects of such systems, is art's first line of defense against all such invasions [of philosophical pedantry, imposing over-simplified



ideals on artistic experience]" (231). *Unholy Wars*, as art, is a full scale offensive: first, against pedantic readers who use and abuse positions of authority under the pretense of objectivity to reduce artistic works and the aesthetic experience to a common interpretation; and second, against unethical readers who attempt to use their subjective interpretations of texts--the Bible, the Constitution, or any work of art--to further a political career or personal greed. One of the implications is that the uneducated reader is most frequently a product of the educational system that protects and perpetuates pedantic philosophers who are so easily seduced by hubris. The attack on readers is an attempt to use irony to inspire self-reflection and reevaluation by critics for their individual degrees of objectivity, so that they, as teachers of higher education, might help remedy the problem; but the attack on religious pedantry for political purposes is pure invective.

The implied author's original illustration of the carnival pony on the page with the poetic prologue is a visual aid, illustrating a commonplace in satire but with a twist. The hobby horse is *a horse of a different color* to suggest to the critical reader that the real subject of the work is a different matter than the one suggested in the poem. Its theme is not merely the obsessions of a southern fundamentalist preacher--Jimmy Carl Patterson, but also the obsessive pedantry of the intellectually elite, as represented by a doctor of philosophy in medieval studies--Dr. John Colman Stillwell. Although Stillwell is painted as a sympathetic and reasonable character in the genre fiction, his fallibility as a reader is gently pointed out by the Venerable Bede in the symposium.

### The Genre Fiction

The genre fiction adapts the concept of a recessed text from the convention used by Umberto Eco in the opening of *The Name of the Rose*, but that is where the

superficial similarities end. At the risk of reducing the complexity of his work by attempting to classify it, I would suggest that Eco created a tightly woven world of medieval Italy in his historical novel; while at the center of *Unholy Wars*, I created a world of stereotypical characters loosely following the patterns of the subgenre of political thriller, demonstrating how characters interpret, misinterpret, use, and abuse verbal and non-verbal texts. The use of generic characters and patterns do not distract the common reader from the ideas exemplified in the text, which is extremely important when the satirist is attacking flawed systems of reasoning and their social consequences.

*Unholy Wars* uses fictional characters and prose narrative in the style of a genre fiction to develop a fictional world centered around two manuscripts, which set off a chain reaction of political intrigue, terrorism, and man-made disasters. The device of a text within a text has been multiplied in *Unholy Wars*. The first is an Anglo-Saxon manuscript, containing the writings of Wilfrid and his biography written by an anonymous monk during the late seventh or early eighth century. This manuscript haunts the discussions at the center of the narrative. The second text, which discusses the first, is Dr. John Stillwell's manuscript describing the documents. Instead of the actual Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the reader is presented with a medievalist's interpretation of the documents, an interpretation which displays an obviously partisan view of the historical period in which Stillwell attempts to further his view of what Christianity should be in contrast to what he believed it became under the guidance of the Roman Church.

Partisanship based on subjectivity is demonstrated through four characters. Stillwell's view seeks to further a particular Christian tradition--that of the early Celtic contingency in Northumbria. His academic view is subjective in interpretation and partisan in his response; first, privileging Christianity, like too many modern scholars

studying this literary period whose subjective and personal religious views hinder their progress toward objectivity, but unlike many of his predecessors, his view favors the Celtic perspective. Concurrently in the narrative, the reader is shown the results of Jimmy Carl Patterson's interpretation of the same document as an agenda to further his ultra-conservative political aspirations by using fundamentalist Christianity as a rallying cry. Patterson's view is equally subjective in his version of Christianity, but his partisan political actions demonstrate the dangers of irresponsible rhetoric based on that subjective view. The character Phillip Sinclair exemplifies the extreme danger of subjectivity when he becomes the instrument for poetic justice by his misinterpretation of the scene in the hot tub. Sinclair's homophobia--fed by Patterson's rhetoric--causes him to misread the situation between Patterson and Schwann. Greg Lawrence is the only character transformed by his critical analysis of the Alliance, the events he observes, and his role in them.

The genre fiction exemplifies the process of interpretation and response to make a statement about the prevalent danger created by educated people in positions of authority who capitalize on the ignorance and subjectivity of others--as represented by Phillip Sinclair--who have not been adequately trained in the arts of logic and rhetoric. The genre fiction is a dramatization of the central theme, and the layering of its text within text imitates the structure of *Unholy Wars* as a text within a text.

### The Symposium

The juxtaposition of the symposium and the genre fiction creates a third level of text within the text. This dramatic narrative of the genre fiction is subsequently reflected on and discussed by a collection of supernatural beings at an eternal drinking party. The word *symposium* is taken from the Greek meaning "a drinking party," with

a secondary meaning of "any meeting or social gathering where ideas are discussed freely." In Plato's philosophy, the mystic doctrines of Dionysus include an Orphic afterlife where the righteous receive the reward of an everlasting symposium so they can drink and discuss ideas for eternity. The symposium in *Unholy Wars* shifts the reader into a fantasy world of dead scholars discussing the genre fiction as though it were a staged play, and they were the audience--as though they were looking down on reality and discussing the human condition and how to read it as a text. Ironically, Stillwell advances to a Platonic afterlife rather than a Christian heaven. John Stillwell's admission to this august body of scholars suggests that his belief in the ideals of Christianity are not challenged by the members of the symposium. He is reprimanded by the historical character Bede, not for his religious convictions, but for his skills as a reader of Bede's work and as an author who interprets and uses those interpretations under the guise of historical truth. The inclusion of historical characters discussing literary works and how they have been interpreted--not the validity of the ideas and beliefs contained in the works--is an integral part of what establishes *Unholy Wars* as metafiction.

The use of historical characters in fiction and fantasy is different from the way they are used in historical documentation. Fiction and fantasy present the *possible* in order to establish general philosophical ideas, while history attempts to present the *actual*. In the tradition of Dante in *Paradiso*, I placed the Venerable Bede in a discussion with a man he would never approve of as a scholar, and then use Bede--a master rhetorician--to make the philosophical point that Stillwell found proof of what he was looking for in the *Janus* manuscript, but that proof was literary truth not historic truth--a point Tolkien makes most clearly in his study of *Beowulf*. This inclusion of the father of English history maintains Bede's legacy for the analytical mind who would search for additional information as a response to the *echo of*

*intertextuality* as a means to locate literary truth. As a justification for the use of exemplary history in *Unholy Wars*, I would suggest that even the Venerable Bede used stories of miracles to make his philosophical and theological points, and although he is reported to have checked his sources and quoted them, he never seemed to question their credibility, but bowed to their authority as a rhetorical appeal to *ethos*. The discerning reader must wonder how much of Bede's *A History of the English Church and People* is actual fact, and how much is rhetorical strategy for a moral tale.

Fiction mimics human folly so that the reader may discriminate moral lessons in an effort to prevent the recurrence of crimes and misfortune. Fantasy is often formulated as *exemplum* to present the ideal. In addition, satire amplifies the message by making fun of those same flaws in humanity as less than ideal. Fiction and fantasy are usually intended for a more common audience than satire. The shift from the illusion of reality in the genre fiction to a fantasy world of the symposium forces the analytical reader to think about the ramifications of human folly but, in this case, also the cause--an irresponsible lack of effort toward objectivity, which is pointed out in the fantasy world of the symposium--in the ideal world.

The use of historical figures in the genre fiction is an example of *parallel history*, which draws events and characters from history to produce a warning against a repeat of the similar errors in human reasoning that are identifiable from earlier periods. In this way, exemplary history become a powerful tool that focuses on general truths rather than actual details. In *Unholy Wars*, the warning is against the blending of religion and politics and is against the withholding of information and education by the people in positions of power in an effort to achieve and maintain political control. Both of these activities have become commonplace in America during this last decade of the twentieth century.

## The Epilogue

The epilogue closes the frame around the genre fiction and the symposium as a comprehensive text, creating a fourth level of text from the implied author's perspective. This closure objectifies the fourth text to demonstrate the process of reading and interpretation, but refrains from giving the audience the implied author's interpretation of the work.

The use of an epilogue is another literary convention relied on by satirists--a structure for the retraction. It looks back on the whole work in a direct address to readers to be forgiving of the flaws of the artist and the artist's product. At the same time, it ridicules readers who did not bring enough to the work to understand the allusions, language play, and metacritical theme. To those readers who understood the work, the implied author suggests through a final play of language: "I am, above all" and "a conscientious objector in this war." The model reader would never accept the literalness of the statement or the reliability of the implied author in light of the rhetorical battles she has just waged. It is, for those readers, pure irony. She is neither "above all," as she indicated by the poetic self-evaluation in the prologue nor "a conscientious objector," as she demonstrated in the work. Rather, she is locked in the heat of battle with her own pedantic tendencies and the fanaticism of others who have yet to concede their own tragic flaws. The retraction is absolution for those less than model readers who never *got it* and who must rest assured that they are not to blame for the inadequacies of the communicative process. A retraction is a *cover-your-ass* convention for satirists who have taken aim at a powerful adversary.

## In Conclusion

Umberto Eco's critical and fictional works have played a major role in the creation of *Unholy Wars*. He suggests that

when a writer plans something new, and conceives a different kind of reader, he wants to be, not a market analyst, cataloguing expressed demands, but, rather, a philosopher, who senses the patterns of the Zeitgeist. He wants to reveal to his public what it *should* want, even if it does not know it. He wants to reveal the reader to himself. (523)

The spirit, or Zeitgeist, of the last decade of the twentieth century indicates a moral and intellectual trend demanding personal integrity for what is said or written by politicians, media personalities, artists, professors, and the average person on the street. In *Unholy Wars*, I used a self-reflective fiction to define this problem for its intended audience because that audience has the capacity to work toward a remedy, but only if enough model readers are created who can see their subjectivity as part of the problem and work to become less subjective in the process; so they can pass on the ideal of objectivity and the skills of critical reading to the next generation of readers. By demonstrating the potential consequences generated by ignorant readers, *Unholy Wars* is an appeal to the intellectually elite in this country not to betray the next generation of Americans and a challenge to them to teach their students reading skills beyond mere literacy that will prepare them against assaults of specious reasoning and eloquent rhetoric--to help them develop the skill of critical thinking essential for aesthetic distancing.

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**UNHOLY WARS**  
(A Fiction)

**FABULOUS READERS' RESPONSES  
TO  
UNHOLY WARS**

**"Blasphemy . . ."**

--The Christian Voice

**"Typical anti-clerical poppycock . . ."**

--Archbishop Saul Abrahams

**"All the world's a stage and Sophie proves it. Would that I could have rehearsed my part with them."**--Frank Bacon

**"Prodigiously points a painted fingernail at all mankind."**

--Sophie Goldstein

**"A provocative and dangerous ride on the information highway."**

--Internet News

**"Obviously, Sophie never read Wayne Booth."**

--M.M. Bakhtin

**"So what's the point?"**

--Geoff Walker

**"Do not listen to the voices beneath the voices of the speakers in this fiction, for the worm at the heart of the labyrinth often infects the unsuspecting mind with the horrid symptoms of *gradstu flu*."**

--Colorado Weekly

**"Be forewarned, beware of the implication for contemporary America."**

--Socks

**"Carnival Earth at its worse and its best. A remarkable festival of human folly. A side-show of human weaknesses."**

--The Chronotrope Review

**"Metaphysical . . . A journey into the realms of the gods, through the woodlands of sacred oaks occupied by satyrs and spirits, designed to land the reader firmly in the fertile fields of imagination, and finally captivate him within the isolation of ideas."**

--The Pan

**"An obsessive and uncontrolled brain fart."**

--Mary Harris Jones

Dedicated to  
the Tenth Muse  
Satura  
and her twin Saturo

## PROLOGUE

### *The Confession of a Philosophus Gloriosus*

*Ride! Ride! Ride!  
Through the wood,  
Beneath forespacious skies,  
Across the fruited plain.  
Along the way  
A stiking blow  
Deep into my thigh  
From words sharpened  
In unholy wars  
Forced me clinging  
To this bucking bronc,  
Never to walk alone  
While the kingfisher circles  
A wasted land.*

*Once a child  
Set astride this hobby horse  
By a somber sanctimonious man  
Suggesting I ride  
To Hell straightaway.  
Hail, Bacchae! Hail!  
I ride and I ride and I ride  
The carnival pony  
Called Life.*



When power corrupts, poetry cleanses, for art establishes the basic human truths which must serve as the touchstone of our judgment. JFK--October 26, 1963

## Chapter 1

"I've been sent to persuade you not to publish the Manuscript and to forget what you know."

"That's impossible." The professor of medieval studies stared at the tall man in a well-tailored gray suit standing in the doorway of his office. A white cross superimposed on a small American flag decorated his lapel.

John Stillwell sat behind his desk, arms folded, his eyes fixed on the blue irises of the man glaring from across the room. Stillwell was not a man easily intimidated. Confrontation had been a major element in his adult life, and he would not give in to this or any other demands to withhold information from the educated public. He was, above all, a teacher. As a medievalist, he knew, only too well, the results of a monopoly on information and on discourse.

"It's your choice, sir. We would like to have your cooperation. This is considered to be a matter of national security in some circles. The United States is in danger."

Stillwell watched the messenger's mouth move in what seemed like slow motion. The eyes never wavered, nor the purpose. "The next president will be God's Regent, and the United States will become God's Kingdom here on earth." Then the man paused as if turning the page of a text before he could continue. His voice became flat. A deep

breath--"He will remake America into the reflection of the Heavenly Kingdom, and our president will wield divine authority in the world. His word will be law once again, and his Christian Soldiers will insure the order of His rule."

"Why are you telling me this? Who are you, anyway?" Stillwell hesitated, but the only response was a smile. The whole scenario seemed absurd. His paranoia was escalating, again. Before, he had written off his uneasiness about the manuscript and the book he was writing about it to pre-publication jitters, but this time it was more real because the anxiety could be directly related to the threatening body language of his visitor. "I think you'd better leave now. We have nothing more to discuss. My edition of the manuscript will be in the hands of my publisher by the end of the week. Frankly, my publications are none of your damn business. I have work to do."

"Yes, sir. So do I. I can see now that a man of your orientation cannot be persuaded to do what is right. God's will be done." The man disappeared into the August heat rising in the stairwell of the aging university building, the sound of his heels echoing in the narrow passage.

Dr. John Stillwell continued to stare at his empty doorway. *God's Regent ruling the United States?* The pieces of information didn't fit. He shook his head as though he were trying to shake the ideas around enough for them to fall into place. Ideas converging in the back of his mind were almost perceptible, but he couldn't quite see the connections. Wrinkles formed between his brows as he squinted, trying to see what he was missing. The focus was still too blurry to see clearly, just unclear enough to make the rising anxiety free-floating instead of the fear driven panic that surges from understanding and acknowledgment of actual danger. Stillwell tried to refocus his attention on the computer screen displaying his manuscript and finish the final revisions he was working on before he was so strangely interrupted.

When he glanced at the clock, he had worked another two hours and had the manuscript ready for mailing to his publisher. He wanted to send a paper copy of the text as well as the computer disk with the book stored on it. He locked the door to his office and left the university to join his friends for dinner. Maybe an open forum over a glass of good wine would make the whole scene earlier in the day more coherent, and how it involved him clearer in his mind.

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The lock on John Stillwell's office door at the University of Oklahoma posed no problem of physical entry for the men. Phillip Sinclair tossed the black bag on the desk, flipped on the computer switch. "Get all those files," he commanded.

Harvey Carter moved quickly to the cabinet drawer marked *Northumbria* and stuffed the paper research files into the bag. He rifled the other three drawers, pulling folders with titles that might be related.

"The Colonel can sort through it all later. Damn." Sinclair slammed the desk top. He accessed the menu, inserted the disk, and began pounding on the keyboard. "These files are a lot more extensive than the Colonel thought. This may take a while to download." Sinclair hit *enter* and the computer began transferring Stillwell's data from the hard drive onto the formatted disk. "Now Col. Lawrence and Reverend Patterson will know how much Stillwell has figured out about the Agenda." He watched the younger man search the papers on Stillwell's desk for any additional information that might help the Colonel understand. Phillip Sinclair liked the clean-cut kid he had chosen as his partner. He was bright, dedicated to the Reverend Dr. Patterson and his cause, and easily convinced of the necessity of using whatever means were required to succeed in their mission to turn America toward Christ. The computer was silent. Sinclair removed the disk and turned it off. "Let's get out of here. I have what we came for. But I want to take care of one loose end before we head back to Colorado Springs."

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Driving home later that night, the Professor of Medieval Studies began to understand, if only rudimentarily, what the man across his desk had been talking about. The phone calls from people who identified themselves as graduate students interested in Anglo-Saxon studies. Red flags raised by inquiries at the University of Oklahoma library into the computer records of his interlibrary loan requests. Someone had been trying to *finger* him, to identify him through his access within the Internet. The E-mail from James Meade at Oxford informing him of queries into the nature of his research in the archives. The messenger had warned Stillwell against the publication of his discovery, but how could a seventh century document out of Northumbria be a threat to national security in twentieth, almost twenty-first, century America? And who exactly formed the *circle* so concerned with national security?--the gray-suit never introduced himself or presented any form of identification that would indicate which organization within the government he represented. Stillwell had not made the connection between the arcane document from England that lay beside him on the car seat and the men who had sent the messenger.

Like most of his associates, he had paid little attention in the last few years to the mounting headlines reporting the politicizing of the evangelical community. From where he sat at the university, the politically active evangelicals were just a handful of true believers, a radical fringe of fundamentalists--naive, narrowly educated, and driven by emotion--an unfortunate combination, granted, but hardly a threat to democracy. Even in the 1992 presidential campaign Bush and Quayle lost the election, so the influence of the Religious Right could hardly be called a victory. The ultra-conservative leadership's control of Republican politics was marginal at best. Surely, mainstream America was too educated to be swept up into their reactionary rhetoric.



Ideas were beginning to intersect, connections clicking in his mind's eye, while he paused for a moment too long at the red light, deep in thought. He didn't see the man in black jump from the passenger side of the car beside him at the deserted intersection.

A gloved hand jerked open Dr. Stillwell's car door and dragged the bewildered scholar to the pavement. Blood gushed from the cut just below his eye where his cheekbone caught the hard metal edge of the car door on his way down. A polished black military boot crushed into his groin, pinning him to the ground. The blue-eyed man moved with such precision and determination John Stillwell didn't have time to react, much less raise his arms to protect himself from the assault, nor could he see his attacker through the tears that involuntarily flooded his eyes as he rolled sideways, doubling up from the pain between his legs. The heavy-soled boot kicked again at the base of his spine, sending pain upward through his torso. Sinclair braced himself against the car door to empower the next blow of his boot. The car would absorb the recoil from the force of the kick. The final impact landed in the professor's lower abdomen with such momentum his body was lifted off the pavement and bounced back to the street. John's eyes squeezed shut against the torment. He could not see Sinclair or the gun.

"One less abomination before God, you faggot." The professor could barely hear the calm voice of intense passion before the messenger squeezed the trigger of the military issue .45 automatic. Only Sinclair heard the silenced shot before he jumped into Stillwell's Accord and disappeared into the darkness outside the circle of light created by the street lamp, leaving the medievalist on the street with a massive hole in his temple, without a brain left to ponder the connections he had been trying to make or their implications. Dr. Stillwell's executioner motioned for his driver to follow, then laid his weapon on the manuscript beside him and smiled.

He had been away from the work he was trained for too long. As the Colonel's new exec, he would serve his country with his CO, just as he had in Vietnam and

Cambodia, only now Col. Lawrence made him an officer, a major even, and gave him the official title of Executive Officer In Charge of Operations and Procurement, and welcomed him to the elite corps--"A private army in the service of God" the Colonel said as he pinned the cross and flag on Phillip Sinclair's lapel.

Church had never meant much to him, except as the gussied-up kid of a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher, and he had dumped that baggage years ago. But now the Colonel needed him to help fight Satan, he said. Lawrence equated their struggle to that of the Archangel Michael's battle against the forces of Lucifer. The idea of belonging to an army of loyal angels appealed to Sinclair's sense of pride. The Bible story of the warring angels was one of the few he could remember his father reenacting passionately back and forth across the wooden floor of the rural Mississippi Sunday School, bellowing, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God."

The Reverend Dr. Jimmy Carl Patterson planned to sweep God's Kingdom on Earth of the followers of that old serpent Satan just as Michael cast them out of Heaven, and Sinclair was determined to help the Colonel and Dr. Patterson purify America of the fags, communists, and--especially--the unrighteous liberals who did not fit into the plan of a scripturally based society. God's Law, as Patterson called it, would rid the world of non-believers.

Sinclair parked the Accord in the public parking lot in the refurbished warehouse district of Oklahoma City renamed Brick Town, placed the .45 inside the brown accordion case with Stillwell's manuscript, retied the cotton cord neatly around the portfolio, and moved matter-of-factly from the car with the case under his arm like someone on his way to a normal business meeting or a late dinner at one of the restaurant micro-breweries in the area just across the tracks from the glass and metal high-rises of the city. He joined his driver waiting on the street adjacent to the lot.

Harvey Carter was trembling as he shifted the rental car into drive and headed toward the airport. "What's your problem?" demanded Sinclair.

"My God. I've never seen anyone killed before." He could not look at Sinclair.

"Get used to it if you want to stay on my team. Besides, our sources indicated he was an active homosexual, so he didn't fit our model for an American, and he sure lacked family values. We have a dossier on him as thick as my thigh. Including pictures." He laughed. "This was what the Colonel would call a preventive action. Man, consider yourself lucky 'cause you just witnessed the first official shot in the new Holy War that will usher in the Millennium before Christ's return to reign on earth."

Carter nodded. Then silently wiped his sleeve across his eyes without taking them off the road ahead.

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## Chapter 2

Col. Greg Lawrence, retired U.S. Army Special Forces, waited in his office for his operatives to return with the information from the professor in Oklahoma City. He would have to spend the rest of the night analyzing the material and preparing a damage assessment for the Council. The men who hired him as their security chief would want to see what he had recovered as soon as possible; only then could they contain the potential fallout from Stillwell's publication. Of course, Dr. Patterson would be better able to determine just how much Stillwell actually knew about the Agenda.

The Alliance of Concerned Christians provided Lawrence with an office across town from their headquarters in Colorado Springs, an ample operating budget, and a generous salary. He had leased space in an office park near enough to the Academy so he could quickly get to the classes he taught, but far enough from both to insure the privacy

of his operation. The gold and black lettering of the outer door simply read, *Security Corps*.

The click of a key sliding into the lock of the rear door to the suite of offices caught his attention. Sinclair and Carter passed through the conference room and into Lawrence's dimly lit office. The Exec took the computer disc from his shirt pocket and handed it to the Colonel. "Here's the evidence."

"Well done."

Carter stood just outside the edge of light from Lawrence's desk lamp. "Major Sinclair made certain we won't be bothered by the professor ever again." His voice vibrated. "He kicked the shit out of him, then--"

Lawrence looked at his second in command. "You did what?"

"Sir, I eliminated a potential problem, permanently."

"You killed Stillwell?" Lawrence could barely contain his rising anger, let alone the panic following it.

"One bullet, left temple, pop. The finished manuscript was on the seat of his car. Without his cooperation to suppress the information, it seemed the only rational step to take, especially considering the good doctor's lifestyle." Sinclair dropped the brown folder on the Colonel's desk, minus the .45. "Everyone will think it was just another car-jacking."

"You are an incredibly dumb shit!" Lawrence was on his feet, yelling. "All these months of surveillance, the wire-taps, the covert operations to avoid drawing attention to this guy, and you decide to kill him? What if the cops find the taps in his house and office? What if someone notices his manuscript missing? Stillwell wasn't working in a vacuum. And these," Lawrence dumped the files from the black bag, "you took paper files, hard evidence?"

"Look . . ." Sinclair reeled under Lawrence's angry outburst.

"You look, asshole! You let your personal agenda get in the way of the Alliance's goals."

"My action was in keeping with the goals of the Alliance. Patterson has clearly stated that in the new order homosexuality will be punishable by death because it is an abomination before God. He said that. I was only carrying out the sentence."

"You placed this whole operation in jeopardy because you hate queers. Is that it, Phil, or are you just afraid one might take a liking to you, and you might like it? God, I can't believe you could be so stupid."

"Sir, I believe my action was righteous. And if I have to, I will rid the world of all those he has marked as degenerates--the adulterers, unrighteous heretics, witches, and even the kids in gangs who refuse to recognize authority and the rightness of the Alliance. They are all capital offenders and are sentenced to death under the new world order. I will continue to follow the Reverend's lead in his crusade to save America."

Lawrence could only stare at the man who had once served under him in the covert campaigns in Cambodia.. He looked down at the disk. The only sound came from Carter's dark corner as he bumped the coffee cart against the wall. "Maybe we can still contain this incident. Get your butt back to Denver and on the next plane to Oklahoma City. Our only option is for you to clean up your mess. Re-enter Stillwell's house and office, but this time make it look like a robbery. Take everything of value--electronics, jewelry, silver, but most of all his computer equipment, including all the disks and . . . fuck . . . just take everything. Wreck the files so no one can tell what's missing. Make it look real. In fact, find out when the funeral is taking place and do it then. The police know burglars read the obituaries and hit homes when they think everyone will be out of the way."

"Yes, sir."

"Do I need to tell you to get those wires out of his house and office?"

"No, sir. I'll take care of it."

"Now get out of my sight. And take him with you." Lawrence motioned toward Harvey Carter.

"Col. Lawrence, I have some business to take care of for the Reverend. He wants me to . . . ."

"Shut up, Harvey. You helped make this mess. Now help clean it up."

The two men moved into the darkness of the conference room. Lawrence heard the click of the door lock that meant he was alone again. He opened the brown portfolio and dropped the manuscript to his desk. He knew Jimmy Carl's words could move people because he had been moved, but he never really understood the power of those words until he watched Phillip Sinclair accept those same words as gospel because they mirrored his thoughts and beliefs better than he could. Jimmy Carl had a gift for telling people what they already believed to be true. He would have to talk to the good Reverend about toning down his language.

There was no telling how many other faithful followers took Patterson's pronouncements literally; how many others heard their deepest thoughts expressed in the Reverend's words and accepted those words as a blessing of approval. The Security Chief crossed the room to the coffee cart and took out the bottle of McCallan's from the cabinet below. He emptied the last two fingers of the single-malt scotch into a paper cup. Normally he would have savored sipping the smoothness of the whiskey, but the job ahead of him seemed enormous. It would be a long night, and suddenly he was very tired. Tonight he needed fortification more than pleasure. He crumpled the cup, then slammed it into the waste basket beside the desk as he sat down in front of Stillwell's manuscript.

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### Chapter 3

It took Maggie Stillwell-MacLeod three days to make all the arrangements for her brother's funeral. The phone call from the Oklahoma City police catapulted her out of the New York art gallery, staging a showing of her sketches and paintings, onto a plane back to Oklahoma City's Will Rogers International, and on to the morgue to identify John's body. Sleep had been impossible. All she could see when she closed her eyes was what was left of her brother's head. She had spent hours wandering through her brother's house, touching his books, the sculptures, all the belongings that made it John's home. She was looking through old family albums when the limousine arrived to take her to the funeral home.

Exhausted and stunned, she sat facing the shiny coffin under the canopy protecting the open grave from the late summer rain. The police sergeant had told her John's death "appeared to be just another random car-jacking gone bad. A senseless waste." It was all too horrible to believe. She was alone now. First, Andy, then John--no husband, no brother. Maggie couldn't stop the tears; she could only hold back the sobs. They had been so close.

John had remained the one voice of hope in her life. Even when they were children sprawled on the family room floor drawing pictures with crayons, he told her, "Some day you'll be a great artist, Sis." Lord knows, she had tried. At her lowest moments, when the art world ignored her work and her career as a painter seemed impossible, John would call, and her doubts dissolved immediately into the sound of his confidence in her talent.

"May Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, bless you and keep you, now and forever more. Amen." The Episcopal minister's voice floated in and out of her consciousness. "Dr. John Colman Stillwell was a generous, kind, and gentle man who believed in service to his church and his community. His desire to create a loving and

spiritual community led him to establish a program of summer retreats where he generated an atmosphere crucial to the love of learning and the desire to know God. John truly understood the meaning of spiritual treasures and brought the teachings of the great spiritual masters to all seekers of wisdom who joined his quest. He welcomed all members of the human family to share in the fruits of the Spirit. John Stillwell was my friend, and I will miss him. The world has lost a truly great soul."

The minister bent down to collect a small portion of the soil from under the green carpet covering the pile beside the freshly dug grave and handed it to Maggie. She stood, then sprinkled the earth over the blanket of white roses draping the closed casket.

"I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors." The Reverend Ian Douglas paused. "The Lord be with you."

"And with thy spirit," responded Maggie and others in the group gathered to say farewell to a dear friend. She sank back into the small folding chair, random words reverberating through her awareness as Ian completed the Order for the Burial of the Dead.

". . . the saints in light . . . glory everlasting . . . the mystical body . . . Amen."

The minister closed his Book of Common Prayer and moved to stand squarely in front of Maggie. Ian Douglas took both of her hands in his and helped her stand. "I'm so sorry, Maggie."

He was a large man and when he put his arms around her she knew she had been embraced openheartedly. "If there is anything Mary and I can do for you, please, call us or just come by the house."

Mary Douglas joined her husband beside Maggie. "Come Maggie, we'll go home now." She opened her umbrella, put her arm around the younger woman's waist, lead her away from the grave site.



As Maggie lowered herself into the back seat of the black limousine, she looked back toward the canopied grave. The rain clouded her view of the cemetery as the driver pulled away from the curb. The Fellini-esqueness of the scene would have amused her if it had not been so disturbing.

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## Chapter 4

Sinclair backed the rented white van into the driveway beside Stillwell's house. "Com'on kid, let's get this over with. Open the back of the van. I'll go in through the back of the house." He moved quickly toward the house and kicked in the wood and glass door of the older home. Carter followed him in and began ransacking kitchen cabinets and dumping drawers on the floor. He found a mahogany chest of silver dinnerware in a lower cabinet and stacked it on the table with the other silver serving pieces that had belonged to Stillwell's grandmother. Sinclair disconnected the computer hook-ups and emptied the desk drawers. Both men moved quickly to load Stillwell's belongings into the waiting van.

"Look upstairs for another T.V. and VCR," Sinclair commanded. "And don't forget the jewelry. Don't bother to sort the good stuff, just take it all. And look in the closets for hidden stashes in shoe boxes, cameras. You heard Lawrence. And wreck every room up there. And don't forget those wires you've been listening to--get them out of the master bedroom."

Sinclair raked books and momentos of the professor's travels from shelves. The ceramic replica of St. John's cross crashed to the floor, shattering the circle of life uniting the arms of the cross. He never looked down as he tossed the personal files from the small file drawer in Stillwell's desk into the pile on the floor. When he finished with the office, he moved on to the living and dining rooms, destroying the dignity that had been part of the professor's life, making occasional trips to the van.

Lawrence's sanitizing action took all of fifteen minutes for the two men to complete. Stillwell's house was efficiently transformed into an unrecognizable pile of debris, just as ordered.

"You drive. We'll make quick work of the office at the university and be out of here." Sinclair jumped into the passenger's seat of the van. "Drive slowly. We don't want anyone to get suspicious."

A few minutes later, Sinclair closed the office door, and the two men walked casually out of the university building with Dr. Stillwell's computer and placed it in the van with the other items from the house. The entrance to the building was deserted; he knew it would be on an interim Saturday afternoon.

Harvey Carter climbed in behind the steering wheel and pulled away from the curb. "What are we going to do with all this stuff now that we have it?"

"We'll dump it in the river after dark, then head back to the Springs to report to the Colonel." Sinclair stared out the side window of the van.

"I'll be glad when all this is over." Carter needed to talk, but his partner was curiously silent. "I'm looking forward to my own bed. It feel like I've hardly slept since . . . Phil, you O.K.?"

"Huh? Yeah, fine. I was just thinking. It'll be dark soon."

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Sinclair closed the back of the van and waited for Carter to get into the driver's seat. He pulled the silenced .45 out of his belt in the small of his back and walked to the open window where his partner sat waiting. "Sorry, kid, you've become a liability." Carter's body slumped toward the passenger's seat from the impact. Sinclair unscrewed the silencer, walked to the cattail thicket at the edge of the river and tossed it into the river, then threw the automatic as far as he could down the river. After the splash, he walked the two miles back to the 7-11 Store on the main road. The yellow cab took about

fifteen minutes to get there after his call, enough time to drink a large Dr. Pepper while he cooled off from his hike in the Oklahoma heat.

"Airport." Sinclair tossed the black bag into the back seat of the taxi.

"Yes, sir." The cab driver radioed his dispatcher that he had a fare as he pulled away from the convenience store with his passenger.

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Lawrence was staring at the computer screen when his exec walked into the office the next morning. "Well?"

"It was a clean sweep. Everything is at the bottom of the river."

"Where's Harvey?" Lawrence looked around Sinclair and into the other room.

"He had a falling out with the thieves, and they killed him. It would seem he was getting a little too nervous so they couldn't trust him anymore. The police will find him with traces of cocaine in the van and write it off as another drug related execution."

"That's too bad." The security chief shook his head. "It may be the only smart thing you've done in this operation." Phillip Sinclair was glad to be back in the Colonel's good graces.

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## Chapter 5

Ian and Mary Douglas accompanied Maggie to John's house from the funeral home in silence. Ian pulled the old Ford station wagon into the driveway of the modest brick home in the historical residential area on the south side of town. "Would you like to come in? I could make some coffee, or tea for you, Mary." Maggie didn't want to beg, but she didn't want to be alone just yet either.

"I'd love some tea. Come, Ian. We've not had a chance to visit since Maggie arrived."

Maggie unlocked the front door and began backing out of the house as soon as she took the first step through the open door. Ian caught her just before she fell backward down the concrete steps of the front porch.

"What's wrong?"

Maggie covered her face with her hands and gasped, then pointed. Mary stepped around Maggie and Ian into the front room. "Oh, my God! Why? Who would do such a thing?"

Ian and Maggie followed her into the silent house. Furniture overturned, lamps broken, books scattered from wall to wall, glass fragmented in piles where treasures hit the floor. "I'll call the police," Mary offered as she picked up the phone from where it lay beside the toppled end table.

Ian replaced the wingback chair to its normal position and helped Maggie sit down. Her eyes moved from corner to corner of the vandalized room.

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Police Sgt. Morton "Dub" Thomas completed his inspection of the house and returned to where Maggie was still sitting with the last glimmer of sunlight filtering through the white lace curtains of the bay window. She watched the light play across the knuckles of her hands as she opened and closed her fists in her lap.

"Mrs. MacLeod, do you have any way of knowing what is missing? Could you put together an inventory list so we can start watching the pawn shops and flea markets for someone trying to get rid of the stolen items?"

"Why?"

"Why, M'am?"

"Why would someone do this? Who . . .?"

"This is not uncommon. Burglars watch the obituaries and hit the homes of the deceased when they know the families will be at the funeral. They see it more often than you might believe. An unfortunate coincidence."

"The ultimate ruthless offense," Ian observed from the window seat beside Maggie.

"Yes, sir. These are the most cold-hearted breed of thieves the Burglary Division has to deal with, and because they are so organized they are also the most difficult to catch."

"Does that mean you don't have much hope for recovering my brother's things?"

"We'll do all we can, Mrs. MacLeod, but unless one of the neighbors saw something, we'll just have to wait and see if any of the merchandise turns up on the market. Officers are going door to door now, interviewing. Unless we get fingerprints, that's our only hope."

"Would it be all right to start cleaning up now? I would like to put my brother's house back in order. This is such an extreme sacrilege. It wasn't enough that they murdered him." Maggie's voice barely changed pitch or intensity. But she managed to smile at the police sergeant.

"You'll have to wait until these guys finish their investigation. I'm here because they knew I was handling the investigation of the carjacking. But I have no reason to believe it is anything more than an unfortunate coincidence. Dr. Stillwell's murder and this break-in. We still believe it was a *random* carjacking," Thomas offered, "and there is nothing to suggest that it was premeditated. If Burglary turns up anything they will keep me posted at Homicide Division. It is unfortunate."

"Yes, unfortunate." Maggie stood up. "Who do I see to get permission?"

"Maggie, why don't you wait until tomorrow. You could use some rest. Come home with us tonight," Mary said. "I'll come back and help you with this tomorrow."

"No. I have to do something constructive in the middle of all this devastation. I can't just lie down and do nothing. There's so much," she waved her hand around to encompass the room, "to do. I need to be here for a while, then maybe I can rest."

"O.K. Dub, we're finished here. We'll keep you in the loop if we find out anything." The policeman from Burglary said as he walked through the living room toward the front door. "My men will be out of here in ten minutes, M'am."

"Thanks, Bob."

"Then I can get to work?" Maggie asked.

"Of course. We have everything we need for now. If you could just make a list, including serial numbers, would help for tracing the computer and any other items that might have had numbers, like guns or . . . "

"John didn't believe in guns." Maggie picked up a book and placed it on the shelf, then two, then three more. "He believed the pen was mightier than the sword."

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"The kitchen is better now." Mary Douglas entered the living room where Maggie was still replacing the books on the shelves. "I've made some coffee and sandwiches. Maggie, will you take a break and get a bite of food in you?"

"Thank you, Mary. I'll get Ian from the study. He's been trying to put it back together."

The phone rang. "Hello, Stillwell residence," Maggie answered. Then listened to the caller.

"This is Sgt. Thomas with the Oklahoma City Police. I'm afraid I have a bit more bad news. We just received a call from the university campus police in Norman. The janitor found Dr. Stillwell's office ransacked. These burglars hit hard. All they can verify as missing is the computer, but that room was wrecked just like the house."

"I see."

"They would like to have you come to the university tomorrow morning and identify his belongings and try to determine if anything else is missing as far as you can tell." He waited for her to respond but was met with a resigned silence. "Sorry."

"Yes. Thank you. I'll go . . . tomorrow."

Ian had picked up the phone in John's study and heard the entire conversation. He joined the two women in the kitchen after the police sergeant disconnected. Maggie and Mary were sitting at the oak table. The floor had been swept, the dishwasher was finishing its cycle with a load of the few things that hadn't been destroyed, the coffeemaker burbled the last few drops of water into the filter basket. Mary lined up three assorted coffee mugs and began to fill them as she listened to her husband. She had lived with him too long not to recognize the voice he used to mask genuine concern. She sat the plate of tuna salad sandwiches in the center of the table and a mug in front of each of them.

"Maggie, I can't find anything in John's office that concerns the book he was working on. No files, no hard copy, no galley proofs, even the computer disks are missing. Do you know if he kept all his work at the university office?"

"I don't know, maybe. Why?"

"It just seems strange that he wouldn't have any of his papers here. Would you mind if I went with you in the morning to the University? He probably stored it all in his cabinets there."

"I was going to ask for that very favor."

"You can't stay here alone tonight." Mary placed a napkin by Maggie's hand and topped it with a sandwich half. "You'll come home with us. As soon as we're finished here, you get your things together." She looked at her husband. He nodded in agreement. "Not to worry. We have lots of extra room since the children moved out."

## Chapter 6

Paul Callidus, second in command to the Reverend Dr. Jimmy Carl Patterson as the Managing Director of the Alliance, also served as the Political Action Advisor on the steering committee, opened the office door and motioned to the security men into the outer office.

"Greetings, my friends." The Reverend's voice boomed across the room as Col. Lawrence and Major Sinclair entered his office. He appreciated the value of titles and the hierarchy of rank. It imposed order amidst chaos. Jimmy Carl enjoyed the feeling of absolute power and the sense of certainty created by imposing order on his world. "I trust this isn't business of an urgent nature. I only have a few minutes to give you today. I'm pressed for time with a programming meeting for our new Television Authority Network scheduled at ten o'clock; followed by an assembly of the Steering Committee over lunch. Col. Lawrence, you will be at the luncheon, of course." Patterson turned to Callidus. "You did remember to inform our security chief of this meeting?"

The televangelist's assistant opened his mouth to speak but was cut off. "Yes, Reverend. Paul sent me the customary memo."

Lawrence was forever amazed at the number of words Jimmy Carl could let loose on one deep breath. He hadn't changed much over the twenty-five years since they first met at a meeting of the John Birch Society. Lawrence had been moved by the intensity of the zealous young minister fresh out of the seminary whose personal mission, as a Christian soldier, was to save America from the communist peril. Patterson's blending of Old Testament law and what he simply called the manuscript with the conservative political agenda of the society compelled him to preach his doctrine of theocracy. He would have a nation headed by the Clergy for Christ and ruled by the Agenda of the society, all in the name of God. They would no longer tolerate a government run *by the*



*people*. The people had their chance and would now have to forfeit their beloved concept of democracy; that they didn't realize they had given it away made the victory all the sweeter.

As a young man, Lawrence sat in the back row of the little church in Georgia and listen to the Reverend Dr. Jimmy Carl rail against what he believed to be the rampant evils in America. "The Church Militant has sworn a solemn covenant with God to reinstitute Divine Law in our diseased society."

"Praise the Lord." His small band of faithful answered in unison.

"The soldiers of Christ will rule the world by the gift of Divine authority. Our people have lost their moral grounding in God's law. It is our mission to rebuke them so they may again hear the word of God, and if they refuse to hear, then they will be cast out of the society of decent men. We will defeat the ungodly communists before they destroy our homeland." The young preacher bellowed across the scarred pews of the rural church. The listeners believed.

Lawrence listened and believed. But when the Berlin Wall was toppled and Russia fell into economic ruin, communism could no longer be counted on as the singular threat to American security, so Jimmy Carl turned his attention to democracy as the new representative of Satan's evil power on earth. He would repackage the Society's agenda as one of Christian political action to create a republic controlled by an elite Christian corps, replacing the dysfunctional democratic form of government. Only *true* Christians would vote, and the men who controlled the pulpits and broadcast networks would control the voters, and therefore, the country.

After all, as the Reverend had pointed out, most of the faithful relied on faith rather than knowledge, so their input of information was limited both by choice and by association. Lawrence understood that to Jimmy Carl only the people who believed his teachings would be considered *true* Christians; anyone who disagreed was labeled a

godless liberal, or worse, a heretic if they considered themselves Christians. With God on their side, Jimmy Carl as His regent, and the John Birch Society setting policy, how could they lose the war? Lawrence recognized political genius when he saw it. The means would serve the end.

"What is the nature of your business, Colonel?" Patterson's upbeat and distinctive voice, cultivated by his years in Christian broadcasting, brought Lawrence back.

He handed Jimmy Carl the brown portfolio Sinclair had taken from John Stillwell's car. "This is what you wanted to see from Oklahoma City, sir. You have heard, of course, that Dr. Stillwell has been eliminated as a potential problem?"

"Yes, a most timely coincidence. The Lord does work in the most mysterious ways." Reverend Patterson untied the strings from around the accordion envelop and laid the manuscript in the center of his uncluttered desk.

"Reverend, the Lord didn't pull the trigger, Sinclair did." Lawrence was not getting the reaction he expected from the preacher.

Paul Callidus sprang from the chair where he had been watching and listening. He turned to Sinclair with a look of complete horror on his face. "Sinclair shot Stillwell? For God's sake, why?"

Phillip Sinclair, indignant with the absurdity of a challenge from someone who should know the Reverend's teachings at least as well as he did, defended his action, "The Reverend said, 'The righteous right hand of God will stone unredeemable homosexuals, adulterers, astrologers, and willful children.' As a Christian Soldier, I am God's right hand. Guns are quicker and far more effective than rocks."

"Oh, dear God, let us pray for the soul of this lost lamb, John Stillwell." The preacher dropped to one knee beside his desk and waited for the others to form a prayer circle with him. He raised his right hand above his head and extended the left for his visitors to form a bond of power at the center of the circle by joining hands. "May the

Lord accept the departed soul of this most unfortunate sinner who died in the name of righteousness that we, His servants, may purge this great nation of its vile men with vile ways. And we beseech Thee to bless this soldier who broke Your commandment as a messenger of holiness, just as David slew the Philistine Goliath, for the Lord was with him and blessed his house out of which came our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Lawrence stood up with the other three men. He had hoped to elicit a verbal censure from Jimmy Carl, or at least a mild reprimand, toward Sinclair for his unwarranted action. He had not expected the Reverend to sanction the kill. "Sir, you have to condemn this action. We can't have our people taking the law into their own hands."

"It is God's law, based on His word, and it will soon be the standard of this country we are rebuilding in the light of His word. God will forgive the *righteous* who act in his name."

"But Jimmy Carl, don't you see what . . ."

"I want to hear no more of this incident." Jimmy Carl sat in the large leather desk chair and began thumbing through John Stillwell's manuscript. "Please excuse me, now. I must prepare for my busy schedule."

Callidus quietly closed the office door behind them as the three men left the Reverend alone with Stillwell's text and his own thoughts.

"There, Colonel, the Reverend wasn't as upset as you thought he would be." Phillip Sinclair smiled at his superior officer.

Lawrence could barely contain his irritation with Sinclair's smugness. "Phillip, you go back to the office and work on the surveillance plan for the investigative reporter who has been writing so much negative press about the Alliance. I'll catch up with you there after lunch. I also want to see that dossier on the minister, Stillwell's friend. What's his name, Douglas?"

"Yes, sir."

Lawrence turned to the Alliance's Political Action Advisor. "Paul, let me buy you a cup of coffee?"

They watched the elevator door close behind Sinclair. "What are you going to do about this, *incident?*" Callidus turned toward Lawrence.

"What am *I* going to do? Don't lay this off on me. All I did was send Sinclair and Harvey Carter to Oklahoma City to keep tabs on the professor. It's not *my* heart-felt speeches that are setting these people off. What are you going to do about Jimmy Carl's, shall we say, inspirational persuasiveness? Can't you control his speech writers?"

"He refuses to stick to the speeches we give him, and he insists on writing his own sermons. You know how he gets full of himself and goes off on tirades interpreting the Scriptures, the Word according to Jimmy Carl. Besides, the Alliance needs to move the American public in the right direction, and Jimmy Carl knows just which buttons to push, even if some of the flock occasionally stray from the straight and narrow path. Once we're in power we'll tone down the rhetoric, but we need it to get there."

"Let's get out of here. This is not the place to talk about such sensitive issues. That coffee house with the sidewalk tables would be better. By the way, FYI, Sinclair decided Harvey was a liability and terminated him too. I probably should have given Jimmy Carl the opportunity to absolve Sinclair of that minor infringement while he was at it."

"This could get out of hand." Callidus pressed the down arrow for the elevator.

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Paul Callidus returned to his office and placed a telephone call to the Commissioner of Police in Oklahoma City. The local chapter of the Alliance had supported and contributed financially to his election. Actually, their chapter chiefs had launched a full-fledged campaign behind the scenes to insure his election. Churches affiliated with the Alliance received substantial funds to cover the expense of the

brochures they sent to their members comparing the positions of the candidates and emphasizing the characteristics of Bill Jefferies which were aligned with the policies of the Alliance, wording the language to comply with issues of family values the church members could claim as their own. They had successfully pulled off a solid bloc vote in a poorly attended election. Backdoor politics was a technique that worked well when the average American voter was too apathetic to go to the polls, which was more and more often lately.

Callidus particularly enjoyed the guerrilla-fighter tactics he learned so well in Vietnam. The stealth involved in these surprise political coups reminded him of all the surprise raids behind enemy lines. Games--of war, of politics. He liked the challenge and had become a consistent winner since Jimmy Carl made him the Steering Committee's Political Action Advisor six years ago. Thanks to his stealth, the Alliance was finally building a network of locally elected officials who supported the tenets of the Alliance and were personally loyal to the Right Reverend Jimmy Carl. Soon he and Jimmy Carl could enter the front door of the White House and run the United States the way it should be run. They would be in power before the American people knew what hit them.

Bill Jefferies' voice broke through the music over the phone line. "Paul, this is an honor. What can I do for you?"

"I'm calling for Reverend Patterson to inquire about a case your department is handling. The professor from the university who was killed. Stillwell, I believe, was his name. Do you have any leads? The Reverend seems to have known him a while back and was concerned about his death and his family. You know how Jimmy Carl gets worked up over such tragedies."

"Yes, the Reverend is a good man. But I haven't been involved with that investigation. It's in the hands of one of our best detectives. Dub Thomas is very thorough and like a bloodhound once he gets on a scent."

"It would be such a shame to drag the family through a long investigation. Do you anticipate closing the case file quickly?"

Jefferies' silence was audible in the dead air between Colorado Springs and Oklahoma City. "I see. Sgt. Thomas is a very busy man with a heavy case load. Perhaps he could be persuaded to shift his attention to more pressing matters than an apparent carjacking."

"The Alliance would be most grateful if you could spare his family from any unnecessary probing into his personal life. Jimmy Carl sends his best wishes to you and your lovely and devoted family. God bless."

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The next morning when Dub Thomas arrived at headquarters there were five new case files stacked neatly on his desk and a note that read: *Congrats, I heard your name has been added to the list for promotion to lieutenant. Crack these five and you could win the brass ring. Abuti.* Thomas immediately recognized Nick Abuti's scrawl across the bottom of the note. He knew Abuti was impressed with the power in his new supervisor's job, but he apparently had forgotten what a full case load was like since he got his promotion. It wouldn't be too hard to shift his attention to some cases with serious leads. Besides, a promotion would delight Allis. She had been wanting new family room furniture, and he had hit dead ends on several cases he was tracking anyway. Stillwell's case had turned up zilch, nada, zero. It would be the easiest to let slide. He opened the top manila folder and started to read. *An unidentified white male found in the front seat of a white van parked at the river. Gunshot wound to the left temple.*

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## Chapter 7

Lawrence stood by silently while Patterson greeted the seven members of the Steering Committee as they entered the private dining room of the Alliance Complex. The oversized oval oak table had been richly set with the appropriate china, silver, crystal, and crisp white linen. Lawrence could remember a time when Jimmy Carl sipped his hot coffee from a saucer. Now, the Good Reverend was as taken with the trappings of the *nouveau riche* as any young captain's wife Lawrence had dined with during his years of military service. Even the massive floral centerpiece sparkled with an array of exotic flowers and greenery. The setting was complete once an assistant opened the drapery of the western facing windows and revealed a spectacular view of Pike's Peak and its adjacent foothills. Jimmy Carl had become a master showman since they met. His assistants had learned well to cater to his adopted tastes for the dramatic.

"Come in, my friends. Come in. We should do this more often. Haven't Jane and Henry outdone themselves this month?" He motioned to his two assistants poised on either side of the doors into the kitchen. They both smiled and nodded their heads slightly in acknowledgment of the compliments. "Please, take your places at the table. Each is marked with your name on a small gift--a token of my gratitude for your diligent efforts toward the success of our Holy Mission."

Lawrence waited until all the committee members were seated, then took his place at the far end of the table from Jimmy Carl, between David Barker, the Alliance's Communication and Media Coordinator, and retired Col. Gus Jensen, Military Ministry Advisor. After a lunch suitable for the table setting, Jimmy Carl dismissed his assistants. Coffee carafes had been strategically placed along the length of the table so the forthcoming meeting would not be disturbed by zealous servers. Lawrence secured the two sets of doors into the room to insure the privacy of their tactical discussions.

"I would like to begin this meeting by congratulating Paul Callidus for his resounding success with the mid-term elections. We have control of both houses of Congress."

The room filled with applause.

"Paul, you have the gift of prophecy, I do believe," Patterson continued his praise. "Your strategies during the '92 convention helped get Clinton elected, a minor loss for us that only seemed monumental at the time, and well worth the sacrifice. Lose small to win big, right Paul?"

"That's right, Jimmy Carl. As you can all see, the plan is being made a reality."

"By setting Clinton up," Patterson continued, "we have paved the way for this more significant victory. We gave the public a scapegoat, and they love to have someone to blame for the things they can't understand. For two years we have been able to block his every move. Now our challenge is to maintain the momentum until the '96 elections, and we'll not only increase our numbers in the Congress, but we'll claim the presidency, and then we'll be in a position to fortify the Supreme Court with appointments of our own judges. Gentlemen and lady," Callidus acknowledged the one female member of the Steering Committee, Tiffany Walker, Chief Legal Advisor for the Alliance, "we will win a resounding victory for the Lord. America will be ours in ten years. God bless America." The room echoed with applause and a chorus of "Amen."

"But I must give credit where credit is due." The Political Action Advisor continued. "Reverend Charles Bishop was instrumental in our election ambush. As you know he mobilized the ministries by networking the voting bloc for this election. He helped prepare the flyers that were distributed to churches in the areas where our candidates needed the most help. Thank you, Charles. Your efforts not only helped at the national level, but I understand that your people have been even more successful at the local level with the election of core people to city councils, school boards, and state



assemblies across the country--those little elections the national media failed to notice. That's what I like to see. We'll just slip into power through the backdoor while no one is looking and make America a Christian nation with the help of your ministry, Charles."

The members broke into another round of applause.

The Religious Mobilization Coordinator acknowledged the appreciation of his peers. "Thank you, my friends. Our triumphs have been profoundly satisfying for my soul. The Apostleship Program has been one of our most successful mobilization efforts to train the elders in our key churches. Our success in that program has been two-fold--we have been able to share our Biblical World View, and because many of the church elders are retired, they have the time and enthusiasm to work on the campaigns. They have been essential to the organization of our Youth Councils whose members went door to door during the campaigns. The young people not only served the Alliance through their ministry by reaching out to potential converts, but they were also able to identify those residents of the community who were hostile to our position. They then marked the curb in front of those houses with the sign of non-believers for future reference. We will be able to target the people who do not share our values of moral absolutes. Especially those who do not support natural, pro-family morality."

"Excellent, Charles. Your foresightedness could prove to be most serviceable once we assume complete control of the country." Callidus leaned forward and raised his hands in mock applause.

Lawrence watched the faces of the committee members as their intense looks turned to smiles of approving devotees. Each member presented a report in turn. Paul had suggested that when it came time for Lawrence to make his monthly report that the Stillwell incident would best be set aside so as not to alarm the more sensitive members of the group. Paul had reiterated his position on the Alliance's need to know policy--lack of information prevents any undue conflicts and creates a dependency on the information we

dole out. It was all a matter of faith and trust--establish a trust in your authority, and they would bring their faith to your doorstep. An old military tactic that was essential to the development of loyalty among the rank and file. But Lawrence had never seen the strategy honed to such a sharp edge as it was applied by Paul Callidus.

"Dr. Chilton, could you bring us up to date on our educational endeavors?" Jimmy Carl moved the meeting along as smoothly as an orchestrated church service.

Bruce Chilton served as Education Coordinator and worked at the very foundation of the Alliance's strategy for success. Lawrence would always remember Jimmy Carl's insistence during the early years of their alliance that control of education is the key to revolution. He had never heard Patterson repeat that philosophy since, but Lawrence knew it was a basic tenet the Reverend had adopted from the Manuscript and every strategy for the Alliance was based on control of information within the educational system, however underplayed that strategy appeared.

Chilton began his presentation with an acknowledgment of Callidus' observation on the elections. "Thanks to the efforts of our affiliate churches, we have captured positions on 340 school boards across the country. This is just the beginning of our effort to influence the curriculum and policies in the public schools."

"What about the lobby for a voucher system for Christian schools? Are we making any progress in shifting the cost for private schools from the parent's pockets and getting them tax breaks?" Rev. Bishop asked.

"We haven't been able to make much headway in that area. Most state constitutions explicitly forbid any use of public funds for sectarian schools. The governments see tuition tax credits as a means of supporting the church that controls the school because it is an extension of the church and its teachings. That method of controlling what our children learn is a hopeless cause." Tiffany Walker had been fighting the legal battle for years. "Our best chance is to take over the public schools and begin

educating the children of this country in accordance with the Biblical World View, then they will be prepared to reform government when they reach voting age. It will be gradual, but that take-over seems imminent."

"Our new goal is to convert all public schools to Alliance Christian Academies within the next 10 years. We will approve and hire the faculties, shape the curriculum, and approve all textbooks in accordance with Biblical Law. We will get back to basics in education and forever rid this country of its anti-Christian biases and the unholy influences of a godless education system." Dr. Chilton reaffirmed the Alliance's mission. "Then our teachers will be able to teach our nation's children the scriptures and lead them in religious ceremonies as part of their daily lessons. Christian prayer will be back in the schools where it belongs, and Old Testament morals and ethics will be reinstated."

Applause resounded.

Lawrence had heard it all before. He had been there from the beginning. Now the masterplan was coming together. They were about to turn the dream into a reality. After the incident with Sinclair and the assorted shootings at the abortion clinics, he just prayed the dream didn't turn into a full-fledged nightmare. The heightened emotions of some of the zealots could make his job difficult, if not impossible. He would have to keep his finger in the security dike until after November 1996 and maintain voter confidence until they could celebrate a mega-victory at all levels of government. Jimmy Carl's broadcast network would be responsible for the public relations image and keep their viewers on the path they had cut through the political woods. Very few members of his audience watched or listened to the godless liberal news media and would accept whatever perspective they were presented through the Alliance's news network.

Communication and Media Coordinator David Barker had already started talking when Lawrence refocused his attention on the meeting at hand. "As you know the Television Authority Network now airs on 12,000 cable channels across the country,

opening the door of 60 million homes with viewers of all ages. Our liaison with Dr. Chilton's committee has helped produce hundreds of shows aimed at the re-education of different age groups. We have biblical cartoons for the 4-10 year olds, Christian music videos for the pre-teens, and adventure programs for teens. Of course, Jimmy Carl is on our channels at least three times daily and syndicated to other cable channels, so we have the adult market covered. The financial pay-off will be close to a billion dollars, which we are prepared to plow into the political campaigns of our candidates as well as our educational programming and our--"

"Yes. Yes. Yes, and in cooperation with our educational programs, the revenues from our cable channels and syndications are being used to fund scholarships for our most promising young people--those who are thoroughly focused on the Biblical World View." Jimmy Carl's excitement spilled over. "We have Alliance students placed in the most prestigious programs in the highest profile universities around the country--Harvard's business school, Yale's law school--we have them all covered--economics, broadcasting, political science--but most of all teaching. At this point, we give more scholarships for teaching than any other discipline. These are our footsoldiers. They will be in the classrooms with American children shaping, molding, and influencing the next generation. For most of our people entering the teaching profession, it's a step up economically from blue-collar jobs, so they aren't concerned with the low pay scale that public school teachers are allotted. Recognition of their accomplishments, however minuscule, goes a long way in stroking their new-found egos.

"Soon Alliance graduates will move out into the public sector with B.A.'s, M.B.A.'s, and even Ph.D.'s from the most prominent universities and will automatically move into positions of power at all levels. Isn't it wonderful when a plan comes together?" His enthusiasm was met with a spontaneous round of applause.

Jimmy Carl smiled and raised his hands. "Praise the Lord!"

After a few moments of chatter among the members of the Steering Committee, he continued. "David has also done a wonderful job of assisting in the start-up of our magazine *Christian Voice* and several local newspapers in those counties where we can have the greatest impact, at least at first, then we have plans for a nationally syndicated paper on the order of *USA Today*. The news perspective will be in accordance with the Biblical World View."

Jimmy Carl was very proud of his accomplishments for the Alliance's multi-media approach to education. "Soon *we* will be the media elite, instead of those godless liberals, with our own production companies creating appropriate entertainment for the American public. We will control the theaters and video stores, then we can pressure artists of all media to conform to our standards, or they will no longer have an audience available to them. But most important, we will influence the audiences in their own homes through our television ministry, news programs, and entertainment programming."

Another round of applause exploded.

*And they'll never know what hit them until it's too late, just as Jimmy Carl had visualized it and Paul Callidus had implemented it through his stealth campaign.*

Lawrence was getting antsy. He had more pressing matters to deal with than a pep rally. But he couldn't argue with success, and these people would in turn inspire the people who headed their committees where the enthusiasm would trickle down to the footsoldiers out there at the frontlines within America where the battles were being fought daily.

"Gus, have you been getting the cooperation you need from David's people to get the advertising on the network and in the magazine for the training camps? Charles, are you part of this? Your Youth Council members should be assisting the recruitment for militia readiness."

"Yes sir, Reverend," responded the Military Ministry Advisor. "We are already receiving applications for this summer's sessions. We have military training camps set up

in California, Colorado, Texas, Oregon, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, Iowa, upper New York state, and Florida. Each session can accommodate a hundred trainees. By the end of this summer we will have three thousand more soldiers trained and ready to return to their home counties to raise county militias. Some of these will be duly elected county sheriffs who will be responsible for each militia unit. We have been working very close with Dr. Chilton's people and Rev. Bishop's to devise a core curriculum for our classroom training sessions to teach our recruits Biblical Law, economics, the moral and ethical values of the Alliance. Every day they spend three hours after lunch in a classroom setting and the rest of the day in basic military training, including weaponry and war games. We try to make it fun as well as educational. We also make sure they understand their second amendment rights so they will be prepared to defend the constitutionality of gun ownership." Ret. Col. Gus Jensen believed in a strong defense program and military preparedness. His troops would be ready by the time the revolution was full-blown.

Lawrence first met Jensen when they were majors in Vietnam. Uncle Gus, as his men called him, could capture the loyalty of the troops under his command like no other officer he had ever observed. They would follow him into hell, and those who survived thanked him for the opportunity. Jimmy Carl couldn't have chosen a better man for the job. He had lobbied for the NRA for several years and had established a network of influential cronies in Washington, both in the Pentagon and Congress.

"We will maintain America's military might." Jimmy Carl added. "This is one of our most promising programs. We accept both youths and adults. Some are coming from our affiliate churches, but most of our trainees are new recruits to the Alliance and to the Biblical World View. We have even given direction to former inner-city gang members who were seeking some higher purpose in their lives. And what higher purpose is there than our holy mission to save America? In fact, Col. Lawrence, aren't you capitalizing on the talents of some of these recruits in your organization?"

"Yes, several have proved most effective on our surveillance teams." Lawrence glanced at Paul Callidus just in time to catch a distressed look and knew the Managing Director was reminded of one such recruit, the late Harvey Carter. Callidus poured himself another cup of coffee from the carafe.

"We have put a few new recruits to work too." Colin Darryl Birch, the Alliance's Economist and Tax Consultant, sat forward in his chair and shuffled the papers on the table in front of him. "Our employment agencies have placed several of our trainees in strategic jobs, especially those with exceptional qualifications. A few devoted business majors were placed in the Alliance Chambers of Commerce that cater to the needs of local Christian businesses. Several of our journalism majors were hired by major newspapers and local television stations as reporters. Jimmy Carl's scholarship program is paying off. We are gradually extending our potential for influence. Each trainee is cautioned never to mention his or her affiliation with the Alliance. They are encouraged to be excellent examples and to serve as positive role models for their co-workers, essentially to blend in."

"Do you foresee any progress with our tax lobbyists?" Bruce Chilton asked. "We are very eager to see some reforms in the economy."

"We are lobbying at the state and federal levels to institute a flat tax for all citizens." Birch continued. "But our primary thrust has been toward the elimination of PIC--property, inheritance, and capital gains taxes. With our new members in Congress we should be able to push through some of these reforms more quickly now that we have more sympathetic ears. Of course, once we have taken Washington, then we can pass legislation to disempower the IRS and break its hold on our tax exempt status as a reason for restricting our political involvement. For the time being, the IRS may keep us from endorsing political candidates and campaign issues, but our major goal is to dismantle the

IRS within ten years. Once that is accomplished, we can replace the Federal Reserve with the Alliance Banking System and institute Alliance investment corporations."

"It's just a matter of time and controlling the vote," observed Callidus. "Reverend Bishop seems to have worked that detail out, and as long as the public gets to vote, they will still think the American government is a democracy."

"And they will all be legal takeovers," added Tiffany Walker. "Reverend, you'll be happy to know that my office is currently drafting legislation for all levels of government to reinstitute biblical disciplinary procedures and sentences for convicted criminals. As we have all agreed, the Bible will be the legal foundation for all Americans--Christians and non-Christians. We will reactivate the death penalty for the eleven capital crimes under Biblical Law, including murder, homosexuality, rape, kidnapping, abortion, adultery, and pornography. We will be ready when the time comes for God to rule with Jimmy Carl as His regent."

Patterson smiled, cocked his head to one side, raised his palms to form a cup as if to receive both the endorsement and the blessing with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Thank you, Tiffany." Paul Callidus stood. "Lawrence, do you have anything to add to this meeting before we adjourn?"

"I'll keep this short. The security team is keeping an eye on potential hot spots where our security could be breached, and we are watching some of our more vocal adversaries in the media so we can neutralize their influence. Have your liaisons keep me informed." Lawrence had followed orders. The Sinclair/Stillwell secret was safe for the time being. He wasn't allowed to report to the committee that Stillwell's manuscript made no connection between Wilfrid's tactics for the usurpation of political power in seventh century England and Jimmy Carl's modernized version aimed at revolutionizing America.

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## Chapter 8

"Maggie, we have to talk." Ian Douglas handed her the customary after-dinner coffee cup and saucer, then guided her into his study. "As you know, I've been helping John edit the book he was working on, and I know he planned to mail the final draft this week. It's missing."

"What do you mean, it's missing?"

"Just that. When we were cleaning up at the house I couldn't find a copy of the manuscript. There wasn't one at his office at the university either. And the curious thing is, all of his files relating to the book were missing from the cabinet. It's like everything about the Wilfrid manuscript vanished."

"But, why? Who?"

"I suppose there are several options we might consider. A graduate student may have absconded with everything, planning to use the information for his own publication, or God forbid, another professor might be that desperate. It doesn't make sense that everyday, run-of-the-mill burglars would be so selective, especially about the files. John could have hidden everything somewhere, but that is so out of character for him that it isn't even worth considering as a possibility. Half the time he forgot to lock his house."

"I know very little about the details of his latest project. Was there anything in it that might have prompted anyone to steal it?"

"Not that I could see. It's a scholarly study of an arcane prose manuscript. Basically, about a man from Northumbria during the seventh century who tried to usurp the power of the kings through his manipulation of church offices and political intrigues. His mission, which was blessed by the Pope, was to convert the whole of Northumbria from the Celtic form of Christianity to the Roman form and to bring his homeland into contact with the Mother Church as a politically organized body of bishops, priests, and

other religious. Unfortunately, many of these men, who were suppose to be the spiritual mentors of the people, often abused their positions and used their religious offices to pursue secular political power. Wilfrid was apparently the worst.

"John's manuscript deals with two separate, but related documents. The first is a biography of Wilfrid and the second is a collection of Wilfrid's writings in the form of a journal he kept between the time he left Northumbria for Rome and his death. He began his pilgrimage with the blessing and financial support of Eanfled, the wife of Northumbrian King Oswy, who was converted to Christianity under the Roman form. The combination of the two documents paints a fairly accurate portrait of one man's rise to power and the methods he used to establish Church authority and to sustain it while facilitating his personal political agenda. He established the first court schools to educate the aristocracy according to Church doctrine and accepted secular learning. His goal included control of Christian kings through ecclesiastic advisors.

"In the process he eliminated the direct influence of the form of Christianity in existence in Northumbria--the Celtic Church. His actions virtually eliminated any freedom of choice in religious matters in the British Isles once the authority of the Roman Church was established and Northumbria fell to Roman rule. Scotland and Ireland subsequently followed suit and acknowledged that authority. The Church labeled anyone who disagreed with that authority as heretical. A word of most interesting origin--from Greek *hairein*, to take or to choose." Ian waited for Maggie to take in his description of John's book.

"It sounds like a very important find. I knew he was an exceptional scholar. He had to be, just because he was so devoted to his work. What if all his work is lost forever?"

"It won't be. He gave me a computer disk of the manuscript to read and edit. I made a hard copy, added my comments, observations, and suggestions, and gave it to him.

If he made any revisions based on that copy for the final draft, they would have been minimal, at best." Ian opened his desk drawer and held up a gray 3.5 disk labeled *Codex Wilfridi* with John Stillwell's signature below it.

"Could I read it? Please."

"The printing will take about half an hour, unless you want to read directly from the computer screen."

"No, I would rather have a copy of the whole book to hold on to while I read. As silly as it sounds, it would be a little like having a part of my brother back."

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Maggie sat in the over-stuffed chair staring at the printout of the title page of her brother's manuscript. He had titled it *Codex Wilfridi: The Rules of Regency*. Below the title, her fingers moved lovingly across his name. The sound of the printer faded into the distance as it continued printing another copy of John's manuscript.

She read John's introduction to the text explaining the historical, political, and religious significance of his discovery. As the words passed from the page, through her eyes, and into her mind, she could hear her brother's voice penetrating the silence created by his death. The ancient world he had come to know and love so well came alive in her mind's eye--the sights, the sounds, the people, but most of all the ideas he illuminated with his words:

### **Prologue**

*The imperfection we envision rarely, if ever, lies in the subject of our scrutiny, but rather in our own angle of perception.*

*My scholarly colleagues will forgive me if I choose to become an apologist in defense of religion, not the religion of dogmas and doctrines that are formed in the minds of men and held as exemplum of humanity's willingness to accept, however blindly through faith, the authority of voices that will never speak*

*truths, but of that thin golden thread that binds the human soul back to the transcendent and makes life a celebration of the eternal, rather than an ordeal of the flesh.*

*Three years have slipped by since I stood on the Northumbrian coast, waiting for Holy Island to rise again out of the frigid waters of the North Sea. As the tidewater receded, I watched a narrow black causeway break the surface of the water like the back of an enormous whale emerging from the pelagic depths to create a link between the mainland of England and the islet once known as Lindisfarne.*

*Still, its magic haunts me as it did when I walked its rock-strewn shore, wishing to hear the immaterial voices of its long departed monks chanting softly beneath the shrill and lonely sounds of sea-birds circling above the rising tide that would isolate me, this time, from the mainland. Those voices whisper even now from the darkness, and the din demands a release from the bonds of time. They do not seek a eulogy nor do their austere lives require applause. Perhaps it is not their need to be heard as much as it is my desire not to have them cast into oblivion where their voices would evaporate like the calls of sea-birds in the wind. They were not the casualties of the battle for Northumbria—we are.*

*The Codex Wilfridi: The Rules of Regency delineates a composite portrait of the strategies used by Wilfrid to instigate the unification of Northumbria under the supreme authority of the Roman Church and establishes the rules for creating God's kingdom on earth with the Roman clergy as His regents. Most medievalists have taken this conquest of the north country as a positive sign of the coming of Christianity to England; however many of my scholarly predecessors have failed to acknowledge that Christianity, albeit not the evolved Roman kind, had been established by Irish and British missionaries for an indeterminate period long before the Roman contingency arrived at the Synod of Whitby in A.D. 664 with its sophisticated political machinery; or that the extant form of Celtic Christianity may have been more valuable than the Roman model that promptly exiled the Celtic monks and their rituals back to the sacred island of Iona off the western coast of what is now Scotland.*

*The Celtic form acknowledged the direct connection between the human spirit and the transcendent and encouraged its followers during their missionary travels to share the rituals designed to enhance the relationship between the individual and God. Not only were these monks and nuns taught meditative*

*practices as a part of their daily lives and essential to their own salvation, but they were encouraged not to remain hidden within a cloistered setting and to share their knowledge and learning--both secular and spiritual--with the extended community. They taught the people how to be responsible for their own salvation--an intolerable concept to the Roman rule which placed the political Church between the individual and God, the Church Militant above the Church Triumphant. Christianity would no longer be a path to know the transcendent, but rather, an institution where people could talk about and hear about God, as the transcendent became doctrinized, dogmatized, and theorized, forever lost behind a veil of ritual.*

*The last outpost of religious freedom in Christendom, those areas influenced by the Celtic Church--the northern and western regions of the British Isles-- were conquered at the Battle of Whitby on the North Sea coast of England in A.D. 664. No swords rattled, no battle axes ripped the air, lindenwood shields were nowhere to be seen. The instruments of war emerged from the pages of theological treatises as words hurled against adversaries. The spoils of war to be collected from the battlefield would be the unsuspecting souls of the English speaking people.*

*The discovery of the MS Janus Litteratus Ludibrium A IX includes a collection of the Anglo-Saxon writings of Wilfrid I, Bishop of York, dated between A.D. 652-709 and Vita Wilfridi apparently written in the Monastery of St. Paul at Jarrow, possibly by the Venerable Bede, but referred to here as Pseudo-Bede, dated about A.D. 728.*

*That these documents are written in the vernacular rather than in Latin is significant because it suggests they were intended for a local audience rather than for the church hierarchy in Rome. This observation is particularly important in relation to the Pseudo-Bede Vita as a biography of the man Wilfrid rather than the usual hagiography commissioned by the Church to idealize and glorify a saint's virtues while ignoring the humanity of the person behind the saint. Most of the monastic writings of the early eighth century in Northumbria were in Latin as a result of the conquest of the area by the Roman Church, and therefore, severely distort our angle of perspective in relation to the period. The implications of an Anglo-Saxon document of this type during this period are extensive. The recovery of this manuscript is as*

*valuable to our studies of early England as the Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum and casts a light on many unaddressed issues of the period known as the Dark Ages.*

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## Chapter 9

Col. Greg Lawrence returned to the Security Corps office and was greeted by a handsome young man behind the receptionist's desk that he didn't recognize.

"Good afternoon, Colonel."

"Yes, afternoon."

Sinclair entered the lobby from the copier room across the hall when he heard Lawrence's voice. "Hi, Greg. I been putting together that information you wanted on Louis Macon and Ian Douglas. Are you ready for a briefing?"

"Would you like to introduce me to . . .?"

"Of course. Col. Lawrence this is our new recruit Joseph Schwann. Col. Jensen recommended him personally as the top trainee from the last summer session at the Texas base of operations."

As the boy snapped to attention and saluted, Lawrence realized that he couldn't be more than twenty years old, then offered his hand. Schwann shook the extended hand, but Lawrence didn't bother to return the salute. "Welcome aboard. Gus must have seen a lot of potential if he sent you to me."

"Thank you, sir. I will do my best to keep the tenets of the Alliance and Rev. Patterson and to serve the Security Corps well."

Lawrence wondered if this eager believer really understood what that meant. He hadn't way back when he was that age.

"Fine." Lawrence turned to Sinclair. "Let's see what you have. Bring it to my office." He crossed the hall to his office and went into his private bath to wash his hands.

He was standing in the doorway drying his hands when Sinclair entered with two manila folders. "Close the door."

Sinclair had already reached the credenza adjacent to Lawrence's desk and had to walk back across the room to follow the order.

"Tell me about him."

"Who first?"

"Schwann."

"He was waiting for me on the park bench outside the door when I got back from headquarters. He had a hand full of official papers. Basically they were orders to report to this office, signed by Col. Jensen, and with a personal letter of recommendation from both the Colonel and Rev. Patterson himself. I gave him a brief tour of the office and told him he would be responsible for phone calls, messages, the fax machine, and any clerical work that needed to be done. According to his file, he learned his way around a computer and to shoot a rifle at some exclusive military school in Texas before he had a brush with the law at a Klan rally in Austin. That's all I know."

"We'll find something for him to do around here until we need him for an operation. He'll have to take over Carter's assignments. Stay close to him. Once he proves himself loyal, we'll let him transcribe surveillance recordings into our computer files and handle more sensitive issues. Now, tell me what you have on the priest, Douglas."

Sinclair opened the folder labeled *Ian Douglas* and handed it to Lawrence. Pictures of Ian and Mary, their adult children, Ian with John, and with Maggie were stapled to the inside front cover. "Douglas is a former monk who left his Catholic religious order disillusioned with what he called 'isolated spirituality.' He entered the monastery at age 15 and stayed ten years. Personally, I think he left because he wasn't getting any."

"Jesus, Phillip. I don't care about his sex life. Just tell me about the man. I want to know how much he knows, and if he is a threat to this organization."

"Right. Something of a whiz-kid, entered the university at 16. He has degrees in theology, philosophy, and comparative literature, reads Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Gaelic, and Anglo-Saxon. He left the monastery 25 years ago and wandered around the U.S. and the continent for a couple of years. He met and married Mary McDonnell in Edinburgh. When they returned to the States, he became an Episcopal priest and was assigned to a small church in Virginia then transferred to a larger church in Oklahoma City. He teaches part-time at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, is a prolific author of books about spirituality, and a close friend of John Stillwell."

"A potential problem."

"Maybe. We have tapes of his conversations with Stillwell about the Manuscript, but there was never any mention of the Alliance or Rev. Patterson. He has apparently read Stillwell's book."

Lawrence leafed through the dossier transcripts of telephone conversations with Stillwell, surveillance reports, and background information. "Has he demonstrated any political activism in the past?"

"Not really. Some of the Washington crowd attended his church in Virginia, so he has some connections in D.C. but no activity that we've uncovered. Seems to be more of an egghead. His wife publishes a Christian newsletter for subscribers in the Internet."

"Is your reliable source still in place?"

"Yes, one of our operatives is running a cold surveillance. We don't have any electronic penetration at this time. Do you want me to install a more sensitive source in his house and office?"



"No. Oklahoma City is too hot right now to go in with electronic equipment. That's the last place we want to draw attention to for a lot of reasons. Just watch him and keep me posted. What about the reporter?"

"His name is Louis Macon. Born and educated in Paris. A freelancer covering the American political scene for fifteen years, concentrating his attention on human rights issues, especially First Amendment rights and seems to be on some personal mission to maintain what he sees as a connection between the U.S. and France's revolutionary roots. It's like a personal vendetta against the Alliance. Another goddamn fucking liberal."

"Do you have any of his published articles?"

"I've collected a number of them in the back of the folder. One of our operatives in Boston has been keeping tabs on him and sending me copies of his articles through our computer link-up. So far most of his publications have only been in small magazines with a limited readership. Nothing has reached *Time* or *Newsweek* yet."

"Where is he now?"

"Last indications are that he is in Boston, working on a book. But that information is over a week old."

"Find out where he is and what he's up to. We have to contain any bad press right now. Callidus is working hard to portray the Alliance in the most positive image as the savior of the American way of life thanks to his efforts in the midterm elections. It is essential for the '96 strategy that the voters identify with that image. Anything else you can tell me about him?"

"He's 38, single, and lives alone, no involvements. I'll put a man on him. Do you really think he really that much of a threat? He seems like such small potatoes."

"Maybe, maybe not. That's what you're suppose to find out." Lawrence leaned back in his chair. "Close the door on your way out. And Phillip, don't screw this one up."

"Yes, sir." Sinclair snapped to attention before he turned to leave.

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## Chapter 10

Louis Macon's photo portfolio on the members of the Alliance was growing, but he had not identified the man coming out of the Security Corps office with Phillip Sinclair. Colorado Springs wasn't such a large city that he couldn't easily follow anyone he wanted to keep an eye on, but he had been watching the apartment building where he knew the man lived, and he hadn't returned for several days. The journalist didn't have any more time to invest in a dead end, so he knocked on the door marked *Manager* at the first floor entrance of the run-down red brick apartment building. A woman in her early sixties answered the door. "Good evening, madam. My name is Macon. I'm trying to locate someone. Have you seen this man lately?"

"Naw. That's Carter. He ain't been around for 'bout a week, and he's not coming back neither. His brother came the other night and collected all his stuff, not that he had much, and paid his last month's rent. Said Carter moved to Oklahoma City to take a new job, and he was going to send his clothes and stuff on to him there. What you want with him? Is he in trouble with the law or something?"

"No, m'am. Not that I know of, I'm a journalist and would like to interview him for an article I'm writing. My reasons for finding him are quite honorable, I assure you." He watched her expression change from distrust to acceptance. "Do you know his first name?"

"Will you write about me in your newspaper?"

"Not unless you give me your permission. This is just between us. His name?"

"Harvey. Harvey Carter."

"Is this his brother?" Louis showed her a picture of Sinclair.

"Yeah, that's him. Real nice guy. Weren't no family resemblance between those two. Like they didn't come from the same peapod, if 'ya know what I mean." She poked him on the upper arm.

"Yes, I know exactly what you mean. I don't suppose you have any paperwork on him from when he rented this apartment that I could take a look at for next of kin or employment information, do you?"

"Of course. I run a respectable house here. You wait." She closed the apartment door in Macon's face leaving him standing in the hallway at the bottom of the stairway to the upper apartments. He smiled at the thought of acceptance as one thing and trust as a very different issue all together. When she reopened the door she shoved a rental agreement at him. "Here. But you can't have it. Just take a look."

Macon jotted down the information Harvey Carter had given her when he rented the apartment. Under the section marked *Employer* he had printed in a clear upright hand *The Alliance of Concerned Christians, Security Corps, Job Title: Clerk*. That was all Macon needed to connect Carter with Sinclair. "Thank you, madam. You have been most helpful, and I am very grateful."

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Louis Macon only had a name and a connection to the Alliance as he carried the enlarged photo of Carter from one rental car counter to the next in the Oklahoma City airport terminal.

"Yes, that's the man. I rented him a white van last week. What a mess. We still haven't got it back from the police impound lot. After all this time, it'll probably be impossible to clean up and use again as part of our fleet. I sure wouldn't want to rent it knowing a man was murdered in it."

"Who was murdered?"

"Mr. Carter. Shot in the head according to the newspaper."

"Do you recognize this man?" Macon held up a photograph of Sinclair. "Was he with Mr. Carter?"

"No. I don't remember seeing anyone with him. You might talk to Sgt. Thomas. He's handling the investigation." She rummaged through the drawer under the counter. "Here's the business card he left with me, if you want to write down his number."

"Thanks. Now, I'll need a car for a few days."

Macon filled out the rental car forms and picked up a Geo outside the terminal. He unfolded the OKC map then followed the network of interstates into the city and headed for Thomas' office. He couldn't help but wonder if another head on the Alliance dragon might not have surfaced in Oklahoma City--this one breathing death and destruction.

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## Chapter 11

"I'm looking for a Sgt. Thomas." Macon leaned over the counter at the central police headquarters in downtown Oklahoma City.

"Down the hall to your right." The uniformed officer directed the reporter toward the office. Macon knocked on the glass panel in the door, rattling the Venetian blinds on the other side. Thomas motioned him into the office with one hand while the other held the phone to his right ear.

"Mrs. MacLeod, that's all I can tell you right now. We haven't found any new information on your brother's death, not even a lead. I have a hard time believing that it was more than a random carjacking. Your theory that he was killed for this manuscript is just that, a theory, and nothing more. We have no evidence to connect his murder to the burglary or to the missing documents. I'm sorry, but I'll keep you informed of any further developments." Thomas hung up the phone. "Civilians." Thomas motioned to a chair on

the other side of his desk. "What can I do for you, Mr. Macon? You said you were a reporter when you called. Which paper are you with?"

"Actually, I'm an investigative journalist. I don't work for a newspaper."

"Which case were you interested in? You know I can't give you any details in an ongoing investigation, especially that I might read about the next day.

"I have no intention of interfering with your investigation. I thought we might be able to help each other by sharing information. That's all. Nothing will go into print until you close the case or clear the way." He wasn't eager to overplay his hand and give Thomas more information about his own investigation of the Alliance until he knew more about the man across the desk from him. Macon sat down and opened the portfolio he was carrying. "I understand that this man was murdered recently." He held out the picture of Carter.

"Yes. Name's Harvey Carter. All we've been able to determine is that he was involved in some petty crimes as a kid and was arrested for car theft five years ago. That incident got his prints into the FBI's national computer network, and that's how we identified him. He's dropped out of sight after that. No arrests. How do you know him?"

"I don't."

"Then why the interest?"

"I've been following some leads on a story I'm researching. I took this picture of him with another man. Do you know him?" Macon handed Thomas the photograph of Sinclair and Carter talking beside a car in a parking lot. The photo was void of all indications of location or any references to the Alliance or the Security Corps. The journalist had learned to be very careful when approaching people he didn't know with any questions that might indicate a connection to the Alliance, until he was sure of their loyalties. Until he was sure they weren't part of the problem.

"Can't say that I do. Who is he?"

"Are you a friend of Jimmy Carl's?" Macon used the familiar greeting of casual members of the Alliance to identify kindred loyalties. Only a follower would recognize the significance of the question, or know the appropriate response, *a very dear friend*.

"Jimmy Carl who?"

"Patterson."

"You mean the T.V. preacher?"

"Yes, Jimmy Carl Patterson. Head of the Alliance of Concerned Christians."

"I've heard of him, but who hasn't. He's a real mover and a shaker. Can't say that he's a friend of mine though. I never met the man. Why do you ask?"

Not a trusting man, Macon ventured out on the limb. Thomas was his only connection to Carter, and what was turning out to be a very ugly portrait of the dragon. "This man Carter worked for his organization. Specifically for the *defacto* paramilitary arm of the organization called the Security Corps out of Colorado Springs. That's where he was living until Thursday of last week when the other man in the picture, posing as his brother, picked up all Carter's belongings and told the landlord he had moved here to take a new job. The man's name is Phillip Sinclair, and he isn't Carter's brother. He's second in command to a retired Col. Greg Lawrence, the Security Chief for the Alliance."

"Paramilitary. Curious. That might explain the .45 caliber slug we dug out of the side post of the van. The one that passed through his head. We don't see many of those--very unusual caliber for a hit these days." Thomas paused, then began digging through the case files on his desk. He opened one, flipping through the pages. "Especially with metal jacket ammo--that's standard military issue."

"When was he killed?"

Thomas shuffled the pages in the folder. "The autopsy shows that he died sometime Wednesday night. Where's this man, Sinclair?"

"As far as I know, he was in Colorado Springs when I left there this morning."

"How much do you know about him?"

"Enough to stay out of his way. He lost it just after some secret operation in Cambodia in '75 and was hospitalized. Sinclair spent a couple of years in some government rehabilitation program for veterans before he was released with a seal of approval. From what I've been able to find out from the hospital personnel, he watched a great deal of Patterson on television during his stay, and became a devoted follower. *Born again*, as they say. Once he was out he went straight to Patterson's church in Colorado Springs. That's where he reconnected with Lawrence who, as it happens, was his commanding officer on that mission in Cambodia, and has been an associate of Patterson's for a long time. He was instrumental in Sinclair's appointment within the Alliance. He's bright, clever--but imbalanced. He doesn't demonstrate any traces of good judgment, and depends on outside guidance from people he admires, and when those are lacking, he relies on his own judgment which is usually reactionary rather than rational."

"You mean dangerous. I'll contact the people in Colorado Springs and see what I can find out. It sounds like he may have known Carter was dead before we did. I'll start checking airlines. If he was in Oklahoma City at the time, we may find a connection."

"That wouldn't surprise me. The question is why, and why here?" Macon watched as Thomas shuffled through the pile of folders on his desk. "One other thing, Sergeant, be aware that the Alliance's network is like a spider's web--lots of connections, and when you touch any point on the web a ripple effect will be created throughout the entire network. You don't know who you can trust in Colorado Springs."

"You make this sound like some kind of conspiracy."

"No, not necessarily. I'm just recommending that you proceed with caution."

As soon as Macon left his office, Thomas made copies of the information in the file.

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Dub Thomas knocked on Lt. Nick Abuti's door.

"Yeah." Greeted him.

Abuti wasn't one of his favorite people, but he was a good cop. He had always backed him up in tight situations with the department. And had even saved his ass with the boys from internal affairs when Thomas was suspended for an accidental shooting during a botched burglary at a liquor store two years before. Abuti's sense of ethics during that investigation is probably what pushed him over the top for this promotion. But arrogant assholes were assholes, even ethical ones.

"What's up, Thomas?"

"One of my cases has leads across state lines, and I want to go through the chain of command to make some inquiries about a murder victim. I want you to make the initial contact with your counterpart on the Colorado Springs force. Before you say anything, I know it's not the normal procedure, but I have my reasons."

"Wanta share them?"

"Is that a prerequisite?"

"Yep."

"Sensitivity. The victim was apparently employed by the Alliance of Concerned Christians--not a likely candidate for a professional hit."

"Professional?"

"It's starting to shape up that way. And he probably knew his killer."

"Discreet inquiries, right?"

"That was my plan."

"Leave me the file, and I'll see what I can find out."

Thomas handed him the copied file.

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## Chapter 12

Dub Thomas looked over the list of items retrieved from the river. Whoever dumped the stuff in the river apparently didn't know about the upriver dam schedule for shutting off the water. He looked up at the sound of a knock on his door and waved the journalist into his office.

"Thanks for calling." Macon was eager to know more than Thomas had hinted at over the phone.

"I thought you might like to know we found the gun that killed Carter. A .45 tossed in the river. Two boys had the good sense to call us when they found it. Unfortunately, any fingerprints that might have been on it were obliterated by the water and their excessive handling before we got to it."

"The ballistics match the slug you found in the van?"

"Absolutely. And it looks like Carter may have returned to his old ways. The boys also found a piece of jewelry, and when we checked it out, our guys found what looks like a load of hot stuff dumped from a burglary in the river near where the van was found with Carter in it. Whoever chunked it must not have known about the summer water conservation program at the reservoir upstream. When the engineers closed the gates the river level dropped enough to expose just enough of the pieces to make people curious. Fortunately, they called us."

"And you think there is a connection?"

"Looks like, especially since the murder weapon was found in the same general area."

"But this doesn't make any sense. Why would a man with a good job in Colorado Springs come here to become a common thief? I don't believe this was his reason. More

importantly, why was he killed? And does the Alliance have any role in it, especially Sinclair?"

"I know. I know. Neither do I, but I haven't come up with another reason yet. The Alliance's involvement seems like a stretch. I mean, I would hardly expect a bunch of Christians to be party to a murder." Thomas switched on his computer. "I was just about to run a check on the list of recovered items against several recent burglaries. One thing that makes it so peculiar is the two computers. These guys rarely take computers because they aren't smart enough to disconnect them properly so they can resell them later undamaged. And just because they were found together, doesn't mean they were stolen from the same place. In fact, it would surprise me if this load came from one crime scene. They recovered this odd piece of jewelry." He handed Macon a photograph of an ornately carved and jewel studded broach. "It's not real gold, and the stones are fake, but I've never seen anything like it." He pounded on the keyboard, then waited for the computer to cross-reference the lists for compatibility.

"Nor have I. But it looks like a replica of an antique." Macon studied the photo. "These intricate patterns of interlacing designs remind me of the mazes I saw on art work in Greece. They called them *meanders*, but the Greek's were geometric, and these look more like intertwining vines. Very beautiful. Did you notice these carved animal heads? Birds, and what looks like a ram, and some I won't even pretend to recognize. This must have been quite a work of art in its day."

"There." The police sergeant leaned back in his chair and smiled. "The Stillwell case lists two computers stolen. One from the home and one from his office at the university. But his sister didn't know what kind they were."

"It should be easy enough to ask him," Macon offered.

"I'm afraid not. He's dead. Shot during a carjacking a few days before the robbery."

"Shot? Could it have been with a .45?" Macon stared at Thomas, waiting for the answer he was anticipating..

Thomas moved slowly and deliberately forward in his chair, sorted a stack of brown file folders, removed one from the bottom of the stack in the tray on his desk marked *open*.

"One in a hundred chances of having someone killed with a .45--another one in a hundred the killer would use metal jackets, but--two killings with a .45 within two days of each other--that's too unusual for me. This guy was a professor out at the university in Norman," he paused to read more of the file, "also killed with one shot through the head. It's time to talk to the boys in ballistics. They have a slug they dug out of the asphalt on the road where it finally ended up after it passed through the head."

The journalist could almost see the wheels turning in the policeman's head. "Do you know if this professor was connected to the Alliance?"

Thomas seemed to have forgotten that Macon was still there as he looked in the direction of Macon's voice. "Alliance? No," he paused. "Not that I know of, anyway. All the indications suggested it was a carjacking. I haven't pushed for closure on this case because the leads just weren't there to follow, and other cases were piling up. Maybe I need to have another talk with his sister. She called to tell me that some of his files are missing, and some book he was working on is gone too. If both bullets are military issue," he stopped, rubbed his face with both hands, "then it would be a one-in-a-million chance if they didn't come from the same gun."

"Would you mind if I talked with her?"

Thomas looked him in the eye, trying to size this man up. He rubbed his mouth and slightly shook his head. "Just keep me posted. You aren't planning on publishing any of this," Thomas asserted, "are you? Do I need to remind you that this is an official investigation, and the details need to be kept out of the paper? Remember, I didn't have to

let you in on any of this. I thought we could share information, but if you mess me up, I'll-well, let's just say, it won't be pleasant."

"I told you, I don't work for a newspaper, and I have nothing to write, yet."

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Commissioner Bill Jefferies waited on the line while his secretary placed the call to Colorado Springs. "Police Commissioner Jefferies calling for Paul Callidus."

"Thank you, Carrie. I'll take it from here." He waited until he heard her phone disconnect.

"Bill, it's good to hear from you. How are you? And your family? Is that new job what you thought it would be?"

"Hello, Paul." He skipped over the pleasantries. "I apologize for bothering you, but I have run into a problem, and I thought you might be able to throw some light on the particulars. It's the Stillwell case. I know Dr. Patterson wanted to spare the family any unnecessary hardships in the investigation, but we have a problem. I thought you should know about it." Jefferies waited for Callidus to respond. The extended hesitation made him uncomfortable. As he was about to continue with his explanation, Callidus broke the silence.

"I see. I appreciate your consideration in this matter. Jimmy Carl will be most pleased that you took the time to keep him informed. Have you caught the murderer?"

"No. The investigation has taken a very peculiar turn, and I thought you might could help us clear up some of the questions. It seems we have a double murder. One of the victims may be an employee of the Alliance. Both he and Dr. Stillwell were killed with the same gun according to our ballistics test. Have you ever heard of a Harvey Carter? Our sources suggest he was part of the Security Corps."

The line was silent. Then Callidus responded softly. "I don't believe I've ever met a Carter here. I'm sure it's just a coincidence. Some psychopath out of control. But I'll check into it and get back to you as soon as possible."

"Thanks, Paul. I am faxing a photo of Carter and an unidentified man to you. If you or anyone there knows who he is, we would appreciate a positive ID. Give my best regards to Jimmy Carl, and please, tell him how much I appreciate his support."

"Yes."

The silence of deep thought made Jefferies respond in a concerned voice. "Paul? Are you there?"

"A fax. Yes, of course. I'll give him your message. Thank you for calling." His voice flattened into a monotone.

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"You really opened a can of worms this time." Nick Abuti closed the door to Thomas' office behind him as soon as he entered. "I just spent the last twenty minutes on the carpet in Jefferies office. It seems he disapproved of my calling Colorado Springs. Something about going through proper channels. The Springs chief called him complaining that Jefferies can't keep this department under control. Any further inquiries are to go through Jefferies. What's wrong with this picture? We've never had to follow a protocol like that. There has always been a free exchange of information between departments. A cooperation in our investigations with every city we've needed to contact. I don't like it."

"That's curious. Two deaths, both with possible connections to the Alliance, and all of a sudden we're stepping on toes. What do you want me to do?" Thomas' inquiry was a two-edged sword. He waited for the answer he hoped he would get from his boss.

"What do you think? I want you to do your job--as unobtrusively as possibly."

"That's good, because that was my plan."

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## Chapter 13

"Thanks for coming." Sgt. Thomas greeted Maggie when she knocked at his open office door.

"You said on the phone that you believe you have located some of John's belongings?"

"We found some items that had been dumped in the river. A chest of silver dinnerware and some other things. I hope you can identify a few of them as your brother's." He guided her down the hall to the property room of the precinct. The officer behind the counter led them back among the shelves where two computers covered in dried mud sat beside a large locked box. He flipped through the keys on a ring and opened the box, then sat it on a nearby table.

"That was our grandmother's silver chest. John had more use for it than I did, so he kept it. He loved to entertain and enjoyed pretty things. My life has been much less traditional, living in one room artist's lofts that reek of turpentine and oil paints. He believed in maintaining the stability of old traditions." She sat down at the table near the box. "What else did you find?"

"This is the most unusual piece. Do you recognize it? It wasn't on the list you turned in to Burglary." He could hear a faint gasp as she covered her mouth with her hand.

"It was my mother's. John brought it back from Ireland the summer after he graduated from college, and before he settled into graduate school in Oregon. It's a replica of the Tara Brooch, an ancient Celtic cloak pin from the early 700's. He was so proud of it when he gave it to her. At the time he just enjoyed its beauty. Only after he began his graduate studies did he understand exactly what it represented. Years later he

explained all the patterns and symbols to mother. I remember, he said the designs were very similar to the ornate illuminations decorating the pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Especially the bird's heads. He said they were stylized sea birds that nested on the coasts of England and Ireland. Mother cherished it for the rest of her life, and naturally, left it to John when she died. He displayed it in a glass shadowbox on the wall in his study beside a print of the illustration of St. John with his symbol, the eagle holding a book in its beak, and the adjoining decorated initial page introducing the Gospel of St. John from the Lindisfarne manuscript. He placed a great deal of significance in the importance of words as a source of illumination." She paused and looked at Thomas. "But I must be boring you. Yes, it is my brother's. I didn't realize it was missing from its case, what with all the broken glass around the room."

"Your identification of these items of your brother's may give us some leads, if not to his murderer, at least to the thieves who broke into his house. "Thank you for your help. This may be the break we need." He ushered her past the property clerk and into the hall.

"Sgt. Thomas." A voice called from behind them.

"Hello, Macon. What are you doing here?"

"I thought you might have received some new information from Colorado Springs?"

"Nothing I can discuss right now. This is Maggie Stillwell-MacLeod. The sister of the professor I was telling you about."

Macon extended his hand. Maggie took it in hers. "It's nice to meet you. I'm very sorry about your brother."

"Thank you." She released her grip, but he continued to hold her hand.

"I would like to talk with you, at your convenience, of course."

"What about?"

Thomas interrupted the interplay. "Let me tell you, he's a reporter. This is Louis Macon."

"Please, Sergeant, an investigative journalist." Macon clarified again before releasing Maggie's hand. "I would like to talk to you about your brother's work. I understand that some of his research is missing."

"Yes." Maggie turned to Thomas. "Did you find any of his files? I didn't see any papers in there." She nodded toward the property room door.

"No, but they could have blown away in the winds or washed away with the rising and falling of the water in the river."

"It is very important that I talk with you about the nature of your brother's manuscript, please." Macon reached out to take her hand again, but she moved it to shift her shoulder bag.

She looked at Thomas, and watched for his nod of approval.

"All right. I'm staying with some friends. I don't think they will mind if you come by tonight after supper." She tore a page from a small notebook she took from her bag and jotted down the address, then handed it to him. "About seven-thirty?"

The two men watched her walk down the hall until she turned the corner and was out of sight. "You didn't tell me she was an exquisite redhead." Macon observed.

"I didn't know it mattered."

"It matters."

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Maggie answered the door at precisely seven-thirty. "Come in, Mr. Macon."

"Thank you for seeing me."

"These are my friends Ian and Mary Douglas." The couple were standing behind Maggie in the opening of the double French doors into Ian's study.



"Please, join us for coffee, Mr. Macon." Mary gestured for Louis to follow them into the study.

Two additional over-stuffed chairs had been moved into the room to accommodate the gathering. Ian and Mary took their places on the comfortable old sofa under the windows. Maggie moved to sit in the chair to their right. Louis was obliged to take the vacant chair opposite the other three. He placed his leather satchel on the floor beside him. A coffee table, completely furnished with a coffee service, a platter of Mary's special shortbread, and four cups, separated the visitor from his hosts.

"You said you wanted to talk about my brother's research." Maggie didn't waste time with subtleties and the normal proprieties. This was not a situation she was inclined to ease into as Mary had intended with the pleasantries of a coffee clatch. If this man could shed any light on her brother's murder, she wanted to know exactly what he knew.

Mary handed Louis a cup of coffee. "Do you take anything in your coffee, Mr. Macon?"

"No, thank you, just black."

"Homemade shortbread?"

Louis took a small triangle and placed it on the saucer beside his cup. "Thank you, Mrs. Douglas." He turned his attention back to Maggie. "Yes. I have been researching a multifaceted and international organization apparently dedicated to the take-over of the American government by a small group of conservatives who operate under a banner of Christianity. You may have heard of the Alliance of Concerned Christians."

Maggie paled. "Yes. I know of them. They have been instrumental in the suppression of information about AIDS prevention and severely hindered the implementation of early research that could have prevented the rampant spread of the virus. Yes, Mr. Macon. I know them only too well. The pervasiveness of their ignorance and intolerance is what killed my husband." Maggie's anger forced her out of the chair to

pace the floor. She paused behind her chair and leaned forward across its tall back, wiping her face with both hands as if to wipe away the emotion. "I'm sorry. That is a very personal issue for me, but their intolerance of homosexuals and the false belief that *AIDS is a homosexual disease sent as a punishment by God* is now killing thousands of Americans, men, women, and children whose sexual preference isn't even an issue and who might have benefited from an unbiased and scientific approach to the disease rather than an irrational prejudice based on ignorance of both pathology and Christianity. The result of the Alliance spreading lies and inaccuracies is a classic example of how susceptible uneducated people are to the men who feed their ignorant beliefs."

"Maggie." Ian interrupted her outburst. "Be careful that you don't include me." He laughed. "Did Maggie explain to you that I'm an Episcopal priest?"

Macon smiled at Ian, but wanted Maggie to continue.

She took a deep breath and smiled at her friend. "Ian, you know I don't believe all Christians are ignorant. That's not what I was implying. I just have a problem with people who say one thing and practice another. There are far too many people in this country claiming to be Christian who have no idea of what Christ taught. They only know what the all-too-human preachers have taught since, which is more often than not one hundred and eighty degrees off. The farther we move from its origins, the farther they move from Christianity and into some hybrid forms. They never understood what is meant by *Christ*, so they took the *Christ out of Christianity* and replaced it with a man named Jesus. And worst of all, those same people are ready to follow anyone who will support their *misbelief* system because then they don't have to think about whether their beliefs make sense or not, and most of all they don't have to change. Anyone who disagrees with them, Christian or not, they label as *anti-Christian* as if their hybrid version is the gospel. Hardly, *good news*. That kind of mentality hasn't changed since the Dark Ages when the Church said the world was flat and anyone who looked at the world rationally and

suggested it might not be was considered an un-Christian heretic. It never ceases to amaze me that people are so willing to cling to ignorance in the face of rational experience and the obvious." She circled around in front of her chair, added hot coffee to the residue in her cup, and sat down. "Sorry. I'm starting to sound like some old soapbox Puritan, and I don't even go to church. But far too many don't realize that Christianity is a way of life, not a destination. They never understand that it is a path toward the sacred, which requires daily motivation, effort, and a modicum of success, not just a membership card."

"Please, Maggie, don't apologize for genuine passion. It's an admirable quality." Louis smiled at her. "I share many of your sentiments and agree with your observations about the Alliance."

"Do you think John was in some way connected with the Alliance?" Ian sat his empty coffee cup and saucer on the table in front of him.

"I don't know. All I know is what the police have told me. He was murdered with the same gun that was used to kill a member of the paramilitary arm of the Alliance. From all indications, both men were assassinated. One of your brother's neighbors said she saw a white van pulling away from the house the day of the funeral. Carter, the man I was investigating, was found in a white van near where your brother's belongings were dumped in the river. I don't believe in coincidence. That's why I would like to know more about your brother's papers that you reported as missing. Sgt. Thomas said you believed there is a connection between his murder and the missing documents." He nodded toward Maggie.

"He was my best friend," Ian continued, "and I can tell you that he would never be involved with a fundamentalist organization like the Alliance. For John, religion was one pathway to the sacred, and to him organized religion had lost touch with that intended purpose. His work through St. Albans Church, where I minister, was an attempt to rectify that problem, one community at a time, one person at a time. His studies of history

demonstrated to him far too often the propensity for ecclesiastical organizations to erect a spiritual tyranny over the very people they were designed to instruct in spiritual matters. Too often the Church supported political tyrants over the well-being of those same people for its own economic gain, or at least, for the greed of individual clergymen with feet of clay who valued secular power over spiritual treasures. That was basically the nature of his research."

"Did you read it?"

"I proofread it for him just before he was killed. The final draft is missing along with all his files and research disks for the computer."

"Mr. Macon, we don't believe in coincidence either, but it makes no sense that someone would kill my brother for this sort of academic research."

"I wish I could read it. With all I know about the Alliance, I might find a connection. It's too bad everything is gone."

"Why are you so interested in this fundamentalist organization?" Maggie asked.

"That's a fair question. I'm not really concerned with their religious practices as much as I am with their efforts to undermine the basic human rights granted by the Constitution. I was a graduate student at the university in Paris, specializing in the French Revolution. As you probably know, many of the men who drafted your Constitution and Bill of Rights were instrumental in the early days of our republic, and the modern governments of both countries were founded on similar principles. I wanted to understand why they turned out so different." He hesitated. He knew he could not avoid the personal details. "I came to the United States to study in a special program at William and Mary in the summer of seventy-five. The short of it is--I became involved with a beautiful woman in the law school there. I wanted to marry her, but after an abortion, she was so riddled with guilt that she wouldn't have anything more to do with me and became very involved with a local fundamentalist church in an effort to redeem herself. Her parents convinced

her that her actions were the blackest sin that had condemned her to Hell. Years later she reacted by becoming a zealous member of Operation Rescue, which led her into the Christian Right's movement to establish Old Testament Biblical Law as the foundation for all laws in the United States. She believes her efforts may help other women from suffering what she perceives as her fate. Her name is Tiffany Walker. She is Chief Legal Advisor for the Alliance. I have been tracking the growth of the group and documenting the backgrounds of the key members. I can tell you that these people scare me. They scare the hell out of me. America has been a beacon of freedom for all the world, and these people want to dim that light by eroding Americans' rights, one by one. The people of this country are ill-informed of the inherent dangers this multifaceted group poses to America's political stability and its future capacity for guaranteeing basic rights for all its citizens. The only way a democracy can function effectively is if the people are educated, not merely literate, and kept informed of current so that they can make rational decisions about their responsibilities as part of the governing body. Without the advantage of a broad-based education inspiring rational behavior, this country will fall into *mobocracy* or equally as dangerous in this case a *hierocracy*, a government administered by the clergy."

"That might not be so bad." Ian smiled.

"Then you wouldn't object to having an *ayatollah*, a rabbi, or a shaman from one of your American Indian tribes administering the government according to his religious beliefs and the laws basic to that belief? Or is it only the Christian clergy you would tolerate?" Louis returned his smile, understanding that they were playing a game.

Ian laughed. "Well said, Mr. Macon. Most religions have a moral core that instructs ethical behavior for the society that embraces it. The problems of intolerance arise when we are trapped in the window dressings of a particular religion and fail to see the similarities at the core."

"Enough! Mr. Macon," Maggie began.

"Please, call me Louis."

"Louis, it is getting late, and we have had very little sleep the last week. This is overwhelming. If you would be back here in the morning, say about nine, I will let you read my brother's manuscript. If you can cast any light on a motive for his murder, I would be most grateful."

"You have a copy? I thought---"

"I still have a copy of the draft I was proofing." Ian offered. "It doesn't contain his final revisions, but it's as close to perfect as we're going to be able to get, I'm afraid. We would rather keep its existence quiet, under the circumstances."

"I don't guess you would let me take it back to the hotel tonight? I won't be able to sleep anyway. My mind will be racing."

"Mr. Macon, we don't know you. Would you trust a stranger with it?"

"No. If you're right about the connection between his death and his missing work, the same men may be watching your house. Would you allow me to stay here and work with it tonight?"

"You mean the Alliance has spies?"

"Maggie, the Alliance has a highly trained Security Corps headed by a colonel who ran covert operations during the Vietnam conflict. This type of surveillance would be like a diversionary game for these men. We could all be in danger, if you're right, and the sooner we find the connection the less time we give them to make another move. If the Security Corps is involved, they probably know about you and your copy of Dr. Stillwell's book. And if they are watching this house, then they will know who I am because my publications have been an irritating thorn for several years. Our meeting may have raised the stakes considerably in their power game."

Maggie and Ian exchanged questioning looks.

"I'll bring you a pillow and blanket for the sofa, if you should need to rest. This sofa is very comfortable for napping." Mary had already decided that Louis would stay.

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The two men in the black van continued to aim the radio disk receiver at the house. The small man with an oversized mustache removed the headset he had been using to monitor the conversation at the Douglas' home. "Fax the pictures of the subjects to Sinclair with a note, then transmit the tape of what we have going on here directly into his message recorder."

The taller man dialed the cellular phone in the front of the van and fed the photographs through the portable fax machine. Transmittal was immediate. There was no activity on the line at the other end in the Security Corps office to delay the report.

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## Chapter 14

Paul Callidus' mind raced. He hung up the phone after the Oklahoma City Commissioner of Police finished his report on the Stillwell case. A fax. He opened the door to his office and crossed the outer office to the fax machine. The photograph of Carter and Sinclair was in the in-coming basket with a handwritten note across the bottom from Jefferies. Callidus looked around the room, but his staff members were busy with other tasks. He rolled the paper into a tube and walked down the hall to Jimmy Carl's office.

"Reverend Patterson asked not to be disturbed, Mr. Callidus." Patterson's private secretary responded as Callidus reached to open the door to Jimmy Carl's private office.

"So did I, Mrs. Thurber, but I didn't get my wish either." When he opened the door, Joey Schwann was leaning toward the head of the Alliance in a *tete-a-tete* conversation at the conference table. Both men sat upright in their chairs and turned to

the sound of the door slamming behind the Alliance's Political Action Advisor. "I have to talk to you, now." He emphasized the final word by raising the volume of his voice.

"Paul, come in. Mr. Schwann and I were just discussing some interesting developments at the Security Corps office.

"Joey, leave us alone. This is urgent." Paul tried to dismiss the young recruit, but Jimmy Carl interrupted.

"Anything you have to say, you can say in Mr. Schwann's presence. He is my personal assistant. I trust him implicitly."

Paul stared at the two men. "Since when?"

"Long enough." Jimmy Carl smiled at Callidus. "Now, what's your problem?"

Callidus' face reddened. "Does he know about the Oklahoma situation?"

"If you mean the Carter, Stillwell, Sinclair situation, everything." Schwann leaned back in his chair and folded his hands behind his head like a man confident of his position.

"Everything." Jimmy Carl repeated.

"What do you want to do about the situation before it explodes in our faces and causes the Alliance's image an inordinate amount of damage?"

"I told you, I don't want to hear any more about it. You're Managing Director so manage."

"How do you want it handled?"

"Paul, fix the problem, or I'll have someone else do it."

Callidus looked at Schwann's smiling face. Rage welled up. "It'll be fixed, one way or another." As he closed the door to the office, he looked back to see the two heads lean forward to resume the conversation he had interrupted. After all they had been through and all they had planned for the future, it was inconceivable to him that Jimmy Carl would humiliate him in front of an upstart like Schwann.

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"This must be serious for you to come here." Lawrence remarked after he closed the door to his office behind the Managing Director.

"That's why I called to make sure you were here alone before I came. I don't want any of your people to know about this meeting." Callidus eased himself into a chair at the small conference table cluttered with stacks of files and loose papers. "Are you aware that your newest inside man is working for Jimmy Carl?"

"Aren't we all?"

"Damnit, Greg. Don't play the fool. It's unbecoming, and I know better."

Lawrence laughed. "Let's just say, I suspected something when he crawled out of the woodwork so highly recommended by Jensen and Patterson. I didn't have any proof, but it was only a matter of time before he revealed himself."

"Schwann and Jimmy Carl are together, as we speak, and God only knows what they are planning. I seem to have been left out of the loop."

"Feeling a bit out of favor, Paul?"

"What I'm feeling isn't important. I know Jimmy Carl, and this is just one of his head-games. You know as well as I do how he likes to manipulate people. But that's not the issue here. What's important is the health and well-being of the Alliance, and that could be in serious jeopardy because of the situation your man Sinclair created in Oklahoma City. Something has to be done about him before a scandal rips the organization apart. We can't afford to have this lunatic on the loose any longer."

"What did you have in mind?"

"You know the police have connected the murders of Carter and Stillwell?"

"I've heard rumors to that effect."

"Did you know they are on the verge of connecting Sinclair with Carter? And if he was so overly confident as to use their real names when they went to Oklahoma City then the police will be able to place them both in town and together at the time of the murders."

Callidus reached into his pocket and handed the Security Chief the photograph from Jefferies. "I took this off the fax an hour ago. The Commissioner of Police is one of our men, but I don't know how deep his loyalties run. We may not be able to rely on his discretion. We have to eliminate any potential for scandal. The Alliance must come out of this affair as pure as the driven snow."

"A cover-up with Sinclair as the scapegoat?"

"Sinclair can't ever be questioned by the police. His mental stability is too unpredictable."

"So how do you want to handle it?"

"I want you to secure the reputation of the organization. That's your job, and from all appearances, you haven't been doing too well at that lately."

"Wait a minute. You're not going to hang this on me. You heard Sinclair defend his actions, and Jimmy Carl condone them. If you want someone to blame, blame the Alliance's grand master for his graceless eloquence for inspiring the masses toward religious fervor all in the name of political action. And I might remind you of your significant contributions to the inspiration of our good followers. You guys have turned that broadcast network into a formidable vehicle for the distribution of the *good word*." Lawrence stopped. He stood up and walked to the window. He needed time to regain his composure. "You're right. This is getting out of hand, and it has to be corrected, quickly. What do you want from me?"

"I want you to create a paper trail implicating Sinclair as a lone ranger. That should be easy enough. You can start with his medical records from the rehab hospital. You know how to do this. You've had plenty of practice."

"That was war." Lawrence's anger was rising, but he knew he had to control it. He couldn't say any more.

"So is this, and to the victor go the spoils. I want the White House. And this madman Sinclair isn't going to prevent us from getting there. We are going to rebuild this country. I've put too much into this to let it fail now."

Lawrence passed over Callidus' speech implicating the Agenda. "After the paper trail? I guess you want me to put him on a plane to nowhere with a case full of money and have him disappear like a bad dream at daybreak?"

"Not exactly. We can't have those kinds of loose ends in a situation of this magnitude. You will have to send him away, permanently."

Lawrence turned from the window and stared at the other man. "You want me to kill him?"

"Did I say that? I just think whoever helped Hoffa drop out of sight had the right idea."

"Ah, yes. The age-old *final solution*. We can rid the world of all the lunatics, nonbelievers, and shall we go for the blond, blue-eyed this time instead of the--."

Callidus was on his feet. "How dare you imply--."

"Imply hell. I'm on the committee. I know where this could all lead."

Callidus paced the floor. The room was silent. "Greg, this is the only possible route we can take under the circumstances. You know I'm right. If we don't solve the problem of Sinclair the whole world is going to come crashing in on us. You're the only one who can stay the flow."

"I know. You're right. It's my responsibility. I'll take care of it." Lawrence offered his hand to Callidus. "I'll work it out."

Callidus smiled as he took the extended hand in his. "Thanks, Colonel. I hoped I could count on you when push came to shove. The Alliance needs your help. Jimmy Carl will be pleased to know we can count on you."

Lawrence watched him leave his office. "Please, Paul, close the door behind you. I have a lot of work to do." He smiled and mimicked a salute to the Managing Director. After the door closed, Lawrence opened the cabinet behind his desk and switched off the control for the remote video recorder.

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Schwann answered the phone on his desk in the Security Corps office, then listened.

"This is Paul Callidus. We need to meet. Can you be at La Cochina restaurant in Castlerock about seven?"

"Why so far out of town?"

"It's private."

"Why me?"

"Jimmy Carl obviously trusts you, and I need to. It's urgent we meet as soon as possible. Can I depend on you?"

"Yes sir, I'll be there." Schwann listened for the dial tone so he knew Callidus had hung up, then he pressed another button on the phone for a different line and dialed the number.

A voice on the other end answered, "Hello."

"It's Joey. I'm meeting Callidus tonight. He has a proposal."

"Come to the penthouse afterwards. Use my private entrance. I'll be waiting."

"Yes, sir."

When both lines disconnected, the phone-tap recorder automatically shut off in Lawrence's office. Schwann turned off all but the night lights, engaged the alarm system, and locked the outer door to the Security Corps office. He would have just enough time to get home, change clothes and make the drive north on I-25 to the small community of Castlerock.

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Callidus walked into the darkened restaurant. He knew Schwann would not be there yet, and he would have the advantage of choosing the position for their meeting.

"Good evening, sir. Table for one?"

Callidus flashed the smile he saved for hired help. "No. Actually, I will be meeting someone. Could you seat us in a quiet corner where our business meeting won't be disturbed? I would be most grateful." He looked directly in the eyes of the man behind the reservation podium and smiled again.

"Yes, sir. That shouldn't be a problem." The waiter took two menus out of their rack and turned toward the dining room. "Follow me."

Callidus glanced at the large antique clock. He would have to wait about half an hour, if Schwann was a punctual man.

The waitress approached the table with a pitcher of water and two glasses. "Would you like a drink while you wait?"

"Margarita on the rocks, no salt." He leaned back in the chair and smiled.

"Thanks."

She returned a few minutes later with a large glass of the lime-colored liquid. By the time Callidus realized she had placed the napkin and glass on the table, she had already retreated back across the room. He stirred the ice cubes floating on the top, then tasted the drop of liquid on his finger. The drink was cold and tart. The waitress had just returned with a second drink when Schwann slipped into the chair closest to Callidus. Both men had an optimum view of the dining room and the entrance to the restaurant.

"Drink?" Paul offered.

Schwann looked up at the waitress. "Just a diet Coke for me."

Callidus laid the second straw on the napkin beside the first. "Our records indicate you have *special skills* the Alliance might be able to draw on in a time of crisis." Schwann

didn't reply. The Managing Director took a long drink. "I--we need your help with the situation at the Security Corps. Things are getting out of hand, and Lawrence doesn't seem to want to solve the problem of Sinclair with the urgency the situation demands."

"And just what do you want from me? I'm only a clerk in the outer office."

"Not according to Jimmy Carl. We need someone we can trust to short circuit the impact of the bad publicity this unfortunate situation could have on the Alliance, if the police should get to Sinclair, and he started talking. We want you to deal with Sinclair as soon as possible."

"And Lawrence?"

"If he refuses to become part of the solution, then he becomes part of the problem, but we'll deal with him later, if he doesn't come around. As Jimmy Carl would say, if he doesn't return to the fold."

"What are my options?"

"You're a clever man. We'll leave the solution up to you, since you know your talents better than I do."

"Are you ready to order?" The waitress approached their table.

"May I order for you? The Santa Fe combination is wonderful." Schwann nodded. Both menus were still stacked on the other corner of the table. "Two Santa Fe combinations. And would you bring two cups of *pasole* to start us off?"

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By seven o'clock the next morning Sinclair was listening to the tape transmitted from Oklahoma City. He approached Lawrence's office. "You better hear this."

Lawrence jerked the headphones he was using off his ears and flipped the switch on the machine behind his desk. "What 'ya got?" The anger melted into resolution.

"The priest in Oklahoma has a computer disk with Stillwell's manuscript. Our boys were monitoring a conversation last night. The bad news is Macon showed up there and

stayed all night to read it. That son-of-a-bitch is the last person on earth who needs to know about Stillwell's work. He's a dangerous man."

A dangerous man. Lawrence smiled and shook his head. He decided not to share the information he discovered from the tap on the Corps' phones. He didn't want Sinclair to know their organization had been infiltrated, or that he was in danger of being eliminated by the very organization he was desperately trying to protect. He had listened to it over and over. Schwann was reporting directly to Patterson. The voice in the penthouse was unmistakable. He slumped into his chair.

"I'm going to order a surgical strike against the priest's house. They're all still there, and we can make a clean sweep of it once and for all." Sinclair was ready to move. "Colonel, are you listening?"

"Yes, I'm listening. No. We won't go in." Lawrence refused to sanction Sinclair's normal response to a threat. His mind was reeling. He was not guilty of anything but withholding evidence up 'til now.

Sinclair interrupted his thoughts. "But sir, we have to. There's no other choice. These people know too much. They must be stopped before they destroy us."

"No, goddamit! We have to stop the destruction. I'll find another way. Keep me posted on any further developments. I have my own dragons to slay right now. Don't do anything, Major Sinclair. That's an order."

"Yes, sir. I'll have Schwann make a transcript of this tape so you can familiarize yourself with the situation at your convenience."

"No! Don't bother. Just make a copy of the tape and bring it to me. I'll compile a portfolio with all this information to take to a meeting. I'll deal with the situation personally. In fact, order your men out of the field. Get them away from that house before everything explodes."

"Col. Lawrence, you can't be serious. Those men are our only link to the status of Stillwell's book. We have to keep it from being published. Rev. Patterson was most adamant about that. We must limit its *sphere of influence*, those are his exact words. We must take control of the situation, and my men are key to the success of that mission."

"Damn it man, Stillwell's book would have just died a dusty death on the shelves of university libraries like most academic theories, if you hadn't fucked up and caused a police investigation by killing the poor bastard. No one would have ever made the connection. For God's sake, Phillip, leave it alone." Lawrence was suddenly very tired. "I said, I'll handle it from now on. Go make that tape copy, please."

Sinclair left Lawrence's office convinced that the 'ol man had lost his nerve, and as the next in the chain of command, he would have to take the necessary action for preserving the security of the Alliance.

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## Chapter 15

Louis poured another cup of coffee from the carafe Mary had left for him on the desk in the study. He wanted a cigarette. The only time he really missed smoking was when he worked into the night. The stack of yellow sheets from a legal pad were scattered in piles around Stillwell's manuscript. He understood the connection between the Alliance and the professor--it was a matter of *who controls the information*. Macon didn't know why they had Stillwell killed. He looked at his watch. Four a.m. Maybe the others weren't late sleepers. He needed to talk. And the police would be more than mildly interested in what he found. He leaned back into the pillow Mary left for him and drew the blanket around his shoulders. His eyes closed into deep thought as he drifted into a tired sleep. The soft lilt of Mary's voice brought him upright off the sofa.

"Good morning, Mr. Macon. Could I interest you in some breakfast?"



His watch showed he had been asleep for three hours. "Coffee would be nice." He stood up and looked out the window behind the sofa. The morning sun was bright and promised another hot day in Oklahoma.

Maggie entered the study as Mary was leaving. "Did you get any sleep?"

"Apparently, the last time I checked my watch it was four o'clock."

"Did you finish reading the manuscript?"

"Enough."

They walked into the hallway toward the kitchen. "Enough to understand the connections?" Ian's voice drifted down from the top of the stairway.

"I think so." Louis followed Maggie into the kitchen where Mary was preparing breakfast. The table was set with a pile of English breakfast sausages, hot buttered triangles of toasted bread, a pitcher of orange juice, and bowls prepared to receive ample portions of scotch oats. "Mrs. Douglas, I haven't seen a feast like this since I traveled in the Isles." Louis and Maggie sat down while Ian poured coffee for everyone.

When everyone was seated, Ian and Mary extended their hands to Maggie and Louis. Once the circle was formed, Ian smiled and bowed his head. "Lord, for what we are about to receive, we are most grateful. Amen."

Louis was focused on the man on his right. When Ian raised his head, he looked directly at Louis, almost smiled, and when their eyes met, Louis knew Ian's words encompassed much more than the toast and oatmeal that would break their overnight fast. "Amen," he whispered to Ian. Louis reached for the juice glass beside his plate. His hand was shaking.

"Now, Mr. Macon, enlighten us to your findings." Ian's spoon clinked against the inside of the china cup as he stirred the cream and sugar into his coffee.

"Have you ever heard of the Alliance's twenty-one point Agenda?"

"No." Ian and Maggie responded simultaneously.

"Not very many people outside the organization have. It's Jimmy Carl Patterson's masterplan to deconstruct the American democratic system and replace it with a government of Alliance members with him at the helm. The Religious Right claims are for *less government*, but that is a euphemism for less people in power, especially less people outside the Alliance. Patterson understands only too well the inherent danger built into a democracy--an ignorant, uneducated populace can be controlled through a propaganda of the right lies, and he plans to capitalize on that lack of education to use the people who believe in him to seize power through quasi-legal means. The Good Reverend is versed in making his motivations, ideas, and arguments seem reasonable, when in reality, they are anything but reasonable. By using Christianity as a unifying banner, good people are deceived and don't really listen to and think about what he is saying or doing. They just rally under the banner they want to identify with."

"Not all of us." Ian interjected.

"But how does all this involve my brother?" Maggie was becoming impatient. She already understood at a very basic level the danger the Alliance posed for the American people. She had seen that in their position on AIDS research and their attempts to censor artistic expression, her own included.

"Your brother's manuscript translates Wilfrid's journal and describes his plan to use the Roman Church to seize political power in Northumbria during the late seventh century. Wilfrid's journal is basically a prototype for Patterson's Agenda. It's too close to believe that Patterson was not familiar with it." Louis explained his interpretation of the long night's search.

Ian leaned back in his chair. "We knew Patterson studied in England prior to his shift from academic studies to the seminary."

"We who?" Louis questioned.

"We don't have a name. Our group is basically a newsgroup on the Internet of people, mostly Christian, but actually, it is a rather ecumenical and diverse group who are by nature spiritual and recognize that spirituality exists in all religions." Mary explained.

"Mary is our networker and newsletter editor." Ian laughed. "She networks through a computer link to track and disperse information about efforts to limit freedom of religion. She tries to defuse some of the information they send out through newsgroups they control."

"If your primary goal is to preserve religious freedom, and that means preserving the basic principles of Jefferson and Madison, maybe I can help. The very concept of *freedom* of religion denies any claims the Religious Right has for *one true faith* in America. To have freedom of choice means having more than one option to choose from." Louis pointed out.

Maggie stared at her friends. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"It really didn't concern you, until now. It has been my small way of fighting against the lack of spirituality in American religious life and the spread of a vast amount of misinformation." Mary responded. "And by the way, Louis, I've been following your efforts to expose the disgraceful motives of the Religious Right through the publication of your articles in magazines. I would like to include some of your work in our newsletter that goes out to other Christians within the system. I would like to keep them informed of the current situation."

"It's unfortunate that you haven't reached a larger portion of the American public than you have." Ian added. "The vast majority don't have a clue what is going on behind the scenes. Our newsgroup link has the potential to reach 50,000 listeners on the Internet."

"Was John part of this *Internet*?" Maggie asked.

"No. John was an academic, unconcerned with political action. In fact, he wouldn't vote until he talked to me. I told him who I was supporting, and he followed my lead by voting for the people I recommended--like many other Americans, but some sources are more reliable than others." Ian laughed at the thought of his own arrogance, then touched the fingers of his hands together and pressed his index fingers to his lips. "John didn't make the connection between the past he studied and the present he lived in. His was a world of ideas, and like many of his peers, he never saw the relevancy of those ideas to everyday life." Ian tried to explain. "He used the computer, received his email because the department insisted, but he never subscribed to the Net." Ian looked at Mary. "He really didn't know about Mary's little project. We never discussed it.. He just wasn't interested in the so-called information highway."

"Then why did they kill him? If he didn't know about the connection between Wilfrid's plan and the Alliance, then he wasn't a threat to them." Maggie's face was turning red. She pushed her chair away from the table and stood up. Her hands were gesturing at her side but the movements were indiscriminate clutching movements. "I don't understand. Talk, talk, talk. All you're doing is talking. Why is he dead? He didn't deserve to die." She screamed.

Ian was beside Maggie, trying to calm her. He put his arm around her. "Who knows how some people rationalize their behavior. They are highly unpredictable. They probably feared someone would make the connection, just as we have, and they didn't want the plan exposed." He kissed her forehead. "These people fear an open discussion of ideas. It undermines their need for an authority to establish a solid system of beliefs they can cling to as absolutes. The leaders don't want the followers to think for themselves, and the followers are willing to accept that arrangement, even relieved to relinquish the responsibility for thinking and deciding to someone else." He wanted it to

make sense to her, but it didn't make sense to him yet, either. If John had been involved in open discussions, he might not have been as vulnerable."

"Are you blaming John for his own murder?" Her shoulders dropped, and her arms hung limply by her side.

"No. I'm only saying that his lack of involvement put him at risk, because he couldn't see the potential danger."

"Even if he had seen it, John would never have anticipated a threat against his life. He just wouldn't have believed anyone would harm him for what he knew." She stopped to think. "How can I get involved. How can I fight them?" She looked from Ian to Mary, and finally, to Louis.

"With information."

"I want to know about this Agenda, point by point. What is Patterson's masterplan?" Maggie leaned across the table toward Louis.

"I have it all in my notes in the study."

Mary stood up to answer the doorbell.

"That may be Sgt. Thomas. I called and left a message for him during the night. I wanted to tell him what I found, about the connection. He didn't want to believe that you were right about the link between your brother's missing work and his death." Louis walked to the door with Mary.

"Good morning, Sergeant. Please come in." Mary stepped back away from the open door.

"I apologize for this early morning visit, Mrs. Douglas." He looked directly at Louis. "Your call sounded urgent. I came as soon as I checked my messages at seven-thirty." He turned to Mary. "Do you know who that paneled van outside belongs to?"

She walked through the arch from the entry hall into the living room and opened the window blinds. "The black one in front of the Kelley's house?"

"There's only one parked on the street." He pointed. "Yeah, that one."

"It doesn't belong to any of our neighbors. Maybe it belongs to a house guest."

"I doubt it." Thomas pulled a small cellular phone out of his coat pocket and dialed. "This is Sgt. Thomas, homicide. I need a check on a license plate. Local XPK-392. I'll wait."

"You'll not believe what I found last night." Louis was eager to talk to Thomas about the connections he had made.

Thomas nodded, held up his hand for Louis to stop talking. He was listening to the voice on the phone. "Thanks." The two men turned toward the window at the sound of tires squealing on pavement in time to see the van speeding away.

The phone in the kitchen rang. Ian joined the three in the living room. "Louis, it's for you. He won't give his name. But he is very insistent that you come to the phone immediately."

Everyone followed Ian into the kitchen. Louis put the phone to his ear. The voice asked, "Where are you in the house?"

Louis responded, "In the kitchen, why?"

"Is the room on the front or back of the house?"

"Back. Who is this?"

"Good. Everyone in that house is in serious danger. Is there a van parked in the street near the house?"

"Yes--" Macon didn't have a chance to tell the caller that the van had pulled out.

"They are listening with electronic surveillance equipment. I've ordered their withdrawal, but--"

"Who are you?"

"Just listen. Call the police for protection. The same people who killed Stillwell may make a move on you. Soon."

"The police are here now. Sgt. Thomas is standing right beside me. Do you want to talk to him?"

"No, I don't want to talk to the police. I want to talk to you, alone. I'll call back with a time and place." The line went dead.

Louis hung up the phone. "That van had the men in it who killed Stillwell. The caller said we were in danger."

"Who was that?" Ian asked.

"I'm not sure. It's just a feeling, but I suspect it was Col. Greg Lawrence, the Alliance's Chief of Security."

Thomas pressed the digit two on his cellular phone, then *send*. The call was answered immediately. "This is Sgt. Thomas. I need an APB on a black van, license number XPK-392. Suspicion of murder. May be armed and dangerous. Heading south in the thirty-two hundred block of Caroline Drive probably toward the intersection of I-244."

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Two uniformed officers were waiting in the hall outside the interrogation rooms for Thomas when he arrived at the headquarters. "Where are they?"

"We've separated them. You'll probably want to talk to this guy first. He seems to be the one in charge." The officer handed Thomas a clipboard with the report he was prepared to file on the apprehension of the two men, then opened the door into a small room, allowing Thomas to enter and followed him into the stark white brightness. The small man from the black van was seated at the gray metal table, smoking a cigarette. His plaid western shirt was soaked with sweat, and he used a large bandanna handkerchief to wipe his face. His right hand smoothed the large mustache downward over his top lip. Thomas sat in the chair opposite him. The officer waited against the door behind the man.

"According to this, the van you were driving is registered to the Security Corps. I guess the bottom line is, why did you kill Dr. John Stillwell and your associate Harvey

Carter? You know poor ol' Harvey out of the Colorado Springs office?" The man's reaction was not what Thomas had anticipated.

He raised his eyes from the ashtray to look at Thomas. "You're crazy."

"Our sources tell us that you killed Stillwell, ransacked his house, then killed your accomplice, Carter."

"Your sources are fucked. I never heard of a Carter. Stillwell was just a name I picked up on my equipment listening to other people talk. I'm just a listener. I don't kill people."

"A listener?" Thomas laughed. "Who are you working for?"

"Phillip Sinclair hired me. He's from the head office in Colorado Springs. All I do is provide information that might be interpreted as a threat to the security of--." He stopped.

"Of what? The Alliance of Concerned Christians?"

The man's expression paled. "You have nothing on me, except the surveillance rap. I'll wait for my lawyer. I didn't kill anybody, and you'll never prove that I did. My gun has never been fired off the practice range."

"We know it wasn't the gun you were carrying when we picked you up. We have the murder weapon." Thomas was in his face. "We know Sinclair ordered the hit on the professor. We want to know why?"

"That guy was killed in a carjacking; some stupid kids playing games. That's all I know. No one ordered me to do anything but provide security for LyncNet. I told you, goddamnit, I'm only a listener, not an analyst, not a--" he waved his hand in the air, "a hit man."

The officer responded to the knock at the door. He took a stack of papers from his partner who had been waiting in the hall and handed them to Thomas. When he'd finished reading, Thomas smiled at the man. "Well, Mr. Montgomery, that is your real



name? Brent Montgomery? Arrested and convicted of a felony under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act in 1989? A computer hacker who sabotaged the Net, shutting down systems across the country. According to this, you turned a *worm* loose in the international computer network. You really pissed the military off, fellow, and caused serious damage to several major medical facilities, not to mention the universities and banks you knocked off-line."

"That was an accident. I just didn't know enough to ask the right questions. I was a kid, and they decided to use me as an example for other hackers. I paid for my mistake and everyone else's. I was on the road to a brilliant career in the computer industry, and they ruined it all for me."

"What's LyncNet, and why would they hire a convicted felon when no reputable computer center would touch you with a ten foot pole?"

"It's a Christian organization. I guess they believe in the power of forgiveness." Montgomery looked Thomas straight in the eye. "I didn't kill anyone. That's not my style."

"Then why the gun? I suppose the 9mm Glock is just to make your clothes hang right?"

"I work for a private security force. The gun came with the job, just like the permit and the order to carry it. If you'd bothered to check, you'd have seen that it wasn't even loaded. I don't even carry shells, except when I'm required to provide proof of proficiency to the head office once a month, then I go to the range, fire off a few rounds, get the target certified by the attendant, and send it in to Colorado Springs."

Thomas glanced over Montgomery's shoulder at the arresting officer. He nodded to indicate that Montgomery was telling the truth about his semi-automatic pistol's empty clip. Another knock at the door allowed Nick Abuti into the room followed by Ted Morgan, a local lawyer.

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## Chapter 16

After Thomas left, Louis returned to his reading of Stillwell's *Codex Wilfridi: The Rules of Regency*. He wanted to hear the voice again of the man who had understood the danger in general, but had not connected it to the specific threat. He turned to the final pages, which the professor had titled

### Epilogue

*Northen England and Ireland were noted for the learned nature of their educational institutions. The studies were liberal, and therefore, academic in nature. As an institution of society, the monastery's site suggests its function, and Lindisfarne is indicative of its dual function for Celtic Christians who understood the necessity of an integration of the contemplative and active as a way to achieve a wholeness in life. Isolated at times by the waters of the North Sea, it symbolized the role of contemplative occupations in human life, while periodically accessible for public interaction for the monks as well as the people to whom they ministered and the community they served. Lindisfarne and its inhabitants were conscious of the value of artistic creations and encouraged vernacular literature that could touch the lives of both their peers, and most importantly, the people outside their small community on the island.*

*Wilfrid of York's journals indicate that he, like most representatives of the conquerors, made it his ecclesiastic mission to change the way Northumbrians viewed the world by introducing the subjugated to the official orthodox version of how life should be lived; by building churches that were the wonder of the western world like the ones he had seen on the continent; by dazzling his followers with facsimiles of the spectacles of Rome in artistic creations as simple as adding glass windows to his church in York; by stocking the libraries of his monasteries with books from Rome and Spain, texts of the Fathers from Lyon, and across the literate world to be copied in the scriptoriums by scribes, enhanced by illustrators, and interpolated by the faithful; by creating court schools to educate the tribal kings along the tenets of Christian orthodoxy to*

*be Christian leaders instead of philosopher-kings; by defying local kings and princes to assert the authority of the Church, resulting in his exile from Northumbria twenty-six years out of the forty-six years of his episcopacy. His visits to Rome and the continent provided him with a vision of the God of Worldly Power, and he would return to his homeland to create a new nation for the new god, a nation reborn and baptized Christian. The egalitarian and pelagian world of the Celtic monks would be replaced by the all-powerful world of Roman episcopacy—the rule of bishops. Through Wilfrid, the thorn of political power found purpose—the Celtic Church that had nurtured him in his youth at Lindisfarne claimed no secular power for itself or its clergy; it only equipped its followers with a love of learning and a desire to know God. What Wilfrid failed to realize is that he could not control the man whose first loyalty is to God. Ultimately, Wilfrid was a traitor who sold the souls of the Angles to Rome for an episcopacy—a man with an insatiable appetite for power who didn't understand the value of religion and its relationship to politics. His actions incited the Northumbrian Church, alone in all England, to provide its people with a written history through the pen of the Venerable Bede, so that the adherents to the teachings of St. John would not be neglected and forgotten. Through the efforts of one woman, Wilfrid's fate was sealed. Hilda, Abbess of Whitby, ensured that he would not be remembered for the conversion of Northumbria. In the chronicles and literature she inspired, his name would be replaced by that of Pope Gregory the Great as the apostle of Northumbria. Wilfrid would remain a monument to man's desire for power and the blindness it breeds.*

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Louis didn't see Maggie enter the study. "You startled me. I guess I was deep in thought about your brother's work. It is very interesting."

"Interesting enough to get him killed?"

"I doubt it. It is hard for me to believe that Jimmy Carl Patterson would have ordered him killed."

"Would he have ordered a homosexual killed?"

Louis lay the papers on the coffee table in front of him. "John Stillwell was a homosexual?"

She nodded.

"Even so, as much as the Alliance verbally abuses gays and lesbians, I don't think they would sanction physical attacks, much less murder. I guess, though, a worst-case scenario could be foreseen where some *true believer* would take things into his own hands like Paul Hill and the others who have been convicted of killing the people in the abortion clinics--workers as well as doctors. My God, surely the hate and homophobia haven't gone that far. But I shouldn't be surprised if it had, people have been bashing gays for years." He shook his head.

"It makes as much sense as any other reason, maybe more." Maggie sat down beside him on the sofa. "I have had to deal with this ignorance-bred hostility more often than I care to remember. When a gallery in Dallas finally agreed to present a showing of my art work, the doors to the building were blocked by members of a local church carrying signs to protest what they called the obscenity depicted in my paintings and etchings. It didn't bother me that my work offended them. I was horrified that they honestly believed that they had the right to prevent other people from seeing my work and arriving at their own conclusions about it. John and I were raised in a home where everything was open for discussion. Everything, regardless of subject matter, sensitivity, squeamishness, or any other perceived standards of propriety. Our parents were very different from most of our friends' parents. We argued about politics over the dinner table and anything else. They encouraged us to think, to express our thoughts and feelings, and they valued us for it, rather than be intimidated by their children's independence."

"You'll forgive me, but I'm not familiar with your work. What did the good church people find offensive?"

"At that time, my collection consisted of many life-size paintings of lovers, many of them actually performing sexual acts. They weren't vulgar portrayals. Some of the figures were nude, others partially clothed. They were all very natural portraits of what I considered to be precious moments between lovers. One night, just as the owner of the gallery was closing two men and a woman rushed into the exhibition room and sprayed five of the canvases with lighter fluid, then tossed matches against them before Marguerite and the security guard could stop them. They managed to put out the fires and prevent her showroom from burning down, but they couldn't save the five paintings, two of homosexual male lovers, two of women lovers, and one self-portrait of my husband and me."

"What did the police do?"

"Nothing. They never could identify the three people. The next day the demonstrators were gone. The newspaper carried the story, but the church officials declined to comment on the incident. I was devastated. Not only had years of work gone up in smoke, but Andy was dying, and it was the only painting I had done of him. He was a beautiful man. The disease destroyed the shell but could never defeat the beauty of his spirit." She stared out the window behind the sofa. "I miss him."

"I'm sorry. AIDS is a dreadful disease." He reached to take her hand.

She smiled and patted the back of his hand as he touched her. "No one really knows how completely dehumanizing AIDS is until they have nursed a loved one through the stages and held them in their arms as they died. I really wouldn't want to wish it on anyone, but some of the people who opposed AIDS education and advertising and condom advocacy for those people who are at the greatest risk should have to watch someone they care about suffer. But the people who need to understand the most are the very ones who shut out their own brothers, sisters, and adult children who are inflicted. I watched many young homosexual men die in the hospice. Their families never came to

see them, much less to take care of them. Mothers and fathers disowned sons who really loved their parents because they somehow thought it was a reflection on them as, not just parents, but human beings. So they denied their own children. Most of their friends abandoned them because it was too painful to watch and many could see themselves lying there one day, A few were fortunate enough to have genuine lovers who cared enough to stay until the end. I made some wonderfully compassionate friends there, people I can count on when I need them."

"When you . . .you mean you--"

"We didn't know Andy had received an infected transfusion after he was in a car wreck and had to have emergency surgery. It was before they started testing plasma for the virus. Apparently the donor had a full-blown case of AIDS. By the time Andy was diagnosed, I was infected with HIV. Three years ago the test showed a positive results, but I haven't developed any of the symptoms. I take care of myself. Other than the friends from the hospice, you are the only person I've told about it." She smiled. "I'm not sure why I told you. I guess I thought you might want to know."

He lifted the palm of her hand and touched it to his lips. "It's important to know these things."

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## Chapter 17

David Barker, Communications and Media Coordinator greeted Rev. Patterson as he entered the new LyncNet Center for the dedication services. "Welcome to Oklahoma City, Dr. Patterson."

"This is an extraordinary complex you've built here. Your architect has produced, not only a beautiful exterior structure to glorify God, but the interior is equally hospitable for its human population." Patterson rubbed the wood paneling of the wall in the lobby of

the new Alliance's computer center. The lighting in the room was indirect from behind carved light fixtures of *putti* on the walls above the massive book shelves housing leather-bound books. The small childlike angels directed their light toward white panels overhead that reflected it to create a soft glow. It reminded him of the atmosphere he had once enjoyed in the Huntington Library when he was doing research at the University of Oxford. He smiled to himself. His goal was finally close to realization.

"You, of course, remember our architect, William Carlton." Barker directed Patterson's attention to the man standing beside him.

"Yes, congratulations Mr. Carlton, you have done a wonderful job of capturing the appearance of traditional academia. You've created a workspace for our compilers and copyists that will make God's work all the more pleasant. Thank you."

"I'm glad you're pleased, Rev. Patterson. Your directions were very helpful in reconstructing a facsimile."

"Would you like to see the heart of our center? Our computer room is a modern marvel." Jeff Burton, the Regional Director of the LyncNet Center was eager to begin the formal tour of his facility. "We officially received our licensing last week and will be ready to begin networking within another week. We are still recruiting qualified and reliable people to man our computers. Our newsgroup and bulletin board are on-line and operational, and our lists of subscribers are growing daily with new link-ups of readers." He ushered Patterson and the entourage along a hall, past a closed door marked *Security Corps*, down two flights of stairs, and through a heavy fire-door that opened into another wood-paneled room lined with oak work stations, each of the fifty enclaves housed the latest computer hardware available on the market. "*Project Sower* will be housed in this room. Within the complex, it's known as the *scriptorium*. Our copyists will retype and scan designated texts to be included in the Internet Book Repository. Some of our compilists are busy now in the library preparing the texts for electronic conversion. In

addition, we receive converted works from our people across the country almost daily. Would you like to visit our library?"

"Praise the Lord. Indeed, I would. This is all very exciting for me to see a dream come to fruition. Have you replaced the flawed chips in these computers? I've read that they have a problem."

"No, that won't be necessary. Our purpose will not rely on complicated mathematical calculations and will not be affected by the flaw."

The group followed Burton along a series of corridors and into another paneled room filled with book stacks; many of the shelves were lined to capacity with volumes, but others lay empty and ready to be filled. "We actually have a limited number of texts that we actually own, but thanks to several of our scholars around the country, we have access to the interlibrary loan system and can borrow any text from any university library in this country and Canada. With the endowments we receive from the broadcasting network, we will continue to purchase and store volumes of books. Our potential for success is unlimited."

"Books by Alliance scholars will be some of the first into the repository system. We will expand our efforts gradually, but consistently, keeping our ultimate goal in sight all the way." Jimmy Carl could barely contain his pride. "David, you've done a remarkable job utilizing the communication medias to further our Holy Mission for America. Those we cannot reach with our traditional media of television, radio, and the press, we will be able to reach through our computer network, and that potential reaches across international boundaries to a worldwide audience. God's will be done. Not only can we claim America for the Lord, but soon the world will be His through our preparations for the Second Coming. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is truly an historic occasion. Let us pray." Everyone in the group joined hands to form a prayer circle while standing in the center of library. *"Lord, we are most grateful for the blessing of this*



*magnificent facility raised in Thy name and to serve Thy mission on earth. Grant these devoted men and women the strength and wisdom to carry on Thy work. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whom we prepare a place among us where He and His law will rule for eternity, Amen."*

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After a luncheon in the dining room of the LyncNet Center Patterson boarded his private plane and returned to Colorado Springs. Paul Callidus was waiting for the plane at the small airport.

"Paul, I want you to call a meeting for tonight. I've learned through my friends in Washington that the regulatory committee in Congress is scheduled to meet very soon. We must escalate our plan to influence their decisions concerning the functioning of the Internet, and we'll begin, naturally with outlawing the so-called *adult* on-line videos and *hot chat*. These kinds of perversions must be eliminated for the new world order before they become as entrenched in our society as the cellophane-wrapped trash on the back row of newsstand racks. You would not believe what is traveling across our telephone lines to people. It's time to put our new legislators to work in Congress. Get Tiffany and her staff here for a five o'clock meeting. I'll have Mrs. Thurber arrange for our supper to be served in the dining room. This may be a long meeting. We have a lot of work to do, if we are to meet our goals by election year 2000." He paused. "And Paul, please see that Col. Lawrence is not notified of this meeting."

"Lawrence seems to have vanished. Schwann reported that he hasn't been in the office for a couple of days, and the operatives he sent to check his apartment indicated that he hadn't been there either."

"In that case, I want you in Oklahoma City tonight. They'll refuel and be ready to take off shortly. I don't trust Lawrence. It's time to implement *Project Sower*, and you will have to go to LyncNet and handle it yourself."

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## Chapter 18

The solitary drive along the southern route from Colorado Springs into New Mexico, then along the two-lane highways across the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma had done little to defer Greg Lawrence's determination. The rental car agent never questioned his new identity and the credit card cleared automatically, but that was the easy part. The few hours of sleep he grabbed in the rest stop just west of Oklahoma City had been enough to make the trip bearable before he turned south and into the city limits of Norman. It was all familiar to him. Interstate 35 was a direct conduit between Oklahoma City and this college town, but an unlikely place for anyone to look for him, and close enough to the problem to strike at its heart. He pulled the dark green Taurus sedan into the empty parking lot adjacent to the football stadium at the University. He backed the rental car into a parking space against the hedge hidden fence facing the only open gate into the lot. He watched the ripples of heat dance off the asphalt paved enclosure while he waited for the reporter to show up for the meeting they had agreed to when he called him for the second time twenty-four hours earlier. He hoped he hadn't made a mistake by trusting Macon.

He watched the small red Geo turn slowly through the open gate and stop. He could see the silhouettes of two people in the car. He sat upright and started the engine of the car. He was only expecting one person. The lights on the small car flashed once, then the driver moved slowly toward Lawrence's guarded position. The car rolled to a stop so that the two men were side by side, the driver lowered the window and Lawrence recognized Macon as the man in the photographs from Security Corps files. The electric window of the Taurus silently receded into the door. "I told you to come alone." Lawrence nodded toward Macon's passenger.

"I thought she had a right to be here. This is John Stillwell's sister. I wanted you to explain everything to her. She deserves to know the truth."

Lawrence looked away as his body released a deep vocal sigh, and his shoulders sank from the from the weight of his resolution. His head dropped forward, and he nodded.

"Is there somewhere we can go to make this more comfortable for everyone?"

Lawrence looked at the reporter and almost smiled. "Sure. I rented a motel room not far from here. It will be more private, and safer. Follow me." He cross-cut the open parking lot and waited for Macon to turn his car around.

Macon pulled into the driveway of the Sooner's Rest motel behind Lawrence and parked in an empty space near the office. Lawrence parked the Taurus directly in front of one of the rooms. Maggie was the first one out of the car and to cross the few paces to the door Lawrence was opening into the small clean room.

"Why was my brother murdered?" Maggie demanded.

He stepped into the room. "Please, sit down, Maggie McLeod."

"How do you know my name?"

"I know a great deal. But you'll have to be patient."

"I've been about as patient as I care to be, Col. Lawrence. Now I want some answers." Her fists hung by her side, but her voice was strained and uncharacteristically low.

"Maggie, you promised." Macon was standing in the door of the motel room.

"This man had my brother killed. I won't sit down in the corner like some good little girl and wait for you to tell me what you want me to know."

"I didn't have anyone killed." Lawrence motioned Macon into the room and waited for him to close the door. "I didn't know anything about his murder until it was too late."

"Why haven't you gone to the police? They know about the connection between the Alliance and the two murders. They even have the murder weapon." Macon sat down in one of the chairs at the small table in the corner of the room. "They'll have your man Sinclair soon enough."

"Sinclair is only one symptom of the sickness. Obviously, you already know that he killed John Stillwell, but that was unplanned; the work of one out-of-control madman. Do you know about the planned destruction that the Alliance is about to release on, not just this country, but the world?"

"We have a fairly good picture of the masterplan, if that's what you're talking about. I read Stillwell's book, and he paints a fairly accurate picture of what Patterson could be planning. Too bad he didn't see the connection. What I don't understand is, why did you contact me? You never did answer my question, why not go to the police?"

"Bottom line? I have to save my ass in the process. I'm implicated in the murders for withholding evidence and obstruction of justice, not to mention the illegal wiretaps and other infringements. I want out, and I need your help in more ways than one. But I need to know that I can rely on you to get the job done. I can't do anything about your brother's murder, Mrs. MacLeod, I'm sorry about that. I really am. But I can bring down the whole Alliance organization, and that is the only thing that matters right now."

"What do you want from me?"

Lawrence sat on the edge of the single bed farthest from his visitors. "I need for you to negotiate with the FBI for me. That will be the easy part, I think. How much do you know about dragon-slaying?"

Macon couldn't help but laugh. "Dragon-slaying? Why the FBI? They aren't even part of this investigation, as far as I know."

"You'll have to bring them into it. The Oklahoma City police are compromised at a very high level, and you won't know who you can trust. What I'm going to give you is

much bigger and more tangled than you realize. The dragon has many heads; some that haven't even surfaced yet."

"All right, but why do you need me, specifically?"

"I've read your work. Your activities have been monitored by the Alliance for a long time. And your publications have been an effort to keep the American people informed about the activities of the Alliance. You've been a major source of concern to Jimmy Carl because you're the worst kind of threat to him: you have the power of information and the press. You have the power to expose the heart of the Alliance by telling the story. That's what he feared most that Professor Stillwell would do. Come with me." Lawrence crossed the room and walked through the door toward his car. The reporter followed him out of the room into the breath-taking heat. "I'm going to give you what you need to bring the entire organization down. The people in the Alliance are out of control. They pose a much more serious danger to this country than you have even guessed at yet, and the Alliance must be brought down. John Stillwell's death is only one symptom of what could happen if we don't work very fast."

He opened the trunk of the rental car and gestured for Macon to help him. The two men carried seven cardboard boxes from the car into the motel room. "Each box contains information about one branch of the Alliance's operations--legal, military, educational, communications and media, religious, and political. The seventh box contains information on Jimmy Carl Patterson's personal activities and his background." He pulled a black portfolio out of the largest box marked *communications*. "This contains what you need to strike at the heart of the masterplan--*Project Sower*. I want you to expose the whole sorted mess. If you fail, the information highway will fail as the last vestige of free speech in this country, and the knowledge available on the Internet will be contaminated for a very long time."

Macon stared at the security chief. He shook his head. The simple masterplan he had been familiar with for the last two years suddenly took on an even more sinister cast.

"Can't we just give Sinclair to the police and be done with it? They could take it from there." Maggie wanted justice.

"No. Don't you get it? This isn't just about your brother's death and your personal loss. I don't know who we can trust. Jimmy Carl has powerful friends who owe him favors. The Alliance's role in the murders could easily be swept under the carpet. It's too convenient to paint Sinclair as a fanatic wild card because his reasons for killing Stillwell didn't have anything to do with the manuscript. That just provided the opportunity. Sinclair hated homosexuals, and we know all about your brother. We'd been watching him for a long time. I've read the *Codex*. Sinclair brought it to me. Jimmy Carl had developed his masterplan from the tactics Wilfrid tried to use to gain control of the kingdoms in Northumbria and was afraid Stillwell might make the connection. His first line of assault involved education and the control of information, and Patterson knew he couldn't buy him off or get him to buy into the plan. Professor Stillwell saw Wilfrid's plans and actions as an abuse of the function of the Church in society and set out to give a more complete view of history than we had been left with. For Wilfrid, it wasn't an issue of pastoral care; it became an issue of pastoral power--the likes of which he had seen in Lyon and Rome. For Jimmy Carl Patterson, it was a means to power, and he has been working for years to implement it, making the necessary modifications for time and place and working not to make Wilfrid's mistakes."

"Then I was right. He was killed because he was gay." She looked at Macon. "I didn't want to believe it could be true."

"Yeah, but that hatred is just part of the poison the Alliance is spreading. And turning Sinclair over to the police would be like only cutting one arm off the dragon. I'm after all seven heads and mean to destroy the very heart of the masterplan." Lawrence

was pacing the floor of the motel room. "We have to stop them completely, once and for all. If we don't, another Wilfrid will spring up, just as Jimmy Carl has."

"Tell me about Project Sower." Macon was almost afraid to ask. He knew the Herculean myth of the hydra: cut off one head of the seven-headed serpent and another grew back in its place. What beyond the Alliance's conservative Christian view was Patterson preparing to spread?

"Project Sower involves the on-line book repository. Our good reverend has dedicated researchers sowing the Biblical World View into primary texts that people will be able to download off the Internet. The only people who will have access to the original texts are the true scholars who devote their lives to study. Books deteriorate, fall apart, and aren't reissued in their unaltered versions--a reality Patterson is counting on. Eventually, the Biblical World View will be the only version most people will have access to--at least that's his intention."

"But it would be easy enough to do comparison checks of the different editions of the books and determine which one is the original text. I guess I still don't see--" Macon leaned forward in the chair and rested his face in his palms. Rubbed his eye, the brushed his hair back from his forehead. "I guess I just don't know enough about the Internet to understand the danger."

"Patterson's computer people are taking advantage of a weakness in the repository system. The Internet is trying to create computer-searchable collections, electronic libraries, if you will, that are accessible through disks and phone lines at a fraction of the cost. No huge buildings, no paper, therefore ecologically sound, no waiting for a rare book. A book-lover's heaven. Up until now, books have gone on-line through the work of individuals as a labor of love. Unmonitored for accuracy. That's what the Alliance is counting on--no one is watching what they are feeding into the system. Project Sower has distributed more electronic texts into the repository than any other group, mainly because

the texts have been submitted by individuals dedicated to Patterson, and what I used to believe was the Christian way. The people heading the Book Repository don't realize it is a group effort, or that it is connected to the Alliance."

"What's LyncNet?" Mason was beginning to put the picture together.

"How do you know about that?"

"The police picked up some of your men who had been watching Ian Douglas' house. They made the connection between the men and the Alliance. Ever hear of Ted Morgan?"

"He's a friend of Patterson's. A lawyer. Why?"

"He bailed your boys out once they convinced the police they weren't involved in the murders."

"I left town before I could get that information. There's no telling what else has happened that I don't know about. But I'm sure of one thing--Jimmy Carl has a plan for everything." Lawrence returned to his seat on the foot of the bed. "LyncNet is the heart of the masterplan. Jimmy Carl is preparing a major move on the Internet. Any portion of the information highway he can't control directly, he plans to influence through a series of regulatory actions through congressional legislation. He has been directly responsible for getting a substantial number of conservatives elected to Congress. They owe him, and most of them agree with him, at least in principle. Very few know the extent of his plan. Each person or group is only told enough to keep them motivated. Anyone who could see the whole picture would have to reevaluate his role in the Alliance, not from a religious perspective, but from a moral and ethical position.

"The influence his broadcast network has had on cable watchers is nothing compared to the potential he has envisioned for his influence within the web of the Internet. There is nothing more dangerous than the single-minded purpose of a religious



fanatic. He wants the power of the presidency, and he intends to have it. Paul Callidus is smart enough and ruthless enough to make it a reality."

"Holy shit." Louis couldn't remain seated any longer. He paced the small space Lawrence had given up when he sat down. "Stillwell was right about this kind of control laying the foundation for the Dark Ages. How dangerous is it this time?"

"The lights won't go out all at once. LyncNet will slowly dim the lights until everything is so dark that people will begin to believe they are looking into the light because Patterson's version will be all they can see. Just like the people who only watch his news programs, their capacity to vote and act with any discrimination will be severely limited because they will only have been exposed to one point of view. With LyncNet, Patterson will be able to escalate Project Sower, and move into areas I don't even know about in an effort to create a new world order. All he wants is religious converts, anticipating the second coming, and allowing him to rule until Christ returns, and he believes that will happen in his lifetime. The more texts he can change, the more unquestioning people he can influence. Patterson knows that most people believe anything they see in print to be Absolute Truth, and will just absorb the information without thinking about it. But that's not the worse part--" He stopped.

"There's more?" Macon leaned against the closed door.

"Each text he places in the Book Repository will carry a time-released virus. Patterson just calls it the *bookworm*. If I understand it correctly, this computer *worm* will hide in a compiled macro code for each one of the texts LyncNet feeds into the Book Repository. After a period of time, the virus activates to change key words and passages in the files that have been downloaded off the Internet, so that anyone running a comparison check of files prior to its activation wouldn't find the differences. If someone was clever enough to get into the compiled file, the virus would automatically erase itself. It would be programmed to go 'poof,' until it reactivated itself and realtered the electronic

text. Once in the user's system, it could replicate itself in other files based on the same key words. Patterson's ability to shift texts toward a Biblical World View would expand like a rabid cancer and would be virtually undetectable by the unsuspecting reader."

"Can he really do it?" Louis could barely speak.

"It isn't a matter of whether he can or not. The question is, are we too late to stop him? The first books he placed in the repository project weren't infected. Patterson just returned from dedicating the facility, and LyncNet should be up and running at capacity within the week, if it isn't already. That's when the program designer of the worm was scheduled to release it into the Internet Book Repository. From there it will grow undetected, eating away at the authenticity of the texts."

"What do we do?"

"You go to the FBI, negotiate a deal to save my sorry ass. I'll turn all this information over to them, turn state's evidence, and strike at the heart of the dragon to bring down the Alliance permanently."

"I still don't understand what my brother knew." Maggie was still trying to put everything into perspective.

"Nothing much more than most scholars. He knew that when scribes copied manuscripts housed in their monasteries to be sent to other monasteries occasionally they added their own interpretations to give the pagan stories a Christian cast. What Stillwell discovered in Wilfrid's journals was his plan to intentionally alter all the manuscripts used in the court schools where the kings and princes were educated. Wilfrid intended to give his students his particularly colorful view. He would extend the power of Rome into his homeland and establish himself as the regent of God through the offices of the Church to control the kingdoms of Northumbria. He wanted it all. He failed, of course. The real Christians within the Church recognized a thorn in the garden when they saw one, so the archbishop took the necessary measures to limit his power, but as you can see, his

influence is still around. Jimmy Carl believes what Wilfrid planned to do was morally right, that the Alliance's Agenda is also morally right, and therefore justifiable to save America from Satan. So did I, for a long time." Lawrence paused and picked up a piece of lint off the carpet between his feet. "When Sinclair killed the professor, then Carter, I realized that good intentions could not hide behind hatred, lies, and murder. If ever a beast needed to be destroyed, Jimmy Carl and Paul Callidus must be stopped. The Alliance is the living, breathing, walking, talking Antichrist. I was a good Christian, once. Believe it or not. I failed to heed the warnings against false prophets." He looked up at Maggie. "I'm sorry about your brother. If I could have prevented it, I would have. I just realized too late."

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## Chapter 19

Special Agent Scott Henderson waited for his secretary to show the reporter into his office. "Mr. Macon, your call sounded most urgent. What's so important that you couldn't talk about it over the phone, and how does it concern the FBI?"

"I'm only an emissary. But I have reason to believe that the information I have involves national security. That's why I came to you. The person I represent is asking for immunity from prosecution. The evidence he wants to turn over involves the Alliance of Concerned Christians, two murders, and the sabotage of the information highway that could prove, not only a threat to the United States capacity to transfer accurate information, but internationally catastrophic as well."

Agent Henderson listened as Louis Macon pieced together the jigsaw puzzle. He still had not heard the name of Macon's informant. "Have you taken any of this to the Oklahoma City police?"

"They are involved in the investigation of the two murders, but my source indicates that the local police organization is compromised at the highest level, and frankly, I don't know who I can trust. I was sharing information with Sgt. Thomas in homicide, but I have no way of knowing how deeply the Alliance's influence has penetrated the department. Besides, his investigation only involved the murders, not anything of the proportion we are talking about."

"Thomas and his immediate supervisor," Henderson flipped the page of his legal pad before he gave a name, "Abuti already contacted us and established the interstate link between the two murders and the Security Corps. What can Lawrence tell us about LyncNet?" The agent watched for Macon's reaction to the security chief's name. He smiled at the predictability.

"I never said my source's name. What makes you think--"

"Thomas included information about the cryptic phone call you received warning you about the black van when he made his report to our office. Thomas and Abuti aren't compromised so the murder investigation is secure. Your friend, Mrs. MacLeod, can rest assured that her brother's murderer will be brought to justice. Now, you were going to tell me about LyncNet."

"That's Lawrence's ace in the hole. But I can tell you that it's the key. Will you grant him immunity?"

"I don't have the authority to do that. I'll have to go to Tim Halbert, the Regional Director, who has been keeping tabs on the Alliance's political activities for several years. He'll be interested in this latest development."

"If Lawrence is right, you had better hurry."

Henderson picked up the phone and punched the two digit speed-dial code for Director Halbert's direct line, then explained the situation, adding, "I'm going to let you tell him yourself." He switched on the speaker-phone.

"Mr. Macon, this is Regional Director Halbert. You tell Col. Lawrence that if he'll come in with everything he has, I'll grant him federal witness status. He'll have all the protection he needs. Henderson, are you covering the LyncNet building?"

"We have two men outside. I'll order electronic surveillance immediately."

"I'll have the Colorado Springs office escalate their surveillance of the Security Corps and the Alliance's headquarters. We'll give Sinclair to the Oklahoma City police, and they can clean up their own internal mess. I want the big fish--Jimmy Carl Patterson and Paul Callidus."

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Lawrence lay on the bed in his motel room, waiting for the designated hour he was to call Louis Macon about the arrangements he'd made with the FBI. The television was loud enough for him to hear the CNN broadcast, but not loud enough to distract him from his mental planning. His statement was written and signed, waiting to be turned over with the files. He had compiled the information he wanted to turn over: the list of illegal campaign contributions from the Alliance that would undermine its tax exempt status and tie up any assets in an IRS investigation, the list of elected officials across the country, from Congress to the local dog catcher, with allegiances to Jimmy Carl and his organization, Patterson's drafts of his work with the Wilfrid papers indicating his strategies and intentions, a catalogue of the audio and video tapes of conversations with Jimmy Carl, Paul, and Sinclair, but especially the video tapes of the central committee meetings that Patterson had insisted on secretly taping for posterity, and the list of the first 200 texts designated for interpolation and deposit into the Book Repository, implicating each coordinator's role and involvement.

At four p.m., he dialed the number Louis had given him. "This is Lawrence."

"It's done. The Regional Director agreed to grant you federal witness status in exchange for the information you have and your testimony. Where are you? I tried to call you at the Sooner's Rest, and they said you'd checked out of that room."

"A necessary precaution. Did they set a time and place to meet?"

"No. They said they would come to you. Just tell them where and when."

"That'll work. I have everything ready here in my room. Are you coming with them?"

"I thought I would. I'm going to need to have access to all this material, if I'm going to write the definitive book on this phase in American cultural development. How do you like the title, *Slaying the Dragon: The Fall of the Alliance of Concerned Christians*?"

"Sounds good to me. I'm at the Hight House out near Lake Arcadia, just off Route 66 east. In an hour? Room 9."

"See you there."

Lawrence hung up the phone. He didn't have much time. He knew the FBI very well may have been monitoring the call, but he hoped they would expect him to be somewhere in Norman and be poised there ready to move. Col. Lawrence picked up the small duffel bag beside the door, threw the key to the room onto the bed, and closed the door behind him. He tossed the bag onto the seat in the cab of the Ford pickup truck that he had paid cash for at a south Oklahoma City used car lot and headed north on the back roads. Freedom had to be on his own terms, and the federal witness program would be too much like living in a prison. He gave them everything they needed. If he had a family, he would have considered that kind of relocation, but alone, he could disappear to build a new life anywhere he wanted. The camper on the back of the truck would be home for a while. He would have time to read and to think. He smiled. Life was really very simple, now.

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Louis arrived at the Hight House at four-thirty so he could visit with Greg Lawrence before the scheduled appointment with the FBI, but two unmarked cars were outside room 9, and the door was standing open. Two men in standard issue FBI windbreakers stood on the walkway outside the door with the butts of pump shotguns braced against their hips.

"I'm Louis Macon. I was suppose to meet with Col. Lawrence and Special Agent Henderson here at five o'clock. What's going on?"

Henderson stuck his head out the door. "Mr. Macon, come in. Your buddy flew the coop. We were afraid he might so we came a little early, hoping to have a chance to visit with him."

"Why would Lawrence do that? He wanted his name cleared; it doesn't make sense."

"Who knows how those guys think. He's got to be a little nuts.' Henderson motioned toward the boxes. "He left us the goodies, and that's what counts. I doubt if any of this will ever come to trial anyway, so he wouldn't be needed to testify in court."

"Why?" Louis picked up Lawrence's statement off the table.

"National security." Henderson removed the paper from Macon's hand before he could read it.

"Lawrence promised I could have an exclusive to write this up and expose the Alliance to public scrutiny." He watched Henderson stack the files that were spread out on the bed. "When can I have access to all the information? The sooner I get to work, the sooner I can inform the public. I need to have this published and on the stands before the next national election."

"That will be impossible, Mr. Macon. In fact, I have to insist that you forget all about this."

"Forget it. Like hell. The American people deserve to know what's going on."

"I'm afraid not. This is a matter of national security, and these files are classified. You never saw them. You never talked to Lawrence. Mr. Macon, it never happened."

"John Stillwell's dead. It happened."

"That will be appropriately filed as a *hate crime* aimed at an unfortunate homosexual professor on his way home from a dinner party. A *gay bashing* that got out of hand. These things are such travesties. Don't you agree?"

"You bastard." Louis' fist crashed into the FBI agent's face before he had time to think about it. Henderson was so unprepared for the blow that he was thrown backward into the small space between the bed and the table, hitting his head on the wooden arm of a chair as he fell to the floor. The knuckles across the back of Louis' right hand ached as he tried to walk out the door of the motel room, but the two agents blocked his way. He hadn't thrown a punch like that since he was kid.

Henderson grabbed a chair to help him stand up. "Let him go." He rubbed the side of his face just below his left eye. "Thanks, Macon. Now I could officially charge you with assaulting a federal officer, if you ever try to publish any of this."

"That won't stop me."

"Federal detainment could severely limit your access to pencils and paper. Don't fuck with me, Macon. This is officially classified. Clear?"

"Absolutely."

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## Chapter 20

Sinclair exited I-25 north. He could see the lights in the Security Corps office from the ramp. "Lawrence, finally." He whispered into the silence of the car. By the time he made the right turn into the north end of the dark parking lot, the lights were off, and a



man was balancing a large cardboard box on one hip while he struggled to lock the outer door. Sinclair slowly pulled his car into the shadows and watched Schwann place the box in the trunk of his car. What was this clerk doing there at this time of the night? Where the hell was Lawrence? He couldn't find the Colonel. It wasn't like the Colonel to stay out of contact with him for this long. Sinclair drifted back to another time.

Lawrence was always there when Sinclair needed him. Lawrence had even come back for him in Cambodia when he was wandering the back alleys after the mission failed. Sinclair could only remember what he had been told afterwards. Lawrence said they had been betrayed. Sinclair could still see the stream of fire from the end of his M-16 and the red patterns forming on the yellowed walls. He watched himself open fire on the roomful of men and women like a spectator in a movie. The recurrent chatter of the automatic rifle sounded through his head until he covered his ears with cupped hands.

The lights of a small black sports car running figure eight patterns in the vacant parking lot pulled him back. He looked at his shaking hands as he pulled the white handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the sweat from his face. Schwann had disappeared into the darkness unnoticed.

Sinclair wanted to check the office for messages from Lawrence. He parked behind the building and opened the rear door used as a private entrance. The suite was silent as he crossed the conference room and into Lawrence's office. File drawers containing audio tapes filed by date were standing open with obvious sections of tapes missing from their assigned places. The cabinets had been unlocked. Sinclair looked through the shelves of video cassettes lined up by date with coded entries on their spines. The door to the large storage room was ajar. The equipment sat silently in place on the metal shelves. The Security Corps' second in command checked Lawrence's special files for the portfolios they had developed on each of the Alliance committee coordinators.

They were all missing, along with the security files on each applicant to the military camps and the scholarship applicants.

Behind Lawrence's desk, Sinclair took one of the video tapes off the shelf and placed it into the VCR. He switched the screen on and watched an innocuous conversation between Lawrence and Schwann dated the week before. He looked up to pinpoint the location of the concealed camera that he never knew existed. Phillip Sinclair could feel the fear spread outward in a numbing sensation through his body. He grabbed an audio tape and slammed it into the tape player. He could hear his own voice giving instruction to his operative in Boston about the surveillance of the reporter Macon. The realization of his phone being tapped backed acid into his throat, making him gag. What else had Lawrence taped? Did he know Schwann's identity? He hurried back into Lawrence's storage closet and began flipping switches to the monitors. The third switch flashed a wide-angle view of his own office with his desk as the center of focus.. Sinclair rushed to his office. The bug was still in his phone. The vision of Schwann placing the cardboard box in the trunk of his car finally made sense. Schwann had taken everything. The Corps had been jeopardized. He and Lawrence were in danger. Lawrence had been listening to and watching everything that went on in the Security Corps office. Schwann had betrayed them.

Sinclair glanced at the floor beneath his feet. On the carpet at the edge of the desk was a half inch piece of red insulation from a copper wire. He dropped to his knees. The C-2 plastic explosive hung in a glob from the bottom of the center drawer of his desk. The battery in series with the charge was designed to detonate when he opened the drawer. He had used the same set-up many times in South East Asia to eliminate uncooperative officials. Schwann had intended to eliminate more than one Security Corps officer. This device was designed to take out the entire office and its contents. Sinclair tried to control his shaking hand by taking deep breaths before he carefully removed the

detonator from the gray glob. If someone was trying to kill him, they may have already gotten to Lawrence, at least that would explain why he hadn't contacted Sinclair.

He threw the explosive device into a box and grabbed several of the audio and video tapes from the shelves in Lawrence's office. The Corps' office security had been breached. He couldn't risk using any of the internal equipment. He ran for the back door. Locked it. Jerked open the car door and tossed the box onto the seat beside him, then grabbed his cellular phone. Hit the speed-dial for Paul Callidus' house. No answer. His office. No answer. Why would Schwann want to eliminate the people in the Security Corps? The people who protected the organization, protected Jimmy Carl? His index finger hit six on the face of the phone. Jimmy Carl didn't answer his office phone. The machine in the penthouse picked up the call after he pushed 66. Sinclair may already be too late. He started the engine then shifted the automatic transmission into drive. The forward motion of the sedan slammed the door. Phillip Sinclair could only envision one scenario: Schwann was planning to kill them all. He had to get to Patterson to warn him and to protect him. "Damn Lawrence for not staying in touch."

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Agent Gerald Pollock watched Phillip Sinclair leave the alley behind the Security Corps office. His partner documented the time before Pollock drove away, keeping a safe distance behind their target. "Jesus, he's in a hurry." The agents followed Sinclair through the maze of city streets. "He's heading for the Alliance headquarters. Alert our team in position there."

Agent Markum waited for an answer on the cellular phone. "Phillip Sinclair is coming your way at a clip. Something must be up."

"We've got him," came back. "He just pulled into the far end of the lot. There's been a damn lot of activity here tonight. At least a lot of coming and no going."

"Explain."

"Patterson's in his suite. Joseph Schwann arrived about an hour ago with two, shall we say, well, we used to call them B-girls. You know the kind, 'Wanna fuck, sailor? Five dolla. I love you, no shit.'"

"Is this something new?"

"SOP, it would seem. Our earlier information gathering teams reported similar comings and goings through the private entrance and up the private elevator. Patterson's one secure son of a bitch to bring hookers into the main offices of the Alliance of Concerned Christians. The guy must have one hell of a set of brass balls."

Pollock pulled into the Alliance parking lot as Sinclair locked the door to the headquarters behind him. He spotted the other team's car and pulled up beside them.

"What's happening inside?"

The driver of the other car tapped the headset covering his partner's ears. "What's going on?"

"Sounds like an orgy to me. A lot of water splashing, glasses rattling, and giggling. They must be in the hot tub?"

"They?" Pollock asked.

"The two girls, Schwann, and Patterson. They're all in there together."

"Put it on the speaker. Sinclair is on his way up. Something's coming down. I can feel it."

A girl's voice followed by a deep pleasurable groan came across the surveillance equipment. "Com'mon, honey. Why don't you join us? We'll do that for you, and it'll feel real good. I promise. See how he enjoys?"

"Get your hand off me. I told you the rules when you arrived. You girls are for him. I'll watch. I like to watch. Get back over there. Can you handle more, Joey?"

"That's Patterson talking. A bit testy, isn't he?" The agent with the headphones helped Pollock keep the players straight.

"You girls go to the bar in my bedroom and open another bottle of champagne. Joey and I need to mix a little business with pleasure. And bring the chocolate syrup from the refrigerator under the bar."

"Mmm. You do know what I like. Let's take a dip in the hot tub, then I'll be ready to go again. What'da 'ya think? They're everything I said they'd be. How about those tattoos?"

"Perfect. You've learned very well what pleases me."

The voices were masked by the roar of the water jets. "He likes to watch?" Pollock shook his head.

"Schwann brings girls in, usually very young Asian ones. They have a little *menage a trois* with the good reverend watching. Patterson videos some of the sessions to get off later. This could go on for hours."

"Poor Schwann. It's a hard job, but somebody's got to do it." Pollock observed. The four agents laughed.

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Sinclair used the magnetic card to disarm the security system once he was inside the Alliance headquarters. He rushed through the lobby toward the elevators. He jabbed the button several times. The doors hadn't finished opening before he was inside pressing the big red *6* on the elevator panel, then the *close door* button several time. The doors shuddered in confusion, slowly closing with the command. When they finally opened again, Sinclair ran through the corridors toward double doors into Jimmy Carl's office. The room was dark except for the track lights focused on the large oil paintings hanging on the walls. A wide spiral staircase climbed toward the loft entrance to the apartment Patterson kept for his own use. Sinclair raced up the stairs two or three at a time, clinging to the box he had brought from the Security Corps office. The large loft served as a private library for Patterson. Over the balcony railing, the lights from the city twinkled

through the windows that formed the outer wall of the office. Shelves of leather-bound and gold lettered bindings lined the walls of the loft. The reading lamp beside the overstuffed leather chair was dark. The brass plaque on the door above the peephole simply read *PRIVATE*.

Sinclair placed the box in the chair then knocked.. He drew the .45 from his shoulder holster under his jacket, then closed his eyes and took a deep breath. The lights he had seen in the apartment from the parking lot made him suspect that Jimmy Carl was inside. No one answered. His heart began to pound as he reached for the pass key he kept on his ring. "For God's sake, don't let me be too late." The door opened onto a white tile foyer with white carpet steps descending into a sunken living room. Sinclair had never been invited into Jimmy Carl's apartment. The room sparkled as white as a new snow fall--the walls, upholstery, carpet. Throw pillows of jewel stone colors dotted the floor in front of the white tiled fireplace. Small flames leaped down the length of the wooden logs in patterns of yellow, blue, and orange. One window opened to the cool night air drifting down from Pike's Peak unseen in the distance.

Sinclair could hear the low rumbling sound of hot tub jets cycling in another room and followed the sound past the kitchen and down a well-lit hallway. He opened the first door on his left, allowing his gun to lead the way, but the bedroom was empty and evidently hadn't been used. The door clicked into place as he closed it to moved on to the next door. The whirl of the pumps was louder then they stopped. He could hear two men talking but couldn't distinguish any words. His left hand turned the doorknob slowly, while he held his .45 pointed toward the ceiling ready to fire. He could hear Patterson's distinct southern accent through the crack in the door. He wasn't too late. He felt his muscles relax. He could breathe again, and the first deep breath made his head swim. Then he heard Schwann's voice.

"I'm glad you are enjoying yourself. I enjoy pleasing you, and it's good for me too."

Every part of Sinclair's body hardened except the muscles of his heart, pumping blood into his head, drowning out all external sounds. He threw open the door. The flickering light from the candles placed around the oversized bathroom created shadows on the white tile floor and walls. The brass fixtures seemed to move with the pounding in his head as the lights reflected off the polished surfaces. When his eyes focused on the two men, Schwann was standing beside the white marble hot tub tying a white terry robe around his wet body. Jimmy Carl stood on the steps, holding the railing; the frothing water encircling his knees. Steam enveloped his naked body in the cool air of the room. Water ran in rivulets down his thighs and back into the pool.

Sinclair screamed. "You fucking bastard. You lied to us. You promised to save us from the fags and perverts. You and Schwann make me sick."

Schwann moved toward Sinclair, but he had already lowered the gun and fired three shots in rapid succession. The first shot hit Schwann in the head as the gun came down, the second in the chest, and the last in the groin. Blood splattered into a wide pattern across the white tiles and turned the water in the pool a pale pink. Sinclair turned on Jimmy Carl as he was trying to climb out the opposite side of the hot tub. "How could you do this to me? I trusted you. I believed in you."

Patterson raised his hands to appeal to Sinclair. "You've got it all wrong. This isn't about me and Schwann. We're not partners. It's not the way it looks."

"It never is." Sinclair put one shot through Patterson's heart before he heard the girls screaming in the adjacent room. Patterson's body slid back into the pool. His blood whirled into spirals with the gently surging water of the hot tub.

Sinclair moved sideways around the marble pool toward the opposite door opening into the bedroom. He saw the naked bodies of the two girls and the terrified

Asian faces, before his mind slipped from the penthouse in Colorado to a skivvy joint for VC elite along the Vietnam-Cambodian border. He opened fire; orders were to eliminate all suspected enemy agents. The girls fell into a heap beside the rumpled round bed where they had taken refuge. The large mirror above them reflected what seemed in his mind to be two more images, which he immediately took out with a series of shots. He moved to complete his mission according to his specialized training: *After a hit, wire the room for any additional personnel coming to investigate the gun fire. Take out the secondaries after the brass.*

He made his way back to where he remembered hiding the explosives he brought to complete this job. The Colonel would want him to follow strict procedure. He was a good soldier. The Colonel had told him that before he sent him on this mission behind enemy lines to take out this nest of VC. Sinclair rewired the C-2 device so when the door to the apartment opened the explosion would take out any personnel within the perimeter. He ran down the stairs from the loft. He would have to make his way back to the Colonel's base of operations under cover of darkness. The jungle would conceal him until morning light.

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"Shots fired," Pollock yelled into the cell phone, "backup requested," then with the other three FBI agents rushed the Alliance building. Two agents blasted the locked glass door with the twelve-gauge combat shotguns. Pollock reached inside and unlocked the door. He motioned for the team to split up, sending the two men with the pump shotguns to work their way up through the floors. He and Agent Markum entered the stairwell and climbed to the door marked *6th floor NO ADMITTANCE*. Pollock blasted the lock with one shot then opened it into the stairwell. With weapons drawn, Pollock swung left, covering the hallway from one direction while his partner moved to the right to cover the opposite direction. The two agents who had been assigned to the Alliance headquarters



had briefed them on the floor plan of the building while they were waiting in the parking lot. Pollock headed down the hall to his left while Markum covered their backs. As Pollock approached the turn in the corridor to Patterson's office, he heard a door close and footsteps slow-creeping toward him. He turned the corner in optimum firing position. "FBI. Halt."

Sinclair stopped a few steps from the door, then turned and lunged back through the door to Patterson's office before Special Agent Pollock could get off a shot. Pollock and Markum followed Sinclair into the room. As they eased through the open door, Sinclair bolted up the spiral staircase. "Stay where you are! FBI!" Sinclair never slowed down until his hand opened the door to Jimmy Carl's apartment. The impact of the explosion knocked Pollock and Markum to the floor on the lower level. Books and debris crashed around them. Alarms were sounding throughout the building by the time the other team of agents reached them.

Pollock could hear sirens moving toward them from the opening where the windows had been in Patterson's office. He lay very still. Blood ran down between his eyes where he had been hit in the forehead by flying scraps from Jimmy Carl's library. "Markum, you o.k.?"

"Yeah, I think so."

The other two agents helped them out into the hall and propped them up against a wall. "The paramedics should be here soon. Calls were automatically connected to the local fire and police departments. Where's Sinclair? Were they all up there?" From where the agent was standing just outside the office door he could see what was left of the loft and stairway.

Firemen rushed through the stairwell door and past the agents, hoses unfolding behind them.

"He apparently set off his own booby-trap. Poof." Pollock had to smile. "Like Pierre's mustache."

"What?" Markum shook his head trying to make sense out of Pollock's comment.

"Never mind. It isn't important." Pollock dismissed his partner's puzzled expression. "It was a bad joke."

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## Chapter 21

Paul Callidus left the Oklahoma City airport in the rental car and drove directly to LyncNet. Brent Montgomery greeted him as he entered the computer center's control room. "Reverend Patterson sent me to personally implement the plan. He indicated that you have everything ready to go."

"Everything's up and running. It's just a matter of releasing what Patterson keeps calling the *obiter dictum* into the Net. I have Alliance people stationed in all the major repository links. At nine p.m. the modem links will be opened and from here we can execute the compiled code that will activate the dormant worm in the electronic books we have already placed in the repository's storage systems. Once the larvae is activated it can go outside its resident text to other files loaded in the same storage computers and change key words and phrases. When any of these electronic texts are downloaded by a subscriber into a personal computer in a home, a university's library system, a public library system, or any other storage system for electronic texts then the worm will find its way to the key words and phrases."

"The grafting of the Biblical World View will be complete, and in time will become permanently imbedded in the minds of the reading public." Paul Callidus smiled at Montgomery.

"Before we go any further, are you sure you want to do this? It looks good on paper, but I'm not absolutely sure of the ramifications, I mean, its potential once it is set into motion."

"I'm sure. People will hear the resonances of biblical concepts in all the texts, then Jimmy Carl will be able to echo those familiar concepts, and the people will listen to him because he knows the way. They will follow. He will be God's Regent and rule America and then the world. It is the Master's plan: 'For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my work be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I propose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.'"

"But are you sure you want to sow worms instead of seeds?"

"Like the bee carries pollen, your worm will spread the seeds."

"Yeah, my worm. Maybe we should reconsider." Montgomery looked at the wall clock. Eight fifty-five.

"There is nothing to consider. Everything has been carefully planned, now it must be implemented. This is the only way to save America from Satan. The people must hear the word." Callidus sat down at the computer keyboard. Then he glanced at the clock. Eight fifty-seven.

"I hope you know what you're doing."

"Trust me. We are on a mission from God." Callidus tried to reassure the hacker.

"We're on-line. As soon as the modem links are established execute the file, and the telephone line will carry the code to the dormant worm in the texts we've already sent to the repositories."

Both men glanced at the clock. Nine o'clock.

Callidus typed the activation command: *Sower.exe*. Then he smiled and gently touched *Enter* on the keyboard. "It's done."

"So be it." The hacker assented.

Callidus picked up the phone on the desk beside the computer keyboard.

Six hundred miles away, Special Agent Gerald Pollock answered the phone in Patterson's office. "Alliance of Concerned Christians?"

The voice was unfamiliar to Callidus. "Who is this?"

"Does it matter?"

"Yes. I want to talk to Reverend Patterson."

"That would be impossible."

"Who is this? It's important that I speak with Jimmy Carl, immediately."

"Who's calling please?"

Callidus hesitated. "Who are you?"

"This is Gerald Pollock with the Colorado Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Reverend Jimmy Carl Patterson was murdered tonight." The line was silent. "Callidus?" But the only response was the persistent drone of the dial tone.

Callidus stared at the monitor screen in front of him. The *sower execute* command hung mutely in the center of the screen. He reached into his pocket and drew out a small keychain distinguished by an unembellished gold cross with a single key attached to the opposite end. He stood up slowly.

"Now what?" Montgomery queried as he watched the Alliance's Managing Director cross the room to the small red box mounted on the wall beside the door. "What are you going to do? That's the self-destruct mechanism for the entire LyncNet computer system. No! You can't. I won't let you. I've worked too hard." Montgomery lunged across the room and tackled Callidus just as he opened the cover to the box and inserted the key into the switch.

Callidus bounced off the wall, crashing to the floor with the impact of Montgomery's body against his. "I have too. Patterson's dead. We've failed." He struggled against the hacker's grasp.

"You fool. We'll go to Plan B."

"There is no Plan B. Without Patterson there is no plan." Callidus' fist connected with Montgomery's face and sent him sprawling backward against the bottom of the open door. The Director grabbed at the computer station beside him to help him to his feet. His fingers inadvertently wrapped around a metal bookend. "Don't you understand, we must destroy the evidence. The worm is loose. It is working now, but this place and all the plans and records must be destroyed." The bookend came down on the back of Montgomery's head as he lunged for Callidus one more time.

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Two Oklahoma FBI agent were waiting in their car outside LyncNet when Special Agent Henderson arrived with the four additional teams of agents Regional Director Halbert ordered into the area. "Is Callidus inside?"

"Yes, sir."

"Find him and arrest him and anyone with him."

"What's the charge?"

Henderson took the combat shotgun out of the trunk of his car and waited for the other agents to get into their vests emblazoned with FBI across the back. "Suspicion of conspiracy to knowingly access a computer system in excess of authorization. A violation of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. The documents I received indicate that the Alliance intends to unleash a program to severely alter a series of computers on the Internet, including the Library of Congress' electronic book repository system. God, I hope we're not too late." He gave the command. "Let's move."

Two teams stationed themselves outside the front entrance to LyncNet. One team ran around the building to secure the rear entrance.

The five agents rushed through the front door. When he saw the Security Corps guard stationed at the reception desk, Henderson demanded, "Where's Callidus?" The stunned guard pointed toward the corridor leading to the computer center before he pushed a button on the panel over the desk that called two more Security Corps guards out of the office near the entrance to the computer center with weapons drawn. "FBI!"

One of the guards raised his arms over his head. "Don't shoot."

The other guard fired at the agents, hitting one in the shoulder before three shots center punched his chest.

An agent removed the gun from the hand of the more passive partner.

Henderson reached the door of the computer center in time to see Callidus' hand drop from the red box and him turn and run toward the open door. A red light began to flash in the hallway and the piercing whine of a siren wailed throughout the building.

"Get out of here," screamed Callidus as he pushed Henderson out of his way.

The guard pulled the FBI agent along with the single handcuff that had been attached to his wrist. "That's the warning for the self-destruct mechanism. We have less than a minute to get out. Run!"

"Is there anyone else in the building?" Henderson asked as he passed the guard from the lobby trying to get out the door with the other agents. He pushed Callidus out of the door in front of him, then looked back down the corridor toward the computer center before he hit the ground outside of the LyncNet complex. He could see Montgomery stumbling against the wall in an effort to get out of the building. Henderson could only watch as the ball of fire and debris move down the hallway and into the lobby, consuming everything in sight, including Montgomery. He hid his face and head under his arms as the glass front of the new structure exploded around him.

After he got to his feet, Henderson counted his men plus the three people from LyncNet. "Read him his rights." He pulled Callidus to his feet and shoved him toward one of the agents. Fire trucks screamed into the parking lot as he made his way toward the wounded agent, motioning for the paramedics to assist.

"What are the charges?" called the agent.

"Start with murder and arson. That'll hold the bastard until we can think of some more."

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### Final Chapter

Louis and Ian talked well into the night in Ian's study about the whole affair.

"What are you going to do now that your motivating cause has been virtually destroyed from within?" Ian asked the reporter.

"I'm not sure." Louis brushed an errant strand of hair from Maggie's face where she lay sleeping with her head on a small pillow in his lap. "I want to do something to keep all this from happening again, but without Lawrence's files, I'm not sure how to get that accomplished. The FBI has all but gagged me."

"There's always fiction." Ian sipped the herb tea from his cup. "And Maggie asked me to finish preparing John's manuscript for the publisher. I would like to have a posthumous biographical dedication to the memory of the late John Colman Stillwell. It would be modeled on the traditional conventions of the Irish saints' lives. I would help with that part. It would amplify the details of his literary discovery and expose the circumstances of his murder by misguided fundamentalist Christians. This preface would have to establish the connections between the events of the Northumbrian political struggles and current events in American politics. You could tell of John's life through the perspective of his death, reflecting on how an adherence to ancient and antiquated ideas

that defy rational examination and experiential knowledge killed him--murder by ignorance."

Mary called to her husband from the computer desk where she was working on her newsletter for the Internet newsgroup. "Ian, Louis, come see this. The incoming message light was flashing on the screen."

Louis read the words aloud: "*Louis, the dragon lives. Gandalf.*"

"A Tolkien fan." Mary laughed. "Any idea who's trying to contact you?"

Louis inhaled deeply. "Lawrence."

The next morning Louis began typing the preface to John Stillwell's book into the computer. Above the body of his text he typed: *Quod erat demonstrandum*: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*.

He moved the cursor to the next line:

"In the beginning was the Word . . . But there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that *should* be written."--The Gospel according to John.

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### The Symposium

**"Well, Michel, what da 'ya think of my little play? Have I shown enough?"**

"Enough for what? To entertain? To provoke? To enlighten or for the attentive to understand? Enough to create the dream, or so much as to evoke the nightmare? Sophie, I think you have displayed a world, not unlike that of the Houuyhnhnms, where the inhabitants have lost the capacity for play. It seems a bit disorderly."



**"Of course it's disorderly. It imitates life. Oh, my god, do you think it is too implicit?"**

"A few might realize you are concerned with the word as the informing principle; that your play is actually a discourse about discourse and discourse's role in society. Some will recognize that it is a statement about the shift in *pastoral power* from the religious aims of traditional ministers to lead people to their salvation in the other world to more worldly aims. As always, they will fail to see their likenesses. Sophie, you have addressed the question of what is happening in America during this period. Just as Kant did in 1784 and many other authors have. It is a noble endeavor in that respect. And for me, it always was a most important philosophical problem: for the wannabe philosophers to critically analyze the world they live in and talk about it, an interpretive analysis of their time. Otherwise, they get trapped in power struggles among themselves over the specifics, quibble about the details, and fail to induce the genus, not unlike the New Critics, the Structuralists, the Deconstructionists, the Phenomenologists, and the proponents of Hermeneutics who vie for authority in a game to justify personal *rightness*. If their game is to maintain discourse, then we can appreciate their playfulness, for they would have grasped the wisdom of the Bard, they would realize that *all the world's a stage* and recognize the role they have chosen to play and play the part well, but also that the topic of the discourse is as important as the action."

**"But that's my point. Then you don't think my intended audience will understand that the one thing I wish for them to take from my tale is a profound**

**understanding that to be fully human they must actively participate in the process of thoughtful discourse--to passionately play their roles?**

"No."

**"Surely they will be able to see that as citizens of their world they must insure the freedom to speak with one another about any topic, that the texts they write must maintain a higher discourse of ideas with other texts, and those I call to teach must not only take action to insure that freedom, but must participate in more than one level of the process than simply who won the Superbowl or the trials of the most pitiful O.J."**

"I doubt it."

**"Virginia, you are a good reader, don't you think they will understand?"**

"I'll tell you, Sophie, if it is read by the common reader, people will allot a variety of meanings to your text, especially since you have not revealed your identity to your audience. Many will feel threatened and say it is anti-Christian, while their opponents will see an advocacy for humans to dissolve the boundaries of organized religions and become more spiritual, most will not be able to make up their minds if it is anti-democratic or pro-democratic, and some will claim it is un-American, and far too many will only see an action-adventure. They will fall prey to this, not because you, as its author, have told a good story or placed meaning there for them to find, but because of the unfortunate and limited development of their rational thought, that these creatures of yours bring to the material, which, I might add, has suffered from years of neglect. As unscholarly as their discussions will be, at least they will discuss it. That is all we can hope for. After all, can we ever really expect them to live without religion?"

**"Tell me, John, have you recovered sufficiently from your ordeal in Oklahoma City to comment on whether you see any hope for my words to be an instrument of change? Backus, bring Dr. Stillwell a drink to ease his transition. A toast to our new arrival.'**

"Thank you. It was a long passage, and I probably cannot focus my thoughts intelligently. But I can see now that my dear friend Ian was right about my lack of involvement in the functioning of my everyday world. But like many of my academic colleagues, I wasn't paying attention to what others like to call *real life*. If they can get that much out of it then your efforts will not have been wasted. However, I have to add the observation that humans have generally failed to get the message of the other books you penned. They've fought wars over what they thought you were trying to say. Why would you think they would understand this time?"

**"Really! That is a classical example of unethical literary criticism, if I ever witnessed one. I gave them sublime poetry and testament, and they read all sorts of strange messages into it once they started taking it out of context. I should have given up then, but I just can't quit hoping they'll get it, sooner or later. Tell me, my dear friends, is the answer to close the texts or open the minds, or are texts only as closed as the minds who encounter them?"**

"I apologize, but my thinking is still too fuzzy from the experiential world and the trip to successfully articulate a profound thought, but it would seem more prudent to work toward a balance by teaching them the method. I probably shouldn't have even brought up that issue."

"We understand Dr. Stillwell. All of us around this table have all made that journey, as all must. But you have spoken well."

"Thank you, Mr. Jefferson."

**"Tell us, Tom, you've been very quiet. What's your read on this play?"**

"This fringe group you call the Religious Right has set the American people up as their adversary and are using the strategy of war games and unethical rhetoric to gain an advantage, and they hope, a victory to establish themselves as the authority. I think you were clear enough about that even for the most irrational reader."

"Is there any hope the American people will be able to save themselves from domination? I guess my experience with Phillip Sinclair leads me to think there isn't much hope, if he is representative of the stage of limited development Ms. Woolf has expressed."

**"That's up to them, Dr. Stillwell. As you know, I don't meddle in their affairs once the action begins. Nicocles, when you were King of Cyprus you saw a similar pattern developing. Can you offer us any hope?"**

"Perhaps it is as Monsieur Foucault has pointed out in his writings about the central phenomenon in the history of societies-- continuous interaction between the dominant group in power and its adversary revolting and struggling to overcome repression. In the flailing of its death throes, this remnant mutation of what Sophie intended to offer humanity in her last testament, which she has indicated was grossly misinterpreted, interpolated, and rewritten, and which has held dominant power in the western world for centuries, is about to feel the massive shift from a position of power to one of adversary. Perhaps my obituary for Christianity as a dominant force in

the world is premature, but for the people to overcome this patriarchal authority and rule from a position of power, as Mr. Jefferson and his contemporaries intended, they must first demonstrate a capacity to rule the self. In your current tale, Sophie, I do not see very many people demonstrating the virtue of self-control, so I cannot offer much hope for their ability to rule an entire country, much less to have democracy spread to the rest of the world when few have discerned the correlative between human rights and human responsibility."

"I will remind this august group that I also pointed out that a responsible disciplinary technology is a prerequisite for the success of the prevailing capitalism."

"Yes, Monsieur Foucault, that you did. However, did you intend to imply, with Prince Machiavelli, that disciplinary power is, by necessity, from an external authority so that the freedom or virtue of the citizens, their peace and tranquillity must be sacrificed to achieve solidity of power, or is the individual capable of developing that authority within the self and then able to wield that power collectively from within a democracy? I always wondered if you assumed, like many others, that *human reason* is a static quality, once acquired, always possessed, and like Venus, bursts forth from the head of Zeus full grown; or did you ever recognize the dynamic developmental nature of reason, as Master Plato's witty ally, Socrates, sought to share with those who were listening?"

"Even if I acknowledge that rational thought is evolutionary, Sophie's play demonstrates that too many humans have not developed reason enough yet, even the philosophers. They cannot resist the

temptations of absolutes. The need to be right prevails, and irony is lost on most of them. Yes, yes, the pun was intended."

"Thank you, Foucault. That's what I was talking about. All these people who form a democracy are easily fooled by the rhetoric of the Sophists. They can't tell the difference between an honest man and a fool, for fools can only recognize the likeness of other fools. Didn't I suggest, even long before your Christianity was born or its hybrid spawns, that a republic is best ruled by the philosopher-king?"

**"Yes, Master Plato, we have all read your works. But that is the very point I was trying to make in my little play. The philosophers of this period do not demonstrate the capacity for maintaining a dialogue of the times, much less a proclivity toward a responsibility to rule. In fact, is not the very concept of a philosopher-king an oxymoron? Can a human, who focuses on the world of ideas, refocus that attention on the affairs of state? No offense, Dr. Stillwell."**

"None taken. Although I was not the best living example, I believe they can, not as kings, but collectively through the democratic process. Just because I failed, Ian hasn't, nor Mary, and there are many others like them, but I must admit, very few are in the clergy or capable of giving spiritual guidance, and there are increasingly fewer in the academy. He represents the best human qualities--a spiritual being, a learned and thoughtful contemplative with a sense of his place and his role in his society and the world. From that center within himself he, and the others like him, can teach, and through their teaching transform the world. Regretfully, if I had been doing my job, there might be more. I had the knowledge; from my studies of the Celts I understood that the most effective humans function in both worlds--the

contemplative and the active. That's the beauty of the Mary and Martha metaphor Sophie used in the last testament: both women resided in the same household. It is the continuous interaction of the parts, to use Michel's words, that form the unity of the whole."

**"You are recovering nicely, Dr. Stillwell. But I ask you, since you are our most recent visitor, are there enough of these teachers you describe to make a difference? It would seem that passionately active intellectuals are some form of endangered species, at least in America."**

"I must admit, the unfortunate by-product of the marriage of democracy and capitalism is an abundance of blue-collar workers who have no skills to bring to the art of teaching in the schools. Far too many see teaching as merely a rung on the socio-economic ladder, and never understand the nature of the vocation or the purpose and function of the ladder, because the people responsible for training them to be teachers fail to avail their students of the necessity of a shift from *commonalty* and *mediocracy* toward higher aspirations. And those who have climbed above the shadows too often fail to return to their imperfect societies, abandoning it to the tyrant who would rise as its champion."

**"Then you see no hope?"**

"What is hope but the realization of the good? I have experienced the good. Wouldn't you say, Sophie?"

**"What have you learned, Dr. Stillwell?"**

"It is difficult, if not impossible, for people to live without religion. But it would seem that moral theology has failed to instruct those people who rely on it as their blueprint for living. All my efforts to shift the emphasis from talk about God to a direct experience

of the good through the literature of religion seems to have been for nought. All they can do is disagree. A pissing contest between *he said, she said, or they said*. Authority, it would seem, is an illusion held by people who either cannot see or cannot cope with more than one option. For many, the illusion becomes reality and obscures the options. The authoritarian mind is, as a consequence, incapable of true discourse because it can only hear the sound of its own voice."

"Tell me, Sophie, did you hope to change their world by showing them the error of their ways?"

**"No, Brother Bede. Only to amuse our symposium."**

"That is worthwhile. Because I can tell you that they will not listen to your wisdom. I tried to reach them with my history, but very few understood my *ubi sunt* formula enough to realize that my commentary demonstrated the disparity between my own times and a more perfect world when the Celts showed us the way. Very few understand that to achieve irony, the author must denounce the here and now. You read my works well, Dr. Stillwell. but not well enough. If you had it to do over, would you change anything?"

"Perhaps I was wrong and the poets really hold the key, rather than the preachers and philosophers. Change? I guess if I wanted to show life as noble and reasonable I would write romantic fiction."

"Ah, but you did."

"What do you mean, Brother Bede?"

"You were correct in your assumption that I did write the Janus Manuscript."

"Yes! I knew it!"



"Yes, but what you didn't realize is that Wilfrid's journals and his life are a hoax that has lain unrecognized and obviously misinterpreted for centuries--part of a political plot to discredit Wilfrid. The first, his journals, were a literary hoax--often the only available means of provocation when free inquiry and dissent are condemned, when authors are hindered from debating ideas and political policies openly. The *Vitae* was a parody of the saints' lives that I perverted to accentuate his sins against my homeland."

"You mean I was killed for an elaborate joke?"

"Unfortunately. But you were not the first, nor will you be the last to mistake the written word as Truth, rather than a vehicle for truth. Your death is a baneful by-product of the authority of opinions."

"Another unholy war, Brother Bede?"

"No, Dr. Stillwell. Another holy war fought for what each side holds as sacred. Another swing of Monsieur Foucault's pendulum. Unfortunately, in the heat of battle, both philosophy and religion have habitually failed humanity."

"One last question, Sophie? How have you intended this metaphor of the *bookworm*?"

"Yes, yes. Please explain."

**"Very good. You were paying attention. There are many varieties of bookworms. In its larvae stage it is a louse, *Atropus pulsatorius*, that devours the physical product and is purely destructive; in its naive or adolescent stage, it consumes the words themselves and bloats itself on its prodigious authority, much like the *philosophus gloriosus*; finally, for the bibliophile, the words become like the**

**Archimedean screw--a mechanical device to raise material from a lower to a higher level--and the mature bookworm is grateful for the ride."**

"Perhaps you're right, Sophie. Only laughter can save them from themselves. What, after all, is the idea of the book?"

**"Master Boethius, you always did know how to isolate a topic. Ha, ha, ha, hee, hee, hahahahahahaHAHAHAHHAHAHA. . . .**

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### EPILOGUE

*I appeal to the hearty appetites and good will of my readers to recognize the nature of my "disorderly conduct" and forgive my juvenal displays as a "minor vice," while uncouth, written, as were the meanderings of the old poet, "for our doctrine" and any lackings are my own and not my readers'. For I am, above all, a conscientious objector in this war, and the play is, indeed, most serious.*

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VITA

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