



False Flag?

Dick Croy

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FALSE FLAG
By
Dick Croy

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
Margaret Mead**



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“Only puny secrets need protection. Big secrets are protected by public incredulity.”

Marshall McLuhan

INTRODUCTION

When a good friend contacted me three or four years after 9/11 to tell me the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were an inside job, aided and abetted by elements within our own government, I was furious.

“I’ve never known Sharon to read a newspaper in her life,” I fumed to my wife when she asked why I was so angry. “And she expects me to believe her hare-brained story about 9/11?”

Joy had never met Sharon but had heard enough of my L.A. stories to know who she is. Both of us are expats now, Sharon in Portland and me back in my hometown in the Midwest. We’d kept in touch fairly regularly, but this conviction of hers about 9/11 made me wonder how well I knew her after all.

“I’ll send you a video,” she said. “Just watch it with an open mind, okay?”

It arrived a few days later: a documentary of poor production quality and implausible conjectures appropriately titled *Loose Change*. I did try to watch it with an open mind but heard myself muttering expletives and invoking the names of the Lord and his only begotten son as if I were overhearing someone else. Someone who sounded as if he was about to lose it at any moment. Thanks in part to my dismissive if not entirely negative critique, my wife had no interest in watching it.

It did get me thinking though. Mostly about why such a horrific event had ceased to oppress my thoughts as it once had, until being reintroduced by Sharon with her long distance call and this amateurish but indeed rather thought-provoking video. How had 9/11 faded so completely from my mental radar screen?

My much younger cousin Lisa had been one of the nearly 3,000 victims on that terrible day. I wasn't particularly close to that side of the family but sent condolences after learning of her death, then obsessed for days about how it might have occurred. I didn't know the details and wasn't about to probe. After a while, Lisa's untimely end became submerged in the enormity of the metastasizing tragedy, for our own country, then for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan and for the world at large.

Two years ago I learned that her parents had divorced and wondered what role Lisa's death might have played in the breakup of their marriage; a substantial one, I guessed. She'd been their only child. My uncle Frank was an executive engineer with a major construction company in Kansas City. I knew little about Lisa's mother Linda.

Loose Change and its reverberations reawakened my interest in 9/11. It seemed almost as if a film of some kind, like condensation on a mirror, had been wiped from my mind. This didn't happen all at once. At the computer I'd find myself idly Googling 9/11-related subjects, at first out of curiosity, then as one hyperlink led to another, more like our little dog Riley on the scent of a fresh animal trail in the backyard. After a few days, or maybe it was a couple of weeks of this kind of exploration, it became obvious that I had broken through into the vast, what was then still "subterranean" world of Conspiracy theories. And suddenly I felt paranoid, as if I could be observed somehow. As if my online presence in forbidden realms could be detected by Big Brother.

It was my good fortune, however, to come across a posting by Peter Dale Scott, a Canadian poet, former diplomat and English professor widely recognized for his conceptualization of *deep politics*, which theorizes “that in every culture and society there are facts which tend to be suppressed collectively, because of the social and psychological costs of not doing so.” Scott managed to reassure me that my sudden fear was normal, to be expected. I shouldn’t allow it to keep me from learning what I could about the real world we live in.

What, I wondered, did my uncle think about 9/11, and all the conspiracy theories growing up around the collapsed towers like thorns in an animated fairy tale? Did I dare ask him? From what little I knew about him Frank was a conservative, level-headed person, an engineer and executive after all, from the heart of the Midwest. But no one in the family seemed to know much about Frank these days, even how to contact him. He no longer worked for the company where he’d built his successful career. Apparently didn’t even live in Kansas City nor did my Aunt Linda, his ex. I began discreetly to look for him on the Internet. Didn’t find him on Facebook or LinkedIn or by Googling his name.

Finally one day after I’d pretty much quit looking for him, I came across the name Frank Nolan in a 9/11 survivors group listing. Contacted a guy on their Website, convinced him I was the nephew of a Frank Nolan who’d lost his daughter, and gave him my phone number and email address. Frank emailed me the next day to confirm that his colleague had given him the right information, then gave me his own cell number, in New Jersey, and a good time to call.

I called.

A week later we were sitting in a booth across from each other in a restaurant in Somerville. Just an hour from New York City but with a downtown that, aside from the prevalence of good restaurants, has the ambience of a small town in the Midwest. Frank had

done some homework and was aware that I'd published a few things; in fact he spoke favorably about two pieces he'd found on the Internet.

“That’s why we’re having this meeting,” he said. “I’d like you to tell the story of how and why my daughter died.”

In that first hour we spent together Frank proceeded to lay out the short version of what I would come to learn was a much larger body of work, representing not only his own research but that of hundreds of others, many of them scientists and engineers like himself but also including military and intelligence personnel, first responders to 9/11 from police and fire departments, professionals in all walks of life who just don’t believe the accepted version of what happened that day and what had led up to it.

It was way too much to absorb. To say that I left our introductory meeting reluctant even to consider the undertaking he’d proposed would be an understatement. Despite my own tentative forays into the 9/11 conspiracy forest, there was just too much about what my uncle had told me that I frankly couldn’t believe.

I had business to take care of in the city – which had made meeting Frank feasible in the first place – then planned to return home. I told him I’d think about what he’d said and get back to him in a week or so. Frank said he knew he’d overwhelmed me, that he really hadn’t expected an immediate answer. He would email me information he considered particularly relevant; after I’d digested all of it, however long that took, I’d be better prepared to make a decision. He’d provide additional info and leads at my request.

“I want you to tell the story your own way,” he said. “Otherwise it’s going to get lost in all the other information that’s available to anyone willing to look for it. The choir’s being preached to with brilliance and passion, but it’s time to enlarge the congregation. Exponentially.”

Those aren't Frank's words exactly but they're the gist of his instructions. In the weeks that followed, as I continued my own independent and fairly skeptical Internet search, I became more and more aware of the extraordinary amount of research he'd conducted, on his own and with the help of the survivors group he'd joined. As he told me, the information's out there, you just have to look for it. Spend the time necessary to sort out all the garbage and disinformation from what's worth considering. Not only do most people not have the time, their minds aren't open enough to consider spending even a minute examining alternatives to the government's version of the events of 9/11. I hadn't been willing to. For the first few years after it happened I wasn't even aware there was a controversy. But what I learned has changed my mind.

* * * * *

Society's collective suppression of facts that are too hot to handle, which Peter Dale Scott connects with "deep politics," appears to me similar, if not identical, to the psychological response *cognitive dissonance* – "I can't buy into that, it would undermine my whole sense of reality," – often cited in 9/11 conspiracy theories as the basis for mass denial of what "Truthers" believe to be self-evident. The prime example is the collapse of the three World Trade Center buildings. Truthers and many demolition experts claim it was an obvious case of controlled demolition. The media and average citizens not only accept the government's explanation that burning jet fuel weakened the buildings' steel support columns, launching a cascade of collapsing floors, but are dead set against considering alternatives.

This drives Frank crazy. "Denial's a societal autoimmune disease," he ranted at our initial restaurant meeting. "The immune system is necessary to protect the body of course, but it can over-react and end up wreaking havoc on it. The kind of denial that conspires with greed and corruption to bring about the collapse of civilizations turns the permeable membrane of shared

beliefs that define a culture into a solid crust that ends up suffocating it.

“Here’s an example,” he said. “I actually overheard this at breakfast one morning, in the booth behind me. Two guys, probably in their late 20s, early 30s. I didn’t see them come in, had my nose in the paper. But I could tell by their voices and conversation that they were reasonably intelligent and well-educated. I wasn’t paying much attention until one of them raises his voice and says something like, ‘*Nah*. Are you shittin’ me? I wouldn’t believe that even if I knew it was...’ and he doesn’t finish his thought, just leaves it hanging there. I didn’t know what they were talking about but all of a sudden I was interested.

“Well, the other guy zeroes in on this. ‘Even if it was what?’

“The first guy’s uncomfortable, obviously doesn’t want to say whatever it was he was about to say. ‘I don’t believe it,’ he says, ‘I just don’t believe it.’”

Frank leaned toward me. “I’m paying attention now, and the interrogator’s relentless. ‘Yeah I heard you,’ he says. ‘But you said, “*If* it was.” If it was what?’

“Now the first guy’s annoyed. ‘Don’t give me a hard time, dude. I said I don’t believe it. How do you expect me to believe something like that?’

“Since my own interest has been aroused I’m glad the first guy’s unwilling to let it drop. ‘Hey, I got it,’ he says, ‘I’m just curious, that’s all. What the hell were you going to say that you’re afraid to say now?’

“This makes his companion really indignant. ‘*Afraid?* I’m not afraid.’

‘Okay, reluctant then. What did you start to say, and weren’t *afraid* to say, that you’re very reluctant to say now?’

“He nailed it with that one. The first guy breaks down like the defendant in a *Law and Order* episode. ‘*Goddamnit!*’ he says, ‘If it was *true*. I wouldn’t believe that even if I knew it

was true!”

Frank sat back in the booth with a look of resignation when he'd concluded his account of the incident. "Denial," he said. "Classic example."

Denial

My picture of the world is set
in stone. And, as far as I can
see, I'm not alone. So don't tell
me stuff to mess me up. Don't try
to frighten or enlighten me.

Don't shatter my reality!

I'm hangin' on, I must confess.
Just lost my job, just flunked a test.

Don't throw me in the wilderness!

Denial! Denial! It's stronger than
a smile. When things get tough,
you've had enough,

(gunfighters' fast-draw)

Just pull out that denial!

They say the planet's warming up.
They say we're out of oil. Our way
of life will have to change. *Shit*,
man – that makes my blood boil!
I like things the way they are.
Don't take my guns. Don't take my
car. Don't tax my ass – *kiss* it
fool! I live my life the best I can.
Don't ask me for no "helping hand."
Denial! Denial! Don't let 'em lead
you down the aisle.

(both six-guns blazing)

Blast 'em with denial!

There's all this talk about
conspiracy. A lot of folks died
because the government lied.
They demoed the Towers to make
the Middle East ours. But I
don't buy it 'cause it don't fit
my idea of reality. You don't
mess with that, you hear what
I'm sayin'? And you can *rupture*
the rapture and all that prayin'.
If the ship goes down, I'll be
in the band – *playin'*.
Denial! Denial! Let's all go down
in style. Six guns blazin', some
real *hell-raisin'*! *Poof...*

(blowing smoke from the barrel)

There won't even be no trial.

Chapter 1

You could begin Frank's story on 9/11 or with the birth of his daughter Lisa, but he suggested I start with the day he introduced himself to Ana, on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, at the company where he works in a commercial park in Newark, NJ. And that particular morning began with his least favorite colleague, a boorish Rush Limbaugh-esque heavyweight named Corby, swaggering down an aisle in the dead sea of cubicles where Frank earns his living recruiting engineers for corporate clients.

"9/11 people! Another anniversary. Take a moment to remember! Take some time to...*get...mad!* And, God help ya, if you're a 'truther' don't show your face around here!"

As he lumbered past Frank's enclosed workspace, leaving an all but visible wake through the cubicle archipelago, the approvals of a few other recruiters could be heard in the vast open boiler room. But most of the staff who were hunkered down with their phones quickly muted them unless they were talking, in which case they merely cringed and attempted to explain away the noise in the background. Frank, however, stood to see who was responding.

Just three cubicles away from his on the same side of the aisle, were the head and shoulders of Ana, a quiet, attractive woman in her late 30s who'd joined the company recently. On her sad Central American face surprise, anger and anxiousness animated her normally

expressionless features. Feeling Frank's gaze, she turned her eyes on the graying man in his 60s whom she'd been too shy to say more than a few superficial words to in her three months of employment. Neither of them spoke, but something passed between them.

Ana disappeared behind the wall of her cubicle, but Frank stood there a moment, holding her expression, trying to reconcile it with the tingling chill of recognition it had provoked in him.

Later at the computer in his spare, unadorned cubicle he tried to concentrate but finally allowed his thoughts to wander. Though he had an important telephone interview to prepare for, he gazed in reverie at the framed photograph of the smiling young woman in her mid-20s on his desk.

In headphones at her own workstation, Ana was focused on a photograph as well, as she mechanically checked off another name on the list in front of her and completed her canned pitch.

"If this is a position you're interested in learning more about, please call me back as soon as possible on our toll-free number. Thank you."

She was about to make the next call when Frank appeared at the opening of her cubicle. Ana glanced up, startled then wary.

"Sorry to interrupt. Is that a call you can hold for a minute?"

"...Sure," she answered with some uncertainty, removing her headphones.

"I'd like to buy you lunch if I may. If today's not good, then sometime this week?"

Ana started to reply but then hesitated. Frank guessed correctly that she'd been about to say no almost automatically before reconsidering. "I guess today would work," she said.

"Good. There's a quiet place near here where I go for lunch sometimes. Nothing fancy; good soups and salads. That sound okay?"

She smiled fleetingly. "I'll trust your judgment."

* * * * *

Frank pulled Ana's chair out for her. He wondered whether the quiet restaurant might be somewhat more upscale than she was anticipating. Or was it simply the reserve that had kept Ana from acknowledging the appreciative glances she'd deflected from her first day on the job. She seemed uneasy in any case. Theirs was one of the few tables occupied.

"I thought we could both use the privacy," Frank said when he'd seated himself and looked across at her. Ana nodded but there was an awkward silence as he searched for a way to open the conversation. He decided on directness. Holding her eyes with a look that was both soft and, Ana suddenly realized, full of pain, he said, "That...incident this morning. I'd never have guessed. It never occurred to me."

Ana was taken aback. Her face paled.

"...And you?"

"Daughter. About your age."

"M-my husband."

"The photo on your desk." He cupped his hand over hers on the white tablecloth. Their eyes, hers in tears, held each other's. The otherwise wordless communion was broken when a waiter arrived to take their order.

Twenty minutes later the food in front of them had barely been touched.

"I was two years old when they sent me to this country. To live with my aunt and uncle – my father's brother. No one ever told me anything, except that my parents had 'disappeared.'"

"The whole time you were growing up, they never told you any more than that?"

"They wouldn't talk about it – what had happened to my parents. I learned not to ask.

Then, I don't think I wanted to know."

"So your cousins became your siblings."

"Yes. We were all very close. *They* must have asked questions, but they never said anything to me if they did. My uncle was very strict."

"What did they tell you about Guatemala? Anything?"

"Arturo's the one who told me what it meant that my parents had been 'disappeared.' *Desaparecidos.*"

"How did that go over with your aunt and uncle?"

"Uncle Paulo was very defensive about it. Telling me nothing had been for my own good, he said. My aunt came to me later and apologized. She cried with me. I realized that I too was to blame, for not asking."

"There are plenty of us guilty of that, Ana."

"That's what Arturo said. He helped me learn everything I could about them, what happened to them – what *probably* happened...who they were, their friends, the neighborhood where I lived the first two years of my life. He never let me feel guilty."

Frank took a sip of his coffee.

"Tell me about your daughter."

He'd known of course that Ana would ask eventually but he was still considering how to respond.

"...Lisa was 26. She celebrated her birthday with us two weeks before...two weeks earlier. In Kansas City. That's where we lived then, where Lisa grew up. She was an only child." Frank was finding this as difficult as he'd anticipated. Ana put her hand on his arm when he set his cup on the table.

“If it’s too difficult...”

“No. It *is* hard, but it’s a relief. I haven’t talked about Lisa for a long time. And not to...”

“Someone like me.”

He nodded. “Someone who lost someone. Lisa had so many sides – I still discover new things about her. I’m not sure if they’re memories, or just seeing her in a different light. I’ll be reminded of some little thing she did or said. Re-creating her.”

Ana started to say something but changed her mind. “What brought her to New York?”

“She’d always said it would be one coast or the other. After she got her master’s, her mother and I encouraged her to travel. We thought for a while she might end up living abroad for a few years. But no, it was New York. She wanted eventually to have her own gallery. Discover new artists. She loved that whole scene. The art world.”

“Did she get that from one of you?”

Frank chuckled. “Her mother and I don’t know beans about art. The commercial side of it in particular, buying and selling it. Lisa didn’t have any artistic talents either, that I’m aware of. It just...moved her so. “

“Like someone who loves music who doesn’t play an instrument.”

“Exactly. The irony is, Lisa had just returned from Europe; her first trip since getting an apartment here. She called to tell us she wanted to celebrate her birthday with us.” He smiled at the memory.

“Arturo was expecting a promotion. Maybe that very day, who knows? He’d been a cook for less than a year, and already they were planning to make him a sous-chef. Preparing food was Arturo’s art. He made it seem so easy. He tried to teach me, but it was never the same when I made it.”

“My wife was an excellent cook – not restaurant-quality, not a chef. But she could get Lisa to eat anything and *like* it. I think that’s what first got her interested in other countries. Other ‘cultures,’ Lisa would say.”

“You said ‘was.’ Is your wife...”

“Linda’s still very much with us, as far as I know. Not living in Kansas City. We’re divorced. We didn’t...we handled the whole thing very differently.”

“I wish I could ‘handle’ it. I wish I had someone to share it with. People are well-meaning, especially if they’ve lost someone themselves. But it’s not the same.”

“It isn’t, is it. I’ve talked to a lot of people, survivors – most seem to agree on that.” His memory flashed over how their friends and relatives, his colleagues at work had taken the news. Awkwardly, even when it was obvious that they themselves grieved. The funeral service with no body. “Well-wishers” wanting a piece of the national tragedy. The local news people, intruding even when they professed a desire not to. All this of course against the inescapable unfolding of the national news in the background, on all sides in fact, in every conversation – which usually ended abruptly at his approach. The politics, the hypocrisy that Frank had never paid much attention to but now saw and heard and read not just between the lines but blatantly in the words and statements themselves.

“It brought us closer together at first,” he said “– my wife and I – *ex-wife*.”

“I don’t see how anything could be worse than...” Ana stifled a sob, then blurted, “being so alone.” Frank took her hands in his across the table. She struggled, successfully, to regain her composure.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean...”

“It’s all right, Ana.”

“I could never start a family now. At least work is a diversion. It’s better than sleep.”

“No nightmares.” Ana nodded. “It’d be an escape for me too,” said Frank, “if I could stay off the Internet.”

“You have time to surf the Internet?”

“That’s one reason I took this job. I can make a living and still spend a few hours every day online.”

“But your metrics.”

Frank snorted. “You can game the system if you’re making ‘em money.”

“That’s funny – I wouldn’t have guessed you’re one of the ‘slackers’ they’re always complaining about.”

“I want to know what’s going on in the world. What’s *really* going on.”

“But how do you know what’s true on the Internet?”

“You don’t really. Doing the due diligence is what takes so much time. But the information’s there.”

“So much of it’s just crazy. Like what our friend Corby said this morning about 9/11. I can’t read those things.”

Frank took a moment to consider whether, and how, to respond. “That’s how Linda feels. Or did anyway.”

“Is that what...?”

“Drove us apart? Partly. She couldn’t bear to think about it, and I couldn’t do anything else.” He glanced at his watch. “We’d better get back.”

“I know....Thank you for lunch. I haven’t been able to talk like this for a long time.”

“I haven’t wanted to. Not too many people want to hear what I think.”

“Maybe...maybe we could talk again. Sometime.”

“I’d like that, Ana.”

She was composed when they left the restaurant, but by the time they’d returned to the parking lot at the office, Ana was slumped against the passenger side window, sobbing. Frank started to slide over to comfort her, but she extended her arm defensively and he merely looked on, struggling to control his own emotions.

Chapter 2

“And you’re in the same office?”

“She’s just a few cubicles away. Very quiet – been there three months and I didn’t know a thing about her.”

The conversation was between Frank, who was driving, and Anita Graham, a woman in her late 40s whose own personal tragedy and fighting spirit had given her a severe appearance and a two-packs-a-day habit.

“I wish I were that anonymous,” she said.

“Those days are long gone for you, my dear.”

“How did you find out?”

“About Ana? I just knew. So did she.”

“So you outed each other.”

“Pretty much. Aside from family, she hasn’t shared it with anyone for years.”

“Have you invited her to the group?”

“Not yet. I don’t think she could handle it.” Though Frank had expected the question, he realized his answer sounded defensive.

“We need to get this information to as many people as possible, Frank. Especially

survivors.”

“She lost her parents in Guatemala. When she was two. *Desaparecidos*.”

“Are you shitting me?”

“I wish I were.”

Anita lit a cigarette and cracked her window. “The woman needs help.”

“Of course she does. But she’s handling it. The kind of help the group could give her might drive her over the edge instead.”

“It’s better to know, Frank.”

“That’s what I tried telling Linda. Some people really don’t want to. You know that.”

“Information. Vs. *disinformation*.”

“Or denial. Maybe not blissful, but insulating at least.”

“Ordinarily, I couldn’t disagree with you more. But this may be how she’s lived her *life*. What’s her name again?”

“Ana.”

“Does she remember anything about her parents?”

“She came to live with family here when she was two. They kept the whole thing secret from her for years.”

“So this is someone who’s *coped* through ignorance, not asking questions. Maybe you’re right about her. It’s a shame.”

“We agreed to talk some more. I’ll keep you informed.”

“Please do.”

Frank jumped at the chance to change the subject. “Who’s going to speak tonight?”

Anita, too, sounded relieved. “Another metallurgical engineer. There’s still a lot of

confusion about what's being said to the media and how that information's being deliberately misconstrued.”

“Disinformation,” said Frank drily.

Anita's exhalation of smoke complemented his tone. “Exactly.”

* * * * *

Ana's one-bedroom apartment was in a subsidized, mostly multi-family residential neighborhood near her work. Her cousin Ynez, who'd just knocked on her door, was always a bit reluctant to visit, although there'd never been any particular incident to cause her concern. But Ana's living space was as drab as the neighborhood. When they were growing up together Ynez could never have imagined that this is how her bright, spirited cousin would live someday.

When the two “sisters,” as they called each other, embraced in the doorway, Ana took Ynez's coat and gestured to a worn sofa which furnished her living room along with little more than an armchair, a coffee table and TV. Of course there were all her plants, but Ynez had never been very fond of greenery, indoors or out.

“I'm glad to see you, but you didn't need to come over,” said Ana, hanging the coat in a closet.

“But I wanted to. I had to hear your news.”

Ana sounded apologetic. “There's not much more to tell. It got me talking again anyway. Can I get you something?”

“No, no, sit down. Tell me about it.”

Ana joined her on the sofa. “Well, just what I told you on the phone. It's what happened since then that's...been a little overwhelming.”

Ynez nodded sympathetically. “Are you okay?”

“Oh sure. The worst was over a long time ago. It hurts – of course. But maybe that’s for the best after being numb for so long.”

“You said he belongs to some kind of...survivors group?”

“He didn’t say much about it. I think he was waiting to see if I was interested.”

“I think it’s wise for you to be cautious, after all this time.”

“You do?” It seemed to Ynez that her cousin was seeking reassurance, which she was more than happy to provide.

“Oh, definitely. Why go stirring all that up again?”

Ana sighed. “Stirred up is hardly the word for it.”

“You said ‘overwhelmed.’”

“We’ve shared many of the same experiences. He lost his daughter. And then his wife – they divorced.”

“Sounds like you had a lot to talk about.”

“Yes. And somehow we both knew, immediately, about the other. Before either of us said a word. Very strange.”

“That is strange. Did he ask to see you again?”

“We see each other every day at work.”

“I mean – you know what I mean: to meet again.”

“We may. I’m thinking about it.”

“Well be careful, Ana. You’ve managed to put your life back together. Somehow. I admire you so much for that. Don’t open yourself up again, for –”

“For what? Being alive? I didn’t realize how much I’ve given up. Arturo took so much of me with him. Now the wounds are fresh again.”

“That’s what I mean. No one wants you to give up on life. But we don’t want you to be dragged down again either.”

“But maybe I have a new chance now. To be alive again. At least now I’ll know what I’m facing.”

Chapter 3

The narrow cobbled streets are crowded with eager spectators lined up for a parade. A little boy of eight or so and his younger sister accompanied by their parents. Ranks of soldiers with longbows and Kalishnikovs, jesters, jugglers, musicians – even a bear on a chain – stream past. As the King approaches in his royal coach, a collective gasp escapes from the crowd but is quickly stifled, as are spectators' expressions of astonishment and the looks on the parents' faces.

But the boy can feel the bafflement on his own face only intensify as he looks from the coach to his parents and little sister – the faces of everyone around him. They've all gone completely neutral, waiting to learn how they're to respond. His sister gives him a sidelong glance to determine his reaction. A trumpet fanfare heralds an announcement by the King's attendant, who looks like he just stepped out of a 30-second car commercial into the 16th Century.

“Loyal subjects, the King's new clothes!”

But other than a luxuriant fur mantle about his shoulders, the King stands stark naked in his coach, hands on hips in the proud and familiar pose of Henry VIII. A few tentative claps from the crowd, then his cowed and loyal subjects all join in, somewhat dubiously at first but at last erupting into loud sustained applause.

The boy can't believe it. He looks from the King to his parents, who give him a warning shush, then – despite his mother's futile attempt to cover his mouth – blurts out:

“But he's naked!”

There's another gasp from the crowd, full of something like horror this time. A man near the coach, part of security obviously, points to the boy. Half a dozen Blackwater goons – linebackers with guns, extras in an action flick for 13-year-olds – sprint toward him.

The boy is terrified, as is his sister, who looks to their parents for help. But they stare straight ahead, refusing to acknowledge the troublemaker. Realizing he's been abandoned, the boy finally turns to run, his face a mask of sheer terror.

Frank woke from the recurring nightmare bathed in sweat, aware that the expression on his face was the boy's in his dream. He lay there a moment collecting himself, then put on robe and slippers and sought the sanctuary of the kitchen, where he hoped the automatic coffeepot had come on. It had. He poured himself a cup and turned on the news. Too agitated to pay much attention to the standard patter, he got up with his coffee and wandered over to the window over his kitchen sink, lost in thought. Recalling his dream, what was different this time, what the same, he gazed out at the narrow slice of lawn and flowerbed on his side of the fence between his condo and the neighbor's.

Why was this goddamn childish dream so frightening to him? Its source was obvious enough in his efforts to expose the government's cover-up of what had really happened on 9/11.

But he'd overcome his initial reluctance to take up that fight long ago. Hadn't he?

It was nearly dawn, more gray than fully dark. He couldn't tell yet what the weather would be like, but it was supposed to be nice. He hoped so because he'd persuaded Ana to take a drive with him down the Jersey Shore.

* * * * *

“This was a pleasant surprise.” Ana’s manner was lighter, more self-assured outside the office. Or maybe she felt more comfortable with him now than with their colleagues at work.

“For me every bit as much as for you,” he said. In fact he could hardly believe it when Ana had said yes as they were leaving the office yesterday.

“That I’d accept your invitation, or that I’d agree to come *here*?”

“Both. I haven’t been here very often myself.”

“This is the first time for me,” Ana said somberly.

“Why *did* you come?”

“After our lunch together, it seemed like the right thing to do. You’re driving me from my cave.”

“I’m glad to hear that, Ana.”

“Is that why you suggested this walk?”

“I thought it would be good for both of us.”

They walked in silence for a while. Each of them had glanced almost surreptitiously at the Manhattan skyline when they walked onto the beach, and both of them avoided the view now.

“I didn’t want to – I don’t want to force anything on you, Ana.”

“I know. I really appreciate that.”

“If I ever do – I mean if it ever feels that way to you – you’ll tell me won’t you?”

“Yes, of course.”

Again there was a minute or more of silence between them, and it felt comfortable, not at all awkward.

Finally Ana said, “So tell me more about the support group you mentioned.”

Pleasantly surprised, Frank took a moment to choose his words. “Well, we’ve all lost someone. But what keeps us together – what we’re really about – is finding out how it happened.”

Ana was obviously confused by his answer. “I’m not sure I understand.”

“We want a real investigation.”

“But...there already was one. Why would you want to go through all that again?”

Frank started to reply with what had become reflexive anger but managed to check himself. “...We don’t think we know what really happened, Ana.”

She was again noticeably distressed by this but said nothing, apparently wanting, though reluctant, to hear more.

“Do *you*?” Frank had asked this as they were walking, but now he stopped and turned to her, his eyes, as in the restaurant, direct but gentle – and too full of pain to deserve an answer that was in any way untruthful.

“Well, I, I don’t know,” Ana found herself stammering. “I thought I did.”

“Do you *want* to know?”

Again she was surprised by her answer. “I guess I’m not sure.”

“This isn’t something we have to talk about,” he said.

“No, no – I asked.”

“I wouldn’t tell you much about us otherwise. We all have different opinions about what happened, what *may* have happened. What we agree on is what we don’t know.” Her attentive expression encouraged him to continue.

“Calling 9/11 an act of terrorism doesn’t alter the fact that it was the worst mass murder

in the nation's history, Ana. But Ground Zero wasn't treated like a crime scene. Physical evidence was shipped off on barges, as soon as it cooled down enough to handle. And the co-chairmen of the commission finally set up to investigate it, despite the best efforts of the White House to prevent it, said that NORAD and the FAA lied to them about what the hell happened to our air defense that day."

"But I thought the 9/11 Commission cleared all that up – all the talk about conspiracy theories."

"Not for some of us, Ana – more of us all the time. I think they tried, some of them. A lot of good people have worked very hard to get to the truth of 9/11. But the commission, and many of those expecting to be called as witnesses, met a ton of resistance. And what they ended up with is what happens in Washington. Accommodation and compromise. The best they could come up with on a miniscule budget, against stonewalling and a deadline. The *process* – standing unanimously behind their report – became more important than the truth. The whole truth, of what really happened on 9/11."

They fell into step again. "It's so...*distressing* to hear you say that. It's just...I thought this was all behind us. *This* part of it."

Ana stopped again and made herself look across the water at the gap in the parade of towers of lower Manhattan. It offended and drew her eyes the way a cavity or missing filling obsessed her tongue.

"The worst will never go away," she said, "but I thought the 9/11 Commission had at least...I don't know. Ended all the speculation. No one's ever going to answer *my* questions. Why Arturo? How can this happen in America? What's going to...what's going to become of me? Of all of us?"

Chapter 4

In the week since their walk on the beach Ana and Frank had shared dinner together, at a Thai restaurant he frequented, as well as several lunches. They'd become the subject of gossip among their fellow recruiters who kept track of such things. Ana was suddenly full of questions about Frank's survivors group and, more cautiously, about 9/11 in general. He tried to be very careful in how he responded, giving her the information she requested in as unprovocative a manner as possible. Ana on her part had obvious emotional boundaries she adhered to, so their conversations were anything but direct.

Frank had mentioned in passing and with some misgiving the meeting they were driving to now, concerned that it might be too much information too soon. Ana had taken his subtle cue and said nothing about attending. But yesterday morning he'd found her note on his desk asking if it was too late to accompany him, and he'd invited her immediately – by email, since they'd become aware that their cubicles were apparently under social surveillance.

“How many people will be there?” Ana asked when Frank picked her up.

“It varies,” he said. “Usually about a hundred or so, plus or minus. But tonight's speaker should draw a crowd.”

“Why is that?”

“David Ray Griffin has published a number of books on 9/11. He presents one of the clearest cases for the controlled demolition of World Trade Center Seven.”

“*Building Seven?*”

“The one most people have forgotten, or don’t even know about. Not hit by an airplane, yet it collapsed just like the others, in virtual free fall, into its own footprint.”

“What does that mean? ‘Footprint?’”

They’d skirted this subject so far, but since it was bound to come up tonight – would in fact no doubt be the primary topic of Griffin’s talk – Frank decided it was probably better to bring it up now and give Ana a chance to ask any of the many questions she was bound to have. But still he left an opening, for both of them, to avoid confronting the issue here and now.

“Well,” he said, “do you want a technical or a simplified answer?”

“Nothing too technical.” Then she added with a sigh of resignation, “Maybe you’d better just give me the simplest answer you can.”

Frank cut to the chase. “Essentially, it means Building 7 was brought down by explosives, not by fire or debris from the Towers.”

“Oh come on, Frank,” protested Ana, “how could something like that be kept secret? After all this time? What did the 9/11 Commission say about it?”

“Nothing. Building Seven wasn’t even mentioned in their report. One of the reasons so few people are aware of it.” Frank felt relieved, actually, that this was out in the open now.

“They must not have considered it very important then.”

“Well I can tell you that several hundred scientists, architects and engineers like myself do.”

“Engineers like yourself?”

“You know that’s my specialty. I can *recruit* engineers because I’m a structural engineer myself. I knew when I saw the Towers fall on TV – and then the collapse of Building Seven – that something was wrong. I just couldn’t believe what my eyes were telling me. I was like you, Ana. How could terrorists, in the middle of Manhattan, accomplish what it would take a team of demolition experts weeks to do successfully?”

* * * * *

On one of two large screens suspended over the auditorium’s stage, some 500 people watched the implosion of a high rise building. As most in the audience had witnessed more than once on TV and in videos, ever since the technology of controlled demolition created a new spectacle for a society fascinated by destruction, floor after floor pancaked neatly within a billowing shroud of dust into a heap of rubble on the ground.

“You’re not going to tell us that was Building Seven are you?” called a man’s voice from the audience.

“No,” said the speaker from a lectern mid-stage, “that was the controlled demolition of the Landmark Tower in Fort Worth, Texas. Building Seven is on the right.”

The scene was repeated, this time simultaneously with the collapse of WTC 7 on the screen beside it. The images were virtually identical.

As the screens went blank, a spotlight fell on David Ray Griffin, a fit-looking man in his 70s with a wisp of gray hair and the relaxed but serious manner of a scholar sure of his research. The side-by-side video comparison having made its point, he launched immediately into the subject of his talk.

“To accept the government’s version of the events on 9/11, a conspiracy theory itself, I remind you – at best – we’re asked to believe in several scientific miracles. First, that Building

Seven is the only steel-frame high-rise in the known world to have been brought down by fire.”

“And debris from the North Tower!” someone shouted, and others in the audience echoed his objection. But Dr. Griffin was undeterred.

“No,” he replied calmly, “that was FEMA’s hypothesis, in 2002. The National Institute of Standards and Technology, whose report in 2008 superseded FEMA’s, stated that the damage from falling debris – and I quote from their press release – had ‘no effect on the collapse-initiating event.’ According to NIST, this was an *unprecedented* fire-induced collapse. That’s even harder to accept when you consider that, compared to fires in other steel-framed high-rises which did *not* collapse, Building Seven’s were unimpressive – lasting no more than a few hours, possibly only three, on just six of its 47 floors.”

Video returned to one of the overhead screens and Dr. Griffin continued. “Compare that to this Philadelphia fire that gutted eight of 18 stories over 18 hours but left the building standing. Or this one in Caracas three years after 9/11 that raged for 17 hours and burned out the top 20 floors of a 50-story building. Yet not a single story collapsed.”

In the audience Frank glanced over to see how Ana was taking this.

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to freak out on you,” she murmured.

“Why *did* Building Seven collapse?” continued the speaker. “And more importantly, why did it fall the way it did: straight down, into its own footprint?”

“For this to happen, all 82 of the building’s vertical steel columns had to fail *at virtually the same instant.*” He paused to let his audience absorb the implications of this, and an assistant standing in an aisle in the auditorium took the opportunity to interrupt.

It was Anita; Frank hadn’t noticed her. “My friend ‘the Harpy,’” he whispered to Ana. “I hope to introduce you afterwards.”

“Dr. Griffin, we have a comment in the audience.” Anita handed her microphone to a man standing beside her. He appeared at ease before the large crowd.

“As the owner of an international demolition firm,” he said, “I’d like to point out for those who aren’t aware of this that there are very few companies in the world who can bring a building down as you just saw. It takes a team of experts a matter of weeks to lay explosives of the right charge, in the right place, to implode a building so it comes down without damaging those around it. To think a fire alone – I don’t care how hot it is or even if it has completely engulfed a building – could do that, is just ludicrous. Thank you.”

He sat down, accompanied by applause, disagreement, and muttering in the audience.

“Miracle Number Two,” said Dr. Griffin, bringing derisive laughter from the audience.

Ana turned to Frank. “So I guess that eliminates the possibility that fire just weakened the steel?”

“Yes, I think it’s safe to say that.” His reply bore an undertone of sarcasm he hadn’t intended.

“I don’t know what I’m getting myself into,” said Ana.

“I’m glad you came, Ana. It took real courage,” he said, hoping the sincere praise was emphatic enough to compensate for his lapse a moment earlier.

He needn’t have worried. Ana’s thoughts weren’t on Frank or what he’d said; she was hardly aware of his presence. Her mind refused to focus on anything, presenting one scene or observation after another in a whirling repetitive cycle of images and nonsensical mental commentary. Her ears were ringing or buzzing faintly, and she was beginning to feel nauseous.

When the auditorium was silent again Dr. Griffin continued.

“The third scientific miracle – which actually applies to all three World Trade Center

buildings – is that they descended in near free fall. In other words, each floor fell with nothing beneath it to impede its descent.” He paused.

“Now think about that for a moment. Virtual free fall requires us to believe that all the massive steel girders and columns between the collapsing floors and the ground – floor after floor of steel framework – provided no more resistance to the falling rubble than thin air would have. That’s what free fall means. And what implosion accomplishes, by taking out *all* the columns of a building simultaneously. Nothing else can do that. And although NIST at first denied that Building Seven came down in near free fall, their *final* report admitted that it did.

There was a buzz of animated conversation in the auditorium now, which Griffin, a long-time philosophy professor and experienced public speaker, allowed to become accompaniment to his presentation. Frank could feel Ana stirring beside him but felt reluctant to make eye contact, sensing that this might ‘set her off’ (and asking himself what he meant by the expression).

“Now let’s look at Scientific Miracle Number Four,” Griffin continued: “inextinguishable, metal-melting fire. The fact that fires continued burning for months in the Ground Zero rubble, with subterranean pools of molten metal, was widely reported. And the melting point of iron and steel is what?”

Several voices volunteered the answer: “2,800 degrees Fahrenheit.”

“Correct. Yet the World Trade Center fires, whether ignited by jet fuel, diesel fuel stored in Building Seven, or any other flammable material, could not – according to the laws of science – have risen above 1,800 degrees. Where did the extra thousand degrees come from? Any guesses of a *non-miraculous* explanation for this discrepancy?”

Again the audience was glad to provide the answer. Though there were variations in how it was expressed, “*Nano-thermite!*” was the gist.

“Large amounts of Nano-thermite residue were discovered in World Trade Center dust. Ordinary thermite is an incendiary that’s been around for years. *Nano*-thermite, or super-thermite, is an extremely sophisticated *explosive* manufactured under the most demanding laboratory conditions and used primarily by the military.”

“Nano-thermite my ass, man – we were *nuked!*” yelled a man in the audience.

Suddenly Ana was on her feet. “I can’t...I’ve got to get out of here,” she said, gathering her things to leave. “Is that...you understand don’t you, Frank?”

“Of course, Ana.” He grabbed her purse, which had fallen from her shoulder, and to the annoyance of some around them, ushered her to the aisle as Dr. Griffin continued.

“Now to Miracle Number Five,” he was saying. “Without the use of explosives, how do you account for these massive steel columns hurled hundreds of feet from the Towers and embedded in neighboring buildings?” Frank couldn’t resist turning to look at the video screens, on which there were multiple photos of the embedded columns.

Moments later he and Ana exited through the front door of the auditorium. A taxi was parked at the curb.

“I’ll take a cab, Frank. I don’t want you to miss the rest of this.”

“No, Ana, you’re too upset. I’ll be glad to take you home.”

But she was insistent. When she leaned forward to open the door of the taxi, he relented and opened it for her. Ana scrambled in and the cab pulled away. Frank watched until it was lost in traffic.

Chapter 5

When Frank returned to the auditorium Dr. Griffin was concluding his talk.

“I appreciate tonight’s large turnout. We all know this is difficult information to hear and to try to get your mind around. Let me leave you with this. Whatever happened to our half-a-trillion-dollar air defense system on 9/11, the laws of nature did not take a holiday. I feel strongly that, as scientists, engineers – citizens – we have a choice to make. Either we speak out...or live in shame. Thank you.”

In the lobby soon afterwards a small group of people were gathered around an open laptop whose screen displayed a continuous loop of Building Seven’s collapse. Nearby Frank waited for an opportunity to address the speaker, surrounded by a small group of people with whom he was exchanging handshakes and arguments. The most pointed and insistent questions, of course, were from a few people critical of his remarks.

“Professor,” said one, “I can’t speak to the science in your talk, but I have to say that you’re just plain naive in its implications.”

“Please enlighten me,” Dr. Griffin replied with a slight smile that was in no way mocking or condescending.

“Well first of all, do you have any idea how many people would be involved in the kind

of conspiracy you imply? There'd have to be thousands, at all levels of government, the military, the media..."

"Exactly! That's what makes it so frightening," interrupted Anita, who was standing beside Dr. Griffin.

"But I think the vast majority of the people you're talking about are those who chose, and choose, simply not to ask questions," he said.

"That's bull. I don't think you have a grasp of the way things work in the real world. Apart from science anyway."

A man with him added, "People talk. You couldn't cover up something like this for years."

"That's what we intend to end," said Dr. Griffin.

Anita came to his aid. "People *are* talking. Firemen and police officers who were there, former military and intelligence officers, government officials, 1,500 architects and engineers..."

"Then why aren't they on the news?" a woman in the group demanded.

"That's what *we* want to know!" replied a Dr. Griffin defender.

Anita had a different opinion. "Well no, we *know* why the corporate media won't report this."

"But the information's out there," insisted the man she'd contradicted. "If you're willing, and unafraid, to look for it. Overwhelming evidence of a cover-up."

At this point Dr. Griffin, obviously wanting to bring the evening to an end, said, "Let's make one thing clear. What scientists and most professionals are calling for is an honest investigation of the facts. None of us – none that I know – claim to know how events transpired on 9/11. We need a full and forthright criminal investigation, and see where that leads us."

Several people applauded, but the woman who'd spoken earlier was vehement. "We already had one!"

"The 9/11 Commission was a travesty," Anita all but snarled, then added, "as was the Warren Commission before it."

"More holes than that 'Swiss cheese steel' they found at Ground Zero," interjected another Truther.

"That's a miracle you didn't mention," said Anita.

"Couldn't cover them all," Griffin said.

Their banter didn't sit well with a man on the other side of the argument who'd remained silent until now. "This may all be a joke to you, but the American people don't see it as a joke."

"*Joke?*" Anita was instantly red-faced. "It's an outrage. A state crime against humanity!"

"That's the kind of talk that gives you wing nuts such a bad name! Only in America could you get away with it."

Anita directed her antagonist's attention to the continuous loop of Building Seven's collapse on the laptop.

"*Look*, what about this don't you understand? Not hit by a plane or any serious debris. Fire confined to just six floors. There are fires in high rises all the time, and none has *ever* brought down a building. Let alone in virtual free fall!"

"*Who are you, the King of Denial?* You don't *want* to comprehend that if high rises were this vulnerable to fire – which is what the government claims caused Building Seven to collapse – they'd be falling like dominoes on a regular basis? Therefore they wouldn't exist in the first place, they'd be *outlawed by every building code in every city in the world?*"

"We don't know who did it. All we know is they needed days if not *weeks* to rig the

explosives. Not a single body, not a tiny *piece* of a body, was ever recovered from the wreckage of the towers. Why? Because they were *blown to bits!* And I want to know *who the fuck's responsible. Who murdered my husband and three thousand of my fellow Americans?*”

This promptly ended the discussion. The protesters left in a huff and soon just the normal give and take of a few stimulated survivors animated the lobby. With the opportunity to speak to Dr. Griffin personally, Frank commended the ‘miracles’ theme of his talk. “I think concentrating on Building Seven’s an excellent idea.”

“It focuses on what we can prove and disprove, *scientifically*,” the speaker agreed. “God knows there are holes in the official story, but this is solid evidence.”

“Which couldn’t be more damning to the official story: the *original* conspiracy theory,” said Anita. “I was hoping the guy who yelled ‘nuked’ would talk to you. Have you seen him?”

“Not that I know of; no one’s said anything,” said Griffin. “It’s certainly not the first time the ‘N’ word has come up, but I’m always interested in any new evidence.”

“If he had any real evidence you’d be talking to him,” said Frank. “It’s just a distraction. Let’s agree that it was a controlled demolition and argue about the methodology in a *real* hearing.”

He had already explained to Anita why she wouldn’t be meeting Ana tonight. She suggested that the two of them share a nightcap. As they were preparing to leave, another of Dr. Griffin’s earlier defenders said, “It isn’t just the media refusing to report it. The American people don’t want to hear it. The implications scare the hell out of them. They sure as hell scare me.”

“Which is why we have to take one step at a time. Just the facts – *all* the facts – first,” Dr. Griffin reminded all of them.

“What we have in the meantime,” said Frank, “is the absurdity of the official story.

Muslim hijackers take control of four airliners and outfox the world's most sophisticated air defense system to bring down two skyscrapers in virtual free fall. Then an hour later when our air defense should have been on the highest possible alert, a guy who'd never piloted an airliner flies undetected to the nation's capital and executes a maneuver that experienced pilots say is impossible, to plow into the first floor of the most heavily defended building in the world. Without even scraping the lawn."

* * * * *

For an hour or more Ana sat before her computer in a state of emotional desolation. On the screen from various websites was old news footage of the Twin Towers being impacted. Erupting their familiar plumes of black smoke, thunderheads of disintegrating steel and concrete, the buildings' contents...shedding the inert plummeting bodies that had transfixed the world in horror until disappearing from the airwaves. Had Arturo been one of these, falling gracefully without struggle in resignation or surrender? She'd been afraid to ask herself before. Had looked past the bodies to the windows alive with frantically waving arms, seeking Arturo there.

Now she forced herself to watch – to ask this and more terrible questions. Had the perpetrators, whoever they were, foreseen the 3,000 individual consequences of their act? The falling and burning bodies? The ruined lives of families? And who *were* those guilty of such a heinous crime? Could it actually, conceivably be...this last, this final question she was unable even to articulate.

Chapter 6

On Monday when Frank looked in at Ana's cubicle she pretended to be too occupied in preparing her desk for the morning's recruiting routine to be aware of his presence. Of course it was office bullshit – she knew that he knew, etc. – which in this case had nothing to do with work, but Ana really wanted to be left alone for now. She certainly didn't want to be reminded in any way of Friday night. Frank understood immediately and walked away, as Ana, feeling both guilty and relieved, had known he would. But it was difficult to concentrate as the morning crawled through the tedium of telephone calls, emails and Internet searches.

“Good morning, this is Ana Morales. May I speak to...” she glanced at her list but had lost her place... “I'm sorry, what company is this again please?”

When it was time to break for lunch Ana had elicited zero interest from client companies she'd counted on for at least a telephone interview or two for her employee candidate. Now it was she standing disconsolately at Frank's cubicle.

“Been a long morning?” he said

She merely nodded.

“Like to talk after work?”

“Yes. I would.”

It was happy hour when they found themselves at the bistro where they'd first lunched together. Frank wondered whether the ambience of alcohol-fueled gaiety would lift Ana's spirits or prove too inhospitable for them. He offered a perfunctory wordless toast, lifting his Scotch on the rocks, and Ana reciprocated with her chilled glass of Chardonnay.

"I probably shouldn't be having this," she said.

"I'll drive you home if that's necessary – take a cab back."

"Thanks," she said, smiling weakly. Neither of them spoke for a moment, verbally at least, as Ana considered how and where to begin. "...I've been on the Internet, doing a lot of reading since Friday night," she said at last. "I don't know what to think."

"I think I know how you feel, Ana."

"I couldn't even be talking to you if your daughter hadn't...it's just so hard to believe."

"What parts are hardest?"

"Well, that our country, our own government, would do something like that, first of all. And think they could get away with it."

"And *are* getting away with it," said Frank, raising his voice. "The people in power on 9/11 – who orchestrated the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan – *said* what they needed was another Pearl Harbor, if they were going to sell a war to the American people. It's on the record."

"But how could they *do* such a terrible thing? And think the world wouldn't call them on it?"

Frank took a moment to compose himself. "Well, to answer your first question, all the lives and the political risks involved must have been viewed as secondary to strategic objectives: oil of course, all the military bases we've established in the Middle East since 9/11, to dominate the Middle East..."

“*Whose objectives?*”

“The people in charge at the time. The neocons, the Bush administration, rogue elements of the military, who knows for sure? There’s even a theory that some kind of double-cross among the perpetrators occurred during the attacks. Supposedly Air Force One was identified as a target, and certainly not by Arabs with box-cutters. So from the elementary school in Florida, where students are reading him *My Pet Goat*, Bush suddenly takes off for Barksdale and Offutt Air Force Bases – to demonstrate that he’s in full command of our nuclear force.”

Ana just looked at him, waiting for more.

“He definitely visited the airbases instead of returning immediately to Washington. Whether the rest of that is true or not I have no idea. But whoever was responsible for, there are two schools of thought on the *motivations* for 9/11, Ana. Sometime you might want to ask my friend Anita why it happened – she lost *her* husband. I pointed her out to you the other night. To me, it was part of the neocons’ ‘full spectrum dominance,’ their war to extend all wars. If our government is willing to sacrifice thousands of American lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and tens of thousands in Vietnam, why do you find this so hard to believe?”

“Assuming 9/11 *was* an inside job, it was a ‘false flag’ operation. A provocation to trick and bully the American people into allowing these objectives to be pursued. It’s been done before, in the U.S. and other countries. The Gulf of Tonkin, the Nazis setting fire to their own parliament to seize power in Germany, the KGB’s wave of bombings in Russia to justify attacking Chechnya. Whether it’s their own citizens or world opinion they’re trying to deceive. Not even *deceive* so much as circumvent.”

“What do you mean – we’re deceiving ourselves?”

“To some degree, yes. That gives us an excuse to go along, look away. You have the

perpetrators, who planned and executed 9/11 – with most of those involved knowing only their own specific orders, their own small role. Who aren't about to ask questions. Then, *after* the fact, you have the more informed and enlightened individuals and institutions *responding*, with the *New York Post*, for example, running that banner headline, BUSH KNEW, which was immediately withdrawn from circulation. The cognoscenti had to ascertain *their* roles. Their careers, maybe even their lives depended on it. After all, at this point the deed was done. There was nothing they could do now but learn the new rules in this post-9/11 world. Which questions not to ask. Which evidence not to examine or pursue.”

“It sounds like – I know better of course – but it sounds almost as if you accept all this.”

“Acceptance that it happened, the past is past. Certainly not the murder of my d– our loved ones.”

Ana was suddenly too emotional to respond. Frank laid his hand on hers. Neither spoke for a while.

“...So where does this leave someone like me?” Ana finally worked up the nerve to ask.

“You and I, the other survivors...we're special cases, Ana. But as for ordinary people, who rely on the corporate media for news, when they hear nothing to contradict the *official* conspiracy theory, and ridicule of anything else...when even the word ‘conspiracy’ has become a label of contempt, most just go along. The American people are too wrapped up in ‘getting by,’ or surviving, to pay attention to what's happening to our country. Denial's our magic cloak.”

Ana said nothing. Frank swirled the ice in his glass and drained the last of his Scotch. Ana could feel him mentally changing gears.

“I know it's taken a long time to get where you are – or were,” he said. “Are you okay with all this?”

She nodded a reluctant yes, then immediately contradicted herself.

“No, not really. I don’t even...*want* to be. Not anymore. It seems disloyal somehow – to Arturo, I mean.”

“To Arturo, yes. I didn’t think you meant the United States. Not the nation that armed and trained the death squads who may have disappeared your parents.”

“...I grew up knowing nothing of that. Now I know there were like 50,000 people who disappeared. And many more than that killed.”

“Two-hundred thousand. And of course Guatemala’s just one of many countries where we’ve ‘intervened.’ A million lives and counting in Iraq and Afghanistan: wars built on a lie to the world and the American people.

“Before Lisa’s murder I was no more aware of what was going on in the world than anyone else. I remained as uninformed as I needed to be, to do my work and live a reasonably happy life. Now I wouldn’t find it hard to believe in our government’s involvement in 9/11 even without all the solid evidence we have.

“But as for disloyalty to Arturo, the reason I wanted you to come to the meeting Friday, was to show you that you can *do* something.”

* * * * *

Ynez’s condo was part of an upscale “luxury” complex, in an exurb west of Newark. Although Ana found the designation more amusing than realistic, she always enjoyed visiting her cousin’s family in their spacious perennially cluttered home. Their two young daughters, born since Arturo’s death, were in a sense her surrogate children. Julio was putting them to bed now while Ynez and Ana talked in the living room.

“I know it’s hard to believe. But I can’t put what I heard out of my mind.”

“You should never have gone, Ana. Didn’t I warn you not to let yourself get dragged back down into depression? These conspiracy people are all crazy.”

“I thought so too. I wouldn’t have anything to do with them. But Frank isn’t crazy.”

Ynez gave her a look of disbelief. “Then how could he believe such a thing?”

“I told you. The information they have is...I don’t know what else to call it but terrifying.”

“It’s crazy talk, Ana. It can only get you in trouble.”

“*Trouble*. What do I care about trouble? Especially if it’s true!”

“Oh, Ana. If it were true, we’d have found out a long time ago. You’ve worked so hard to get your life back. I didn’t realize you were still so vulnerable.”

“I never got my life back! It was *taken* from me, Ynez. From me and so many others. To think those who did it may be our own government is just unbearable.”

“Ana!”

Ana sprang up. “Let me talk! Unlike you, I didn’t have the luxury to just turn away and go on with my life, Ynez. I don’t blame you. If Arturo hadn’t been taken, I’d have done the same thing. Who wouldn’t? I mean, what can we do, even if it’s true?”

“Don’t say that, Ana! Don’t even think it. This is the country that took you in as a child. You’re an American citizen! How could you think that the government would turn on its own people?”

“I don’t know *what* to think anymore!”

“Look – just, just calm down, Ana. We need to get the family together to discuss this. You heard some things, some disturbing information...and I think you need to talk it over with someone. We’ll listen to what you have to say. Why don’t you spend the night here tonight?”

Don't you think that's a good idea? Julio can go over and get your things when he gets the girls down."

"...I don't know. Maybe. That wouldn't be too much bother?"

"No, of course not. Can I get you something? Something to drink? Or eat?"

"Yes, anything. White wine?"

"Sure. I'll open a bottle. Just sit. I'll be right back."

Chapter 7

On the top deck of the ferry returning from Liberty Island, Frank tried to visualize the photograph he'd taken of Linda and Lisa, possibly from this very boat, the first time they'd visited his daughter in Manhattan. He'd positioned them, of course, with the famous lady behind them, Lisa on the left. He vividly recalled her dazzling smile and loving taunt.

“Who knew you were such a tourist?”

“Oh, I've always had a soft spot for Lady Liberty,” he'd said, before snapping the picture he still carried in his wallet. Then at his request they'd strolled to the bow, where he took photos with the Twin Towers and Manhattan skyline behind them. After that they'd had enough of his snapshots. He put the Nikon back in its case and swept them both into his arms, the happiest guy in the world.

Lisa sang out, “Give me your tired, your poor...”

“...Your huddled masses,” Frank added hoarsely.

And together: “Yearning to breathe free.”

Then Lisa pirouetted away, arms upraised. “I lift my lamp...beside the golden door.”

* * * * *

The ferry docked and Frank trudged the few blocks to Ground Zero and the 911

Memorial. He'd made the visit often enough now that he arrived at the Family Members entrance just 10 minutes earlier than the time on his visitor pass and was admitted immediately. The attendant nodded as if he recognized him.

It was a bright sunny afternoon, and the twin reflecting pools were a brilliant blue. The quadrangular waterfalls surrounding each of them masked the sounds of the city. Frank stood there a moment, eyes closed, and let the falling water cleanse his senses. Then he walked to the parapet where the names of the North Tower victims were inscribed. It was still a shock to find his daughter's name there.

As his fingertips lightly traced the incised letters of Lisa's name in the sun-warmed bronze, he was grateful to the point of tears for the flood of images evoked.

Half an hour later, he sat alone with his Scotch in the Irish pub Lisa had introduced her parents to. With the authority of a newly fledged, art-loving New Yorker, she'd pointed out the nearby location of the original Cedar Tavern, hangout of the Abstract Expressionists in the '50s after it relocated to Greenwich Village.

A decade later, O'Hara's had become a landmark in its own right. Thousands of uniform patches from firefighters and police departments all over the country covered the walls and woodwork. Frank always ended his pilgrimages to Ground Zero here. He was lost in thought when someone sat down beside him.

"Hello, Frank."

It was Corby, his least favorite fellow recruiter, though it took Frank a moment to register the face. He was about to get up when Corby said, "At least finish your drink."

"What the fuck are you –"

"Doin' here? Probably the same thing brings you down here." Corby sounded mildly

inebriated. “Sure as hell didn’t expect to see you though.”

Frank turned away and drained his drink.

“I wanta apologize for the other day,” said Corby – “my 9/11 comments. I didn’t know about your daughter.”

“There’s a lot you don’t know about, Corby. But I accept your apology.”

“You got that right. I don’t know *what* the fuck’s goin’ on anymore.” To the bartender he said, “Bourbon and water, and bring another for my colleague. Least I can do is buy you a drink,” he said to Frank.

“So why *did* you come down here?” Frank asked.

“It’s not the first time, I come every now and then. Met a client uptown for lunch; I was lookin’ at 10, maybe 15 potential placements. But it looks like I struck out. Decided to take a cab down – see if I could...” he paused to emphasize the sarcastic change of tone: “gain some clarity.”

“Did you?”

“Whatta *you* think?”

They sat in silence. The bartender set their drinks in front of them and each took a sip. Finally Corby said, “Word is you really think there’s some kind of 9/11 cover-up. The government was involved in some way.”

Frank wasn’t surprised by Corby’s revelation; there weren’t many secrets in the office. “People *in* the government,” he said. “And outside of it. I don’t pretend to know who all the guilty parties are.”

“...I didn’t want to think that for the longest time. I *still* don’t believe it.”

Frank took another sip of his Scotch.

“...But then who’d have believed the economy would self-destruct the way it has? Corruption’s one thing; corruption’s a constant. What we’ve had for the last few years is flagrant lawlessness by the fuckers at the top of the food chain. And they’ve done it with impunity. They fuckin’ *knew* they’d get away with it.”

Frank remained silent. But interested.

“...I had a successful metal fab shop before I injured my back – and found a way to make money in the business with no risk or overhead. You know that story. Used to be, the major fabricators called *me* for good metal fab people. Now I have to wine and dine ‘em and I still can’t get their business. Because there fuckin’ isn’t any! All the money’s goin’ to war and the military and the corporate hoodlums, banks in particular. The rest of us have all become bottom feeders. *Something’s* rotten as hell at the top.”

Frank wasn’t sure where this was going. “What’s your point?”

“The point is, who the fuck’s in charge? Does *anything* go now?”

“Let me get this straight,” said Frank – “let *me* gain some clarity here. Are you saying that, with all the lives lost and all the overwhelming evidence of a 9/11 cover-up, your own suspicions have been aroused by corruption – no, check that: by ‘lawlessness’ – on Wall Street?”

“Now don’t get all self-righteous on me, Frank. I know your loss was terrible – I’m sorry as hell about that, I can’t even imagine it. But thank God not everyone’s suffered that kind of tragedy. The rest of us are left trying to figure things out on our own.”

Frank gestured an apology and Corby continued.

“I’m just a businessman. I’m no deep-thinker, and I’m sure as hell no conspiracy fanatic. But maybe you and me are closer on this than either one of us wants to admit. Bottom line, though, we’re fucked. Yeah, you may earn your good citizenship, your ‘eternal vigilance,’ merit

badge, but you don't think that's going to accomplish anything do you?"

"That's beside the point," Frank snapped. "They murdered my daughter, Corby! Most of the people who are my best friends now lost someone. This isn't just a *political* issue."

"Of course not, it's personal for *you*. But for the rest of us, *whatever* happened is history. Meanwhile, the country's going to hell."

"And we're trying to warn you, if we're all too chicken-shit to stand up, what's in store for us. For all of us."

"Yeah, yeah, I get that. Paul Revere and the Minutemen. But you're not gonna wake these people up. You might as well climb down off your white horse, Frank. Frankly..." – he acknowledged the unintended pun with an inebriated grin – "we deserve whatever we get. Greedy motherfuckers who can't get enough, and sheep just beggin' to be sheared – when, in fact, we're being eaten alive. Lamb chops. Roast mutton. Entranced in front of TVs and computers, stuck to our cell phones like dogs in heat. Did you know the government spent more money investigating the Clintons and the stain on Monica Lewinsky's dress than it has on 9/11? You say it's because of some kind of conspiracy, I say it's to cover their ass. Either way it shows how screwed up this country's become."

Chapter 8

Several days later in response to her email, Frank finished the call he was on and walked over to Ana's cubicle with a sense of anticipation. They had done little more than share a greeting each morning at work since their last lunch together, and he missed their conversations. He didn't feel Ana had been avoiding him, just that he'd given her a lot to think about. Maybe she was ready to talk now over lunch.

"What's up?"

Ana removed her headset and swiveled around in her chair. Frank could see at once that whatever she had to tell him was not going to be good news.

She took a breath and said, "My family has made arrangements for me to go back to Guatemala."

He certainly hadn't been expecting this. "*When?*"

"The sooner the better, as far as they're concerned. As soon as I can get everything here taken care of."

"Let's go somewhere we can talk."

* * * * *

The table where they'd shared their first lunch together was available. Frank ordered

coffee for both of them; it was too early for lunch.

“...So, that’s quite some news,” he said, smiling ruefully.

Ana’s expression was apologetic. “I know. It all just happened. Ynez thinks I’m freaking out. She has the whole family worried now.”

Frank nodded. Even though her family was responsible in some way for Ana’s decision, he wouldn’t have guessed that she’d be so easily led.

“Somehow this particular outcome never occurred to me,” he said.

“It isn’t just from the other night. They’ve been concerned about me for quite a while. They have a job and apartment for me in Villa Nueva.”

“So you’re running *to*, rather than from.”

“Both really. As much as I didn’t want to hear...all that, it made me consider things I’ve been afraid to think about. Not just 9/11. Chile, Nicaragua...there are bad people in every country. But I’m not sure they could have accomplished much on their own. Was the U.S. involved? Of course, everyone knows that. You ‘sweep it under the rug’ as we say here. Life goes on. But not for everyone. Not for the victims. The losers.”

“Those standing in the way. Or worse – standing *up* to the powers that be.”

“I could never stand bullies. But – you said it the other night: self-deception makes life a lot easier. In the short run.”

“Actually, I think you said it.”

“Whatever. I see that more clearly now. But I don’t know that I can do this anymore.”

“I don’t blame you, Ana. I envy you in a way, for being *able* to leave.” Ana started to object but Frank continued. “I mean that sincerely. You have every reason, and justification, for leaving. You’re returning to your homeland. God knows I’ve imagined leaving. But this *is*

my homeland. It's my responsibility to face up to what's become of it. You're right, it's never been the benevolent democracy we liked to pretend it was. But now? I don't know what we are anymore. But we can't let the crimes of 9/11 become America's legacy."

"Brave words, Frank. But I'm not sure this is my fight."

He had no retort for this. They gazed across the table at each other until the table disappeared.

Finally he asked, "What will you do in Guatemala? Isn't it as dangerous as Mexico now?"

"Where in the world is there no danger?"

Again Frank was at a loss for a reasonable response. "...Do you have any plans?"

"Vague ones. Become acquainted with the rest of my family, that I have no memory of. Maybe even learn to live again, if that's not too unrealistic."

"It's not, Ana. Just making this decision tells me that." Even he was surprised by the conviction in his voice.

But perhaps not so much as Ana. "Really? The thing is..." she hesitated. "I haven't quite decided yet. Not for certain anyway."

"You mean about leaving?"

"What you said about *doing* something – for Arturo. I've been thinking about that too. I want to know what your friend says. She lost her husband, right? I even...I asked Arturo what I should do. Does that seem..."

"I talk to Lisa all the time," Frank assured her.

"You do?"

"Not...in words." He gestured to his heart. "But, in some way, they're deeper

conversations than we had when she was here.”

“In what way?” Ana hung on his answer – making it all the more difficult for Frank to give her one – one that communicated faithfully how he felt about his communions with Lisa.

“Well...that’s a hard question. I guess there’s more *of* me now, if that makes any sense,” he said. “More consciousness anyway. There are no boundaries now, between Lisa and me. I know that may sound – ”

Ana gestured that she understood. Her eyes teared up but Frank sensed this was from more than grief alone. They shared the moment wordlessly. Then he said, somewhat hoarse with emotion himself, “That’s what’s kept me from self-destructing. I was never much of a believer in anything but the here and now – the engineer in me, I guess. Grief has made me look deeper than that.”

Ana had regained some of her customary self-control. “That’s not enough for me,” she said. “I wish it were, I hear what you’re saying, Frank, and I’m grateful for it, but...”

“Of course it’s different for you, Ana. At my age, I’d probably be thinking about death – what it means – even without Lisa’s. But that’s not natural in someone your age.”

“Age shouldn’t have anything to do with it, should it? Either you believe or you don’t.”

“It’s not belief, Ana. Belief has nothing to do with it. It’s coming to recognize that we don’t have enough information, to say with authority, *what’s* real. But the feeling that Lisa’s still in touch with me somehow – that’s real.”

“When I talk to Arturo, *he’s* real. Just not *here* – *with* me.”

She sobbed quietly. Frank took her hands. “I’m sorry, Ana.”

“And you can find comfort in that? Just being in touch with her?”

He thought for a moment, feeling Ana’s hands in his own. “...Because of Lisa,” he said,

“because of the gift she was to her mother and me, how the three of us became one, a family, in ways I more or less took for granted while she was alive...and now, having to come to terms with her death, I know that we’re all part of something greater than I ever even imagined before.

“But I know this too: while we’re alive, this world’s laws apply. That’s as true of moral law as it is of the law of gravity. And 9/11 was a heinous crime in the reckoning of moral law. We the living have to confront that, recognize and confront it. If those responsible aren’t held accountable, what will they do next? What *are* they doing?”

“And somehow I can help stop them?”

“Maybe, Ana. The alternative’s too terrible to think about. It’s what happens when those in charge think *they* have all the answers. They know best. And the only law they follow is a 21st Century law of the jungle. I’m glad you’re going to meet Anita. She’s a fighter.”

Chapter 9

As the elevator ascended, leaving floor after floor beneath them, Frank could sense Ana's tension rising with it. "You sure you're okay?" She nodded, but he felt the need to prepare her for the evening ahead, despite the fact that he'd been doing so ever since she asked to meet Anita. Or was it in fact his own nervousness in bringing the two women together, exposing Ana to Anita's barely self-contained rage, that was making him so damn chatty? He'd been talking nonstop, or felt like he had, since Ana got into his car.

"She sold their home in New Jersey and moved here two years after 9/11," he said. "Quite a change. I want to warn you again – all the things you've read about 9/11 that don't add up – the millions made on futures trades bet on a fall in American and United Airlines stock prices...the phone calls from hijacked planes that even the FBI said could never have been made with the cell phones in use then...the missing wreckage at the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania...the total failure of our air defense, without even a reprimand of those responsible..."

Ana interrupted him. "What I find it so hard to understand," she said, "is all the war games going on at the same time. Isn't that supposedly what kept our planes from intercepting?"

Frank was impressed. "That's right – you *have* been doing some research. But none of this compares to what you're going to hear from Anita."

A few minutes later she was ushering them into her elegant condo high above the lights of Manhattan.

“Hello, Ana. Welcome to the Eagle’s Nest. Thanks for bringing her, Frank. Hope you’re not afraid of heights,” she said to Ana. “If I could have found something on the 101st floor, I’d have taken it. That’s where Alex’s office was. This puts me above the bastards at least – feels like I can keep an eye on things from up here. I’m sure Frank’s told you I’m delusional.”

Ana felt a little shy under this verbal barrage as Anita led them to a sitting area away from the windows and their dizzying views.

“‘Delusional’ doesn’t fit you any better than ‘sunny disposition,’” said Frank.

Anita laughed. “Sunny disposition huh? I’d like the part about solar flares at least. Fry some major government *ass*-ets. Where can I learn to do that?”

“Global warming doesn’t need any help from you, Anita,” said Frank, chuckling.

Ana felt herself relaxing with this banter between the two of them. Then Anita set drinks and hors d’oeuvres on the coffee table in front of them.

“So you’re thinking of staying here to fight, Ana. Good for you. How can I help?”

Ana replied immediately. “I want to know why Arturo died.”

Anita lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. “How much has Frank told you about Cantor Fitzgerald?”

“...Nothing,” said Ana, puzzled.

“That’s who Alex, my husband, worked for. Cantor Fitzgerald was the largest broker in government securities in the country. They took up five floors of the North Tower. Alex was good at it. That’s what bought all this,” she said, indicating their luxurious surroundings. “*After* the fact. Everyone in his office, 658 people, were killed on 9/11.”

Ana's voice was subdued. "Arturo worked in the North Tower," she said. "At Windows on the World."

"I'm sorry, Ana. For all of us. Has Frank introduced you to his favorite 9/11 term yet?"

Ana had no idea what she was referring to.

"Collateral damage. I'm sure no one was out to get Arturo, but I'm reasonably certain that Alex and his colleagues were targeted. He never breathed a word of this to me, of course, but since his death, his *murder*, I've learned that his company held the bulk of \$240 billion in illicit government bonds in vaults under the World Trade Center. Apparently – stay with me here – the money was used in a very complicated funding scheme, involving Brady bonds, derivatives, and billions in gold confiscated from Germany and Japan after World War II.

"I know," said Anita in response to Ana's look of incomprehension. "It's as convoluted as it is unbelievable, and you haven't even heard the punch line yet. This was all done as part of a clandestine operation to bring down the Soviet Union."

The silence that followed was so complete that Ana heard the ice-maker in Anita's refrigerator eject a cube into its receptacle.

"...You're right," she said, "it is unbelievable."

"I'll give you all the information I have before you leave. It's all out there where anyone can find it if they know where to look – and *want* to. But you'll need time to digest it; you can verify it to your satisfaction later. What you need to know now though is that these were 10-year bonds, taken out in September, 1991. They came due on September 12th."

"...Wasn't the money there?"

"Who knows? All of it? Some of it? \$240 billion is a lot of fucking money. And over the years I'm sure a lot of greedy people took as big a cut of it as they could get their hands on.

Besides, many of those involved learned their dirty financial tricks on Iran-Contra and saw how easy it was to get away with – to say nothing of the Kennedy and King assassinations. So why repay it? Forget the collateral. Collateral damages are a helluva lot cheaper.”

Ana was too appalled to speak. She looked for support to Frank, who gave her an I-told-you-so look that managed to be sympathetic as well. “There’s more,” he said.

But Ana wasn’t ready for more. “I still have a hard time – I can’t believe all of this could be kept secret,” she said.

“Oh, it’s no secret, Ana. It’s the elephant in the room people won’t talk about. If they’re able to see it in the first place.”

“I don’t understand,” said Ana.

“Two big inhibitors: fear of course, and cognitive dissonance.”

“Cognitive...”

“Dissonance. Something, if you chose to believe it, that would challenge your sense of reality. ‘*What elephant?*’”

Frank added, “I overheard someone say – these were his exact words – ‘I wouldn’t believe that even if I knew it was true.’”

Anita laughed grimly. “That’s how most people feel. To have your belief system shattered is like being cast out into the wilderness.”

“What is it Saul Bellow, the Nobel novelist, said?” asked Frank: “‘A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep.’”

“And we thought brain power was being misused on Wall Street,” replied Anita with contempt. To Ana she said, “Let’s say you were involved in 9/11 in some way but unaware of what was happening until it was too late to stop it. Or you put two and two together after the fact.

What would you do now?"

"Well, I'd tell someone, someone I trust," said Ana decisively. "Who has some influence in the media. Or I'd go directly to them myself."

"Many have; a lot of them are dead. But their names are all over the Internet. A lot of them are in the information I've printed out for you. But you won't find them in news reports. Why that's so I'll let you decide for yourself."

Anita rose to get another round for Frank and herself; Ana had taken just a token sip of the white wine that Frank had advised their hostess was her drink of choice. When Anita had left them alone, Ana asked him in a tone of voice she intended for Frank alone, "...Is there more?"

Anita overheard, however. Ana decided that either she was blessed with very acute hearing or the acoustics in this part of her condo were amazing. "Do you *want* to hear more?" she called from the kitchen.

Ana didn't answer immediately but a moment later when Anita returned, she murmured, "...Please, go on."

Anita glanced at Frank, who nodded. "I understand you heard about the Towers from David Griffin. What about the Pentagon, what's up with that? A plane – some say a missile – disintegrates into the nanosphere, with no video from any of *many* surveillance cameras that would have shown it flying into the west face of the Pentagon. I don't remember how many cameras have been identified, but none of the video from any of them has ever been released.

"Here's what gets me though, Ana. Whether it was a plane, or a missile, or a death ray from Planet X, it bypassed all the top brass, all the warmongers, including Rummy himself, to kill 39 people in the Office of Naval Intelligence – who'd been moved into that part of the Pentagon just a month before. You know what these departed souls were doing while they were

still alive?”

Assuming the question to be rhetorical, Ana said nothing.

“They were investigating the financial crimes connected with that \$240 billion in covert, illicit bonds.”

Frank allowed time for Ana to grasp and consider the significance of Anita’s statement, then added, “You need to mention the SEC.”

“Oh yeah. Securities Exchange Act, Section 12(k)(2). Three days after 9/11, for the first time in history, the SEC declared an emergency and invoked its ‘emergency powers.’ Why? So those illegal bonds could be cleared electronically and replaced with treasury notes backed by U.S *taxpayers*, no questions asked.”

Frank turned to Ana. “You understand, a lot of this is conjecture. It *was* a national emergency after all.”

Anita as usual was annoyed by Frank’s stubborn reliance on controlled demolition as the only “scientific and provable” hard evidence, in his opinion, that 9/11 was an inside job.

Not for the first time she asked, “So what do you think, Frank? Is this all just conspiracy craziness or what? After all, it was you who just mentioned the SEC angle.”

“I’ve told you,” he replied patiently: “I don’t know what the *motivation* was. Just that 9/11 was a false flag operation.”

Anita was not to be deterred. “A lot more than those bonds were wiped out. So were ongoing investigations of international drug dealing, organized crime, terrorism, money laundering...help me here, Frank, what else did the government ‘disappear’?”

“How about the names of banks that sent wire transfers to Arabs the government identifies among the terrorists?”

“There you go, and how about those little-known multibillion-dollar Wall Street investigations – of the corrupt practices that would put the global economy in free fall a few years later?”

“Don’t forget Enron’s SEC filings,” added Frank.

“You see, Ana – the fools thought they could just wipe the slate clean.”

Ana surprised them both when she said, “But...aren’t *we* the fools if they’re able to get away with it?”

Anita jumped up, pumping her arm in the air. “*Yesss! That’s* what I like to hear, Ana! We’ve got a fighter here, Frank.”

“I know we do,” he said. “I told you so. God knows we need all we can get.”

Anita gave Ana an emotional hug. “God bless you, Ana. I know – Frank and I *both* know – how hard it is to look this thing in the face. What keeps me going, what the media quit showing that people couldn’t bear to watch anyway...those falling bodies. Could’ve been Alex. Or Arturo. Just remember that millions of dollars were made on those falling bodies. There were people on Wall Street – Alex wasn’t one of them obviously – who *knew* the stock of United and American Airlines was going down with the Towers. It’s all documented. You’ll find it in the material I’ve printed out for you.”

To Frank she said, “David Griffin’s speaking again next week. Do you think his ‘Course in Miracles’ will fill some seats?”

“Some, sure, he said. “There’s nothing conjectural about the controlled demolition of Building Seven. That’s the smoking gun that gives the whole thing away. Even the insider trading, as obvious as it was, doesn’t flout the laws of science. I’d like to know whose idea it was to rent a 5,000-seat auditorium though.”

“You think 5,000 seats is overly optimistic?” asked Anita.

“Five thousand seats would be another miracle.”

“His talk changed *your* mind though, didn’t it, Ana?”

“Yes, but when I told my cousin about it she didn’t believe me. I think you had to be there.”

“Well, I’m glad *you* were,” said Anita. “Welcome to the resistance.”

“Resistance?”

“To ‘perpetual war.’ Girl, we’re it.”

Chapter 10

Anita's revelations were where I figuratively hit the wall in accepting Frank's account of 9/11. Whether true or the collaborative fantasy of some of the more imaginative conspiracy theorists, they sounded to me like a Graham Greene fever dream. No wonder Frank himself was skeptical, even though he did consider her version of events plausible.

He and I were a month or so into our own collaboration via Skype and email by now, and I decided it was time for me to meet Anita – and while I was at it, Ana as well. I arranged another meeting with my agent, who didn't hesitate to point out that this was hardly necessary as it had been less than three months since our previous appointment, when I first met Frank in New Jersey, but he was willing. I wasn't his only client whose trips to the Big Apple were partially subsidized by superfluous business lunches.

Saying nothing to him about the story I was working on with Frank, I breezed through his office the morning of my luncheon engagement with Anita at a restaurant in her Upper West Side neighborhood. She turned out to be immensely more "Anita" than my feeble imagination had managed to conjure up – all the more so for the perceptible restraint that held her emotions in check. She was, as Frank had described her, an attractive and sophisticated dark-haired woman in her late 50s, who looked younger than that. What I wasn't in the least prepared for was

the sense I had of sharing the cage of a recently fed, and therefore temporarily nonlethal, tiger.

Anita had read and generally approved of what Frank and I had produced so far and was pleased rather than put off by my wanting to hear more about the alleged illicit bonds and the part they'd played in 9/11 "from the mare's mouth," as she put it. "Two things you need to read right away," she said, "are *Gold Warriors* by Sterling and Peggy Seagrave, and 'Collateral Damage,' this brilliant piece of research by E. P. Heidner. He's a former employee of the Office of Naval Intelligence, and his detailed analysis ties together a lot of loose threads in the events of 9/11.

"I couldn't find the Seagraves' book this morning; I must have loaned it to someone, but here's the Heidner piece," she said, handing me a 3-ring binder of 100 or so pages replete with photographs, graphs and illustrations. Skimming through it to the back, I noticed that it was densely and meticulously footnoted.

"I'm not going to sit here and try to summarize Heidner's six years of research," said Anita. "I know Frank has filled you in with what I told Ana – she's delightful, by the way, I'll be glad to introduce you." Anita started to digress but then quickly returned to the subject at hand.

"Heidner's two-part essay is not an easy read," she continued, "but it's very compelling in making the case that 9/11 was as much about protecting vital national security secrets as it was about creating a 'new Pearl Harbor,' to give neocons the blank check they needed to wage war in the Mideast.

"But to believe in \$240 billion in illicit bonds due on September 12th, you have to believe in the gold behind them. And that's where the Seagraves' book comes in. You won't have any trouble being open to the idea after you've read *Gold Warriors*. I suggest you order it online now so you'll have it when you've finished putting all of Heidner's pieces in place. That'll probably

take you two or three days at least.”

“So who are the Seagraves?” I asked, not looking forward with a hell of a lot of enthusiasm to curling up with this 3-ring binder for several days as preparation for reading the book that had set off my alarms in the first place.

Anita sensed my discontent. “Don’t worry,” she said. “You won’t be able to put the book down once you’ve started it. And 9/11 will be seen for what it is to the fucking killer apes who currently rule the planet. Business as necessary, when greed and depravity are the name of the game.”

“This is a book I won’t be able to put down? It sounds more like one I’ll want to throw against the wall.”

“Oh sure, that too,” she said. “It’s the all-too-believable horror it details so convincingly that will make you walk over and pick it up again. Because it’s something we all live with every day whether we’re aware of it or not. You’ll come away from the book knowing that.”

Something about the almost smug certainty in her expression, the faint bitter smile on her lips, or in her eyes – I couldn’t quite determine where it originated – suddenly hit me. Knowing what this woman had been through, I suddenly ‘got,’ like a monk subjected to the zen master’s rude awakening, what she was prepping me for.

“You asked who they are. The Seagraves have co-authored a dozen or so histories and biographies, mostly about the Far East, where he grew up. Exposés on the secret use of chemical and biological weapons, and the powerful dynastic families who rule Asia. They received death threats for the secrets *Gold Warriors* revealed. I hope your story alerts readers to it because of the way it helps explain 9/11.” I assured her that if I found the book as impressive as she’d described it, I would definitely make it part of Frank’s story.

“Good. You will,” she said. “How’d you like to take a cab out to Brooklyn with me? There’s someone I’d like you to meet.”

“Sure. This isn’t Ana though, right? You said we’re having breakfast with her tomorrow.”

“That’s right. I have a full social schedule lined up for you. But I have to warn you: this won’t be a pleasure trip. Memorable? Yes. Are you game?”

“I’m in,” I assured her.

Anita ordered a cab and it was waiting for us in front of her building by the time we reached the street. She told me we were going to meet Peggy McGuire and her husband Tom, a firefighter with New York City’s Engine 40, a first responder on 9/11, who was on home hospice care in the final stages of kidney cancer. It had spread to his bones and he had lost a leg. His death was imminent.

I could feel Anita’s mood changing on the ride across town, over the famous bridge, which I’d never been on before, then through commercial and residential neighborhoods I was sure I’d seen in movies or TV shows over the years. I was only half paying attention, though, because of the almost palpable atmospheric change taking place in the cab.

Anita had brought a fairly thick file folder with her which she held in her lap. When she saw me looking at it she asked me to hold any questions until after we’d talked to the McGuires. “Tom and Peggy are fighters,” she said. “They’ve asked family and friends to give them half an hour alone with us this afternoon. We’ll have a lot to talk about afterwards.”

We rode in silence for a moment, then she added, “I lost Alex years ago; I’ll never get over it but I’ve come to live with it. Now we’re losing hundreds more to cancer – and other illnesses – and the grieving starts all over again.”

I told her I understood and tried to take in the city street scenes we were driving through. After no more than a minute or two of silence between us we stopped in front of a modest three-story brownstone on a quiet tree-lined street. There were some children playing, a few people walking, but a stillness here in front of the McGuires' home.

Although it was in need of repair, which didn't surprise me under the circumstances, it was undoubtedly a choice piece of real estate. Anita told me they'd bought it four or five years before 9/11 as a good place to raise a family: three children, all of them teenagers now. Before ringing the doorbell, Anita said, "I don't expect Tom to be able to talk very long, so you'd better ask any questions you have as soon as you get the chance."

Peggy met us at the door. She was a pretty woman, I guessed in her early 40s though her features and a general sense of fatigue about her movements and her smile made her appear older. Her red hair had a good bit of gray in it and her blue eyes were hard and steady but dim in some way. You could see how they'd once sparkled because every now and then the spark flared for a moment, usually in anger. But I'm getting ahead of myself; it took most of the hour we spent with the McGuires for me to notice all of this.

After her somber but deeply appreciative greeting, we followed Peggy down a hallway that opened on the left onto a dark spacious living room in which the drapes were drawn, then led directly to what would normally have been a den or study, maybe a sitting room. Now it was Tom's sickroom, occupied by a hospital bed and all the paraphernalia of modern terminal illness. That and a crepuscular gloom that vases of flowers and children's artwork did nothing to dispel.

Tom's head was elevated to enable him to converse with us as he felt able to. He was connected to an IV drip and monitored by various electronic instruments but had no trouble holding our complete attention. We were there because Tom had a vital story to tell, and he was

obviously determined to use all the strength he had to get it on the record.

He cleared his throat – painfully, it was obvious – and said in a dry raspy voice, “Fifteen years a fireman and I saw things that no human being should have to see.” He paused and Peggy held a glass of water to his lips. He sipped from it, then his eyes grew glassy with whatever it was he was seeing now.

“Everyone knows about the jumpers – saw them falling – but I doubt many can imagine what they looked like after impacting concrete. But they weren’t...that wasn’t the worst.”

He paused again and when I glanced at Peggy I could tell she knew what was coming. “I’d seen fallen bodies before – suicides, window washer from 40-some stories...bodies burnt to a crisp, that fell apart when we put ‘em in body bags. All in a day’s work. You knew what had happened to them. Tragic...but comprehensible.

“But what we saw that day I still don’t understand....If I wasn’t about to be carted off by the big C, I’d most likely lose my mind thinking about it.”

Peggy gave us – or me anyway, Anita was sitting on the other side of the bed – a look that was somewhere between one of apology and accusation, for what her husband was going through to talk to us.

Anita said gently, “Take your time, Tom. You don’t have to continue; we can come back later if that would be easier.” But we all knew, Tom included, that this was pro forma. The worst thing we could do for him right now would be to give him time. He had very little left.

“It was like a horror movie,” he suddenly croaked. “These...fireballs. They came out of nowhere, and when they caught up with someone, the body would just explode. Disintegrate. I’ve never seen....There was one man, he saw it coming and tried to outrun it. The *terror* in his eyes. But it got him. Just like the rest.”

Peggy motioned to us that Tom needed to rest now, which is an understatement. His face was bathed in sweat and his hands had started shaking. We quietly withdrew

As we waited in the hallway for Peggy I gave Anita a look that must have conveyed my incomprehension because she just patted the file folder she was still holding and said, “Homework.”

A moment later Peggy came out and told us Tom was sleeping. She said for us to have a seat in the living room and brought in a tray of coffee, cream and sugar. I drank mine gratefully though longing for something stronger.

“Tom and I so much appreciate you coming out here to hear his story,” Peggy said. “No one from the newspapers was interested. He saw a lot of things that day that have eaten away at him, along with the cancer. If he were a little stronger he could tell you more, but I’m afraid it can’t be today.”

“We’re grateful too, Peggy,” said Anita. “Tom’s a courageous man.”

“They all are – or *were*, I guess I should say. The union says cancer deaths are off the charts, across all ranks of the department. Strapping, healthy young men – a few women too – in the prime of life most of them. Now they’re a cancer ward. Leukemia, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, multiple myeloma...I’ve become quite the expert I’m afraid. Myeloma usually occurs in the 60s and 70s, not in men in their 30s and 40s. Tom’s doctor can’t believe it. He said you don’t expect something environmental like this to elevate multiple types of cancer.”

None of us said anything for a minute, then I asked, “You mentioned other things Tom saw. Could you –”

Peggy jumped right in. “He said cars parked along the curb were blowing up, like spontaneously. He’d never seen anything like it. And he learned later, from other firefighters,

that temperatures under the Trade Center were so high that soil and glass and stainless steel were being evaporated – just boiled away – *six weeks* after they collapsed. He was told these temperatures were the same as during the nuclear core meltdown at Chernobyl.”

“So we’re talking about possible nuclear contamination?” I asked.

Peggy just nodded, but Anita spoke up immediately. “Chernobyl-level temperatures six weeks after 9/11? Fireballs that vaporize human beings? Seems like a *strong* possibility to me.”

When we left the McGuires, we were both so moved and deep in thought that neither of us said anything in the cab for a while. Finally Anita opened the folder she’d been carrying, and I took that as an opening for the many questions I had.

“So do you think it was a nuclear demolition, Anita? New York City was nuked by our own government?”

She sighed, and when I noticed her glance at the rear-view mirror, I did too to see if our black cabbie had overheard. His eyes were as big around as quarters. Anita didn’t give a damn if he was listening and neither did I.

“I don’t know,” she said wearily. “I’ll pull a Frank Nolan and say, ‘All I know is...’” and I completed the sentence with her: “‘it was a controlled demolition.’” We chuckled, pleased with our new-found camaraderie. “With the increase in cancers of all kinds – prostate, thyroid, esophageal – in addition to the blood cancers and what Tom and Peggy told us, that seems to me the most logical conclusion. The city’s already settled lawsuits by more than 10,000 rescue and recovery workers. But after the Fire Department did a seven-year cancer study documenting this dramatic increase, officials are still stonewalling: ‘There’s no scientific proof that Ground Zero dust and smoke caused cancer.’ *Duh!* How about *radiation*?”

“The thing is, though, those who believe it was nukes are definitely in the minority and

they're *vilified* by Truthers who are sure it was nano-thermite. And there's just as much dissension within the nuclear fraternity. There are three different theories – at the moment. Watch this space for theories 4, 5 and 6.”

She lit a cigarette in flagrant disregard of the prominent No Smoking sign beside her. “What the hell's wrong with the human race? The killer apes” (a favorite term of hers, I'd learned) “have had their way with the rest of us for as long as they have because we either submit, and look the other way, or fight amongst ourselves. We could take out the bastards in a week – we could have taken them out God knows how many centuries ago – if we'd stand together and stick up for ourselves.

“Anyway, here's the deal: currently three different theories that it was nukes – that not just first responders but thousands of people in New York City were exposed to radioactive fallout. I've condensed these reports for you; you'll have to Google them if you want more information later.” She pulled a thick print-out of pages clamped at the top from her folder. “Two of them are based on what their authors conclude is ‘incontrovertible evidence of a thermonuclear controlled demolition’ based on seismographic evidence and an analysis by the United States Geological Survey of dust from demolition of the World Trade Center buildings.

“This one by William Tahil, an energy analyst, shows that barium and strontium were found in dust in the air and on girders before they were quickly hauled away. Apparently these elements are the signature of nuclear fission and wouldn't otherwise be found in concrete or other building materials. He thinks the fission came from the meltdown of underground nuclear reactors. Google ‘Ground Zero: the Nuclear Demolition of the World Trade Center.’

“Another theory,” said Anita, handing me the second report she'd prepared, “is also based on the results of the geological survey but disagrees with the first on how the fission

occurred. This one theorizes that numerous micro-nuclear devices were placed at every third or fifth floor of the Twin Towers and detonated in succession. You can Google Jeff Prager, USGS; there are others who agree with him as well. He's published a number of books that are available free on his website.

“Now the third theory is, for me, the hardest to believe even though it's impressively backed up by one Dimitri Khalezov, who claims to be a former officer of a secret Soviet military unit responsible for detecting underground nuclear tests of adversaries of the USSR. Khalezov says he undertook extensive 9/11 research which proves that the Twin Towers and World Trade Center Seven were demolished by a 150-kiloton thermonuclear bomb under each building. And get this: he says they were part of a nuclear demolition scheme for the Twin Towers, which he first learned of back in the '80s.

“I'm sure you're aware that the buildings were *full* of asbestos. That plus the fact of how ridiculously inefficient they were for heating and air-conditioning made them virtually worthless in terms of any possible resale. Yet Larry Silverstein purchased a 99-year lease on the World Trade Center complex just two months before 9/11 and insured it for a face value of 3½ billion dollars.”

“Yeah, I'm aware of that,” I said. “And then sued his insurance companies for double that. But I still don't understand how he expected to collect.”

“Oh, he *did* collect, most of it – on the basis that two airplane crashes into two different buildings constituted two separate occurrences, the way the insurance policies were written. But \$5 billion wasn't enough, so now he's suing the two airlines involved.”

Anita's look of profound disgust held very little of the smoldering outrage that usually accompanied it. Our visit with the McGuires had temporarily numbed both of us. I added her

third report to my now bulging folder and slumped back against the seat, unable to take any of this in at the moment. A few minutes later we dropped Anita off and I gave the driver the name of my hotel. After I paid him and was walking to the lobby he said, “Hey!” I turned and he stuck his thumb in the air. “I’m witchu, man.”

Chapter 11

I was looking forward to a drink from the mini-bar in my room. Would I spend much time this evening going through the papers Anita had given me? Probably not.

The phone started ringing the moment I walked into the room. I hoped it was my wife with a report from the home front. It wasn't; it was Anita.

"I'm probably the last person you want to talk to now, right?"

"No," I lied. "What's up?"

"Tonight's my night to meet with a couple of fellow 9/11 survivors. We have dinner together at least once a month. I just got off the phone with Lois and she encouraged me to invite you to join us – if you're not too burned out."

If I'd been quick enough to come up with a graceful way of saying no, I'd have declined. What could I learn from Anita's friends beyond our afternoon with the McGuires and the slew of information she'd already given me? I hesitated and in that awkward moment of silence suddenly felt ashamed of myself. Here were these people willing to share their tragic story with me, and I had better things to do? I met Anita and her friends Lois and Marilyn at a quiet restaurant not far, in cab time, from my hotel.

Lois reminded me a little of Bea Arthur as Maude: the same age and temperament.

Marilyn was somewhere between Lois and Anita in age and more reserved than either of them: an intense listener. I was surprised to learn that, like Lois, she was Jewish. Scratch another of my mental stereotypes.

Although I was on time, they were already into a bottle of pinot noir. After I'd been introduced and invited to join them in the wine, they resumed a spirited discussion that veered from the New York theatre scene to financial difficulties which had prematurely closed a play they were all looking forward to, then to the global economy in general. Lois was holding forth on the imminent demise of the dollar when Anita rather abruptly steered the conversation to my reason for being in the city, the story I was writing with my uncle.

"Anita told us about it," said Lois. "I've known Frank for quite a while. Fine man. We certainly approve of your project." I told them how it had come about. "Well, if there's anything Marilyn or I can do to help, just ask," she said.

I hesitated for a moment. "I do have a question; I thought about it on the ride over. From what Anita's told me, I assume you're aware of the speculation that Israel, or the Mossad, were involved somehow in 9/11, is that correct?"

"Yes, of course," Lois replied rather brusquely.

"So, I'm wondering, how do you feel about that? How do Jews in general, the Jewish community..."

Lois rescued me from the awkwardness I was feeling.

"Well I can't speak for anyone but myself, but what distresses me is the confusion between Jews and Zionism that many people have – that has been deliberately instigated by the media, and by those who use it to *sow* confusion. Zionism isn't part of the Jewish religion; it's a nationalist movement, that has gone far beyond the founding of the state of Israel. There are

many Jews who vehemently oppose Zionist ideology. Especially the Orthodox of course, but not exclusively by any means. Even Jews who consider themselves loyal to Israel – Israelis and non-Israelis alike – are very much against the treatment of the Palestinians for example.”

She looked at her companions for reactions and took a drink of her wine. When neither of them spoke she continued. “As for the Mossad, they no more speak for Jews than the CIA does for Americans – of any religion. Could they have been involved in some way? I wouldn’t be surprised. It sure as hell wasn’t the skirt-chasing Arabs, many of them still alive, who the government claims hijacked the planes. And the CIA certainly couldn’t have managed it on their own. They couldn’t even carry out the Kennedy assassination without bungling it. Not that it matters, given the unwillingness of most Americans to face up to it.”

“At least two of the ‘dancing Israelis’ were Mossad agents, weren’t they?” said Marilyn. She was referring of course to the five Israelis observed filming and celebrating the destruction of the Twin Towers, then picked up later in a white van full of explosives. Police and FBI field agents also found highlighted maps of the city, box cutters, \$4700 in cash stuffed in a sock, and foreign passports. The Israelis worked for a New Jersey moving company, Urban Moving Systems, identified by the FBI as a front operation for Israeli intelligence. A few days after the attacks the company’s Israeli owner, Dominick Suter, fled the country for Israel, leaving in such a hurry that some of his customers’ furniture was stranded in storage facilities. His ostensible Israeli employees were held in custody for 71 days before being quietly released.

“I think all five were,” replied Lois, taking another drink. Anita, though following the conversation with interest, remained uncharacteristically silent.

“To add to what Lois was talking about,” said Marilyn, “Jews, Israelis, Zionists – we’re all being put in the same category when it comes to 9/11. By some people.”

“*Many* people,” Lois corrected her.

“Even those of us who lost someone. It’s so unfair.”

“It’s idiotic,” said Lois.

“After all, more than 400 people killed on 9/11 were Jews.”

Finally Anita could restrain herself no longer. “And of those 400-plus Jews, how many were Israelis? At the epicenter of international Jewish financial power – where two of the richest firms in New York, Goldman-Sachs and the Solomon Brothers, had offices, with executives commuting back and forth to Israel regularly. When the *Jerusalem Post* estimated the day after the attack that some 4,000 Israelis were believed to be in or around the World Trade Center or Pentagon on 9/11. How many of the dead were Israeli citizens? Not 4,000. Not *400*. Not even 40.” Anita paused for dramatic emphasis, her eyes holding all of us. “Hell, there weren’t even four. Just one. One Israeli citizen killed on 9/11. Do you think they may have known something we didn’t?”

* * * * *

The next day, a Saturday, Anita and I picked Ana up at her apartment and drove to a coffee shop Anita remembered fondly from the years she resided in New Jersey with her husband, son and daughter, both now in their mid-20s and living on the West Coast. Frank had informed me that, determined to insulate them from her 9/11 activism, Anita seldom mentioned her adult children. But her face revealed how much they meant to her when she reminisced over the family’s Saturday morning trips into the city that had so often begun with bagels here.

Ana’s face gave her away as well, though she tried to hide the pain she’d expressed to Frank about never having children of her own. Anita picked up on it at once; her eyes had a sudden softness I hadn’t yet seen in them. She gave Ana a lingering look of compassion before

saying simply, “We never know what the future holds for us.” Coming from Anita the remark didn’t sound like a platitude.

Ana was pretty much as I’d imagined her. Stoic in a way that in indigenous people of the Americas seems to me somehow graceful and natural, rather than austere, though there was an overlay of grief that I’d anticipated. She was cordial, but I quickly became aware of an obstacle or distance between us that didn’t exist between her and Frank, a fellow survivor. I don’t think she was really quite sure of my role in his life and intrusion in hers but she accepted me. And I felt honored by that.

Having heard Ana’s full story from Frank, both moved and inhibited by her deceptively serene demeanor, I asked only the sort of polite questions expected of a tablemate one has just met for lunch. Her voice was soft but in no way weak or fragile; her eyes, guardians at the gate.

After driving Ana home, we met the last person Anita had arranged for me to meet on this whirlwind visit, a retired flight attendant who asked that I not reveal her name. She introduced me to the novel *Methodical Illusion* by Rebekah Roth, which had recently been published, with the demand that I read it at once. “It’ll offer some relief from all the straight research I’ve burdened you with,” she said, “but don’t take it lightly. The fiction is only a frame around the real picture of the so-called hijackings on 9/11 – that only an airline insider would be aware of. The planes were hijacked all right but certainly not by Arabs with plastic box cutters.”

We spent a couple of hours with the former flight attendant, a plain-spoken, somewhat nervous woman in her mid-50s, who convinced me that Roth’s scrupulously researched examination of the hijackings, based on the author’s alleged years of professional experience, deserves far more than the cursory summary I’m able to provide here. I say “alleged” because there has been some controversy concerning the author’s background and whether Roth is even

her real name. But aside from the conservative politics espoused near the end, I strongly recommend her book. (If you'll permit a digressive generalization, 9/11 Truthers appear to be largely a coalition of the Far Right and the non-aligned: not so much strange bedfellows, more like the diversity of an athletic team. Anyone but the Left and the highly "educated" – aside from a few courageous scientists, architects and engineers – who are apparently too deeply invested in the prevailing culture to contest or even seriously question it in any meaningful way.)

In any case, Roth's contention is based first of all on the alleged cell phone calls from altitude that even the FBI admitted couldn't have been made with the technology that existed in 2001. This and the fact that calls *were* in fact made from *somewhere* but that, where flight attendants were involved, they didn't follow normal airline protocol leads her to conjecture that they were coerced – she speculates from Westover Air Reserve Base near Springfield, MA.

And how did they get there? She believes that FTS (Flight Termination System) equipment onboard the commercial airliners allowed them to be taken over remotely from the ground and flown to Westover, then taxied into hangars large enough to conceal them. All communication from the planes would also have been disabled. What happened to those on board is anyone's guess. The planes were replaced by 767 refueling tankers from Stewart International Airport, in New Windsor, NY, about 55 miles north of New York City. (On March 31, 2000, Stewart had become the nation's first privatized commercial airport.)

It was these military aircraft, she believes, guided without pilots or passengers, which flew into the World Trade Center towers. This would explain the pods which several eyewitnesses described and some photographs reveal beneath the planes' wings. Whatever fell to earth in Shanksville, PA, and punched a lethal hole in the Pentagon, they weren't commercial airliners.

Ms. Roth isn't the first to make this conjecture, but she does so persuasively from an airline professional's perspective – with the holes in this necessarily brief summary filled in with considerable detail. (Googling “Stewart Air Force Base” reveals an even more complicated scenario than the author lays out, but it's impossible to discern where intelligent sleuthing has been corrupted by deliberate disinformation.) Interestingly she also claims, as do many other 9/11 researchers, that at least ten of those identified by the government as hijackers are still alive.

* * * * *

Of course my wife was interested in hearing all about Ana and Anita, asking the kinds of questions it hadn't occurred to me to ask – more about their personal lives than about 9/11. I told her she should have come with me, but we both knew this was just talk. As tolerant as she was about the time and energy I was devoting to this, with no expectation of any kind of remuneration from it, there was only so much she was willing to listen to at any one time. She was becoming incrementally more open to the possibility of a 9/11 cover-up of some kind but remained stubbornly resistant to the idea that exposing it could accomplish anything.

I'd decided not to mention the visit with Tom and Peggy McGuire. The whole nuclear possibility was just too much for me at the moment, let alone for her.

“So what do you think?” she asked. “Did you learn anything to make Anita's theory more believable?”

“I don't know yet,” I said. “She gave me quite a reading assignment.”

She riffled through Heidner's 100-page essay that I'd begun on the plane and made a face. “Not my kind of reading,” she said.

Chapter 12

Returning now to Frank and Ana's story, on the drive back to New Jersey from Anita's, both of them were quiet at first. Frank knew her mind had to be in a turmoil of information that she was nowhere near processing yet. He thought it best to keep his own counsel unless and until Ana asked a question he might shed some light on. Finally she did. "What Anita said, about the illegal bonds and all. You didn't seem too convinced."

"I'm not, but it's certainly possible. I have read about all the gold we seized from the Germans and Japanese, during and after the war. That part is persuasive."

"What happened to it?"

"Good question. Here's another one: what happened to the people it was entrusted to?"

"What do you mean?"

"What almost always happens when you cross incalculable riches with human nature?"

"Well, greed. You get greed and corruption."

"Couldn't have come up with a better answer myself. That may very well have been the beginning. The first step" – he added a touch of melodrama – "in the downfall of the American empire."

"I hope you're going to elaborate on that," said Ana.

“I’ll try. Actually, it wouldn’t have been the *first* step – far from it. Let’s call it a post-war foothold: for control of the United States – and, through the U.S., much of the rest of the world – by the fabulously wealthy families and corporations known now as the ‘global elite.’ Barrie Zwicker, a Canadian journalist, calls them the ‘diaboligarchy.’ But that’s a whole other story I won’t go into now – you asked about the gold. Keep in mind that I’m an engineer, not a money man in any sense of the word.

“At any rate, thanks to our winning the war and the devastation of Europe, Russia, China and Japan – as well as to this secret hoard of billions in gold – the United States suddenly had new and immense power in the world. We started calling the shots on the global stage, in a way we’d never dreamed of before. And as for the gold, we were going to use it to make a better world. *Right.*” The word was saturated with sarcasm.

“Meanwhile, the CIA was mutating from the wartime Office of Strategic Services into a worldwide force for promoting American interests, with virtually no oversight from Congress or anyone else. They very quickly grew totally out of control. And the gold? Besides lining the pockets of anyone who could get a piece of it, became collateral for funding all sorts of clandestine operations on behalf of American political and corporate power. Apparently one of which was what Anita referred to: the undoing of the Soviet Union.

“But whether or not any bonds behind the demise of the USSR led directly or indirectly to 9/11, I have no idea. It’s certainly plausible, in my opinion, but how the hell you’d prove something like that...well, it’s beyond me. Unlike the hard evidence we have that the World Trade Center buildings were brought down by controlled demolition. *That’s* what I thought would finally wake the American people up.”

“It still may though, it’s not too late is it?”

“I hope not, Ana. It wouldn’t be too late if we were willing to launch a real criminal investigation, free of interference or intimidation of any kind, but I’m afraid that’s a fantasy. The resistance to that happening, not just from the perpetrators but the American public, may be insurmountable. People are too afraid to confront this. Afraid of losing everything they’ve worked all their lives for in an economic collapse. Afraid of the bogeyman the government has conjured up: foreign and domestic terrorists, just waiting for an opportunity to destroy America and everything we stand for –”

“But there *are* terrorists, Frank!” Ana interrupted.

“Of course there are. *Real* terrorists – mostly in response to American government policy around the world – and “terrorists” who may actually be part of our own government, or acting on its behalf. There are a lot of intelligent people, not just kooks and extremists, who are afraid of what the government’s up to, Ana. That’s what’s really behind the gun control issue, in my opinion.”

“Oh, but surely you’re not saying that’s the only thing, I mean with the school shootings and all the rest of it.”

“But who’s really behind all of that? If you believe, as I do, that the government was involved in something as horrific as 9/11, and is successfully covering it up, then what’s so unreasonable about suspecting their involvement in the incidents that have followed? Or preceded it, for that matter? Oklahoma City, for one.”

Ana started to object to the metastasizing scale of treachery that Frank was implying – more than implying – but was overcome by the scope of it. Where would it end? Apparently she couldn’t accept just 9/11 as a government-assisted plot – “a state crime against humanity” Anita had called it earlier in the evening. Accepting that opened doors to other atrocities. None of them

including Arturo's death at least. That was the one thought that calmed her, kept her grounded. That could happen only once, and it already had.

While all this was going on with Ana, Frank continued to make a case he'd already won by default. Aware that her thoughts were elsewhere, he brought his argument to a close. "It's not just the NRA or Tea Partiers," he said. "With the Internet spreading the word that Homeland Security and other federal agencies have ordered hundreds of thousands of hollow-point ammunition rounds, it isn't paranoia that has people thinking the government might be preparing for civil unrest. The question is, are they trying to *provoke* it as well?"

This grabbed Ana's attention again. "I've heard nothing about that, all the ammunition and everything. Is that true? What has the government said about it?"

"Oh, they have a reasonable explanation, of course," said Frank. "But how can we believe anything the government says anymore? There's no 'right' to be believed, trust isn't the same as innocence until proven guilty. Known, habitual liars, whether they're individuals or institutions, *deserve* to be disbelieved.

* * * * *

Frank was a lot more at ease about Ana's imminent exposure to David Ray Griffin tonight than he'd been on the first occasion. While she and Anita, who was driving, chatted in the front seat, he was thinking about the turnout they were likely to get in a 5,000-seat venue. Their normal audience would be pitiful in such a large auditorium.

When he expressed his concern Anita said, "We'd *better* start filling seats. It's going to take a helluva wakeup call to stop this runaway train. It's taken 50 years, but anyone with an ounce of backbone knows now that Kennedy was murdered by the CIA. And what good has it done? Who's been held accountable? How strong is the American people's resolve now? We

sure don't have 50 years to piss away this time."

"Oh, their resolve to ignore the cover-up is *very* strong," said Frank

"Exactly. I'm not optimistic. It's been *more* than 50 years since Ike warned us to beware of the military-industrial complex. I think it was the first time the term was ever used."

"Ike?" said Ana.

"President Eisenhower – Dwight, 'Ike' was a nickname – in the mid-'50s," replied Anita.

"The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist," Frank quoted from the president's famous farewell speech.

"You'd think that warning coming from the 5-star general who led us to victory on D-Day would have made an impact." Anita lit a cigarette and re-inserted the car's lighter in an angry flourish meant to accentuate the contempt in her words. "But no, we bet that if we kept our eyes and our mouths shut, the monsters would go away. They just keep upping the ante."

"And anyone who's against them is either a traitor or a terrorist," added Frank.

Exhaling, still simmering in the rage that had become her 'new normal' a decade ago, Anita asked rhetorically, "Is there anything more evil than killing 3,000 of your own people to cover up a crime? Or as an excuse to murder a million more for control of another part of the world? And when anyone dares to object, it's always '*9/11!, Terrorists!*' The evil bastards who did it, the *real* terrorists, using their own mass murder as a ticket to kill whoever stands in their way. It just...it boggles my mind to think this has been going on for what? 11 years now and so few are trying to stop it."

Ana finally spoke up. "A lot longer than that," she said quietly.

"That's right, Ana. You see why I call Anita the Harpy?"

Anita was pleased to play the part. "That's why our 'entertainment's' all about murder

and horror. Because we refuse to confront the monsters in our midst. The *real* blood-sucking vampires profiting from death and destruction.”

“Sucking Mother Earth dry too of course,” Frank reminded her.

“The biggest tit of all. You know, I’m willing to believe that *some* of the people who took Kennedy out believed they were doing the right thing for the country.”

“Oh come on, Anita! That’s – ”

“Just hear me out,” she insisted. “Were they psychopaths? Of course. The Pentagon itself projected 30 million American deaths in a nuclear exchange – yet the military was furious that Kennedy got the missiles out of Cuba rather than nuking it.”

“That’s one reason they got rid of him,” Frank agreed.

“Yeah, but they were *patriots*, right? Protecting us from the ‘menace of communism,’ some of them anyway. But 9/11 wasn’t about America. Not when those at the top are doing all they can to *destroy* the country. 9/11 was part of *their* agenda, whoever the hell ‘they’ are.”

“One thing we have to keep in mind though. I was reminded about this by Corby of all people, Ana.”

“*Corby*? From our office?”

“I had a drink with him the other day in a bar near the 9/11 Memorial. You and I have earned virtual PhD’s in 9/11, Anita. It took me years even to begin to grasp the depth of our government’s involvement. We can’t expect the average person to be up with us on this. Of course they’re in denial about it. I sure as hell was at first. Look at the Germans under Hitler. It took a whole new generation to own up to the evil they were responsible for. Maybe *our* hope lies in the young as well.”

“We can’t wait for them to catch up, Frank!” Anita objected. “The same people

responsible for 9/11 are going to get us into World War III.”

“Besides, when you talk about Kennedy and ‘Ike,’ I don’t think that has much meaning for young people today,” added Ana. “The majority of them anyway – and *not* so young people too. If I tried to explain 9/11 to Ynez with those names, they would mean nothing to her.”

“Which is exactly why 9/11 is still so important almost twelve years later!” said Frank heatedly. “Crimes that big don’t just disappear in the past; their consequences metastasize. Getting away with the Kennedy assassination is what made 9/11 possible.”

“You’re both right, Frank,” said Anita. “Names and facts *do* disappear, if they’re allowed or meant to. The successful cover-up of the Kennedy and King assassinations helps explain why so many of our fellow Americans are clueless about this one.”

“What do you mean?” asked Ana.

“How many people are aware that a Congressional committee clear back in 1979 – when Congress still had some integrity – concluded that the Kennedy assassination was likely the result of a conspiracy? While the ‘official’ version in all the history books is that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. What does that tell you about the control the media have over how well-informed the American people are?”

Ana became thoughtful. “That’s what I’ve come to realize,” she said. “Do you want to know why I finally decided to stay, Frank? The reason my cousin, and I myself, could not accept the truth about 9/11 is how many people would have to be involved in planning, and carrying out, and then covering up such a thing. It was just beyond belief. But after studying all the information you gave me, Anita, when I finally accepted that, yes, the government *must* be involved – certainly in covering it up for so long – it was... *my God!* What *else* is going on that we don’t know about?”

“It explains a lot of things, doesn’t it,” said Anita.

“I knew I had to stay here. I was wrong – it *is* my fight, Frank. For Arturo, and for myself. For all those who died and for all the survivors.”

“For a world we want to live in, Ana. How do we make it right if we’re unwilling to accept what’s wrong with it?”

“Amen,” said Anita.

Suddenly Ana exclaimed, “*Look!* All these people!”

As their car approached the auditorium, people of all ages were streaming past with signs that read “9/11 IS A LIE!” and several with photocopy enlargements of the notorious New York Post banner headline, “BUSH KNEW.”

All three of them were amazed.

The enlivened, determined crowd surged forward. Many were young but there were men and women of all ages, their attitude appearing not so much defiant as driven by an overwhelming confidence and camaraderie.

“They just keep coming!” said Ana.

“They need to *keep* coming!” said Anita.

Frank said nothing. Was the message finally getting out? Were people beginning to wake up? Maybe they *would* fill some seats tonight. He was suddenly very proud of Ana. And once again, as on so many occasions in the past few years – only to become discouraged and sink back into pessimism and cynicism – he was proud, and excited, to be a human being. A citizen of the planet Earth, in the 21st Century.

Chapter 13

I was part of that elated, expectant group of people streaming toward the auditorium to hear David Ray Griffin talk about *real* miracles and the fictitious ones, the rickety scaffolding around a cover-up that we all knew in our hearts was about to collapse. *Is* in fact collapsing even as the corporate media helping to support it refuses to acknowledge this.

As Frank's story – he'd been referring to it as *our* story for some time at this point – inched closer to completion, when it would be uploaded to the Internet for everyone to read, I'd begun again to become concerned about the possible ramifications for myself and my family. Frank understood and assured me that I could keep my involvement confidential if I wished to. But he also told me – I'll try to capture his words as accurately as possible:

“When I first spoke to Ana about coming to terms with Lisa's death and, in doing so, being awakened to the realization that the world is so much greater than my beliefs, my sense of reality, had allowed me to see, I shared just a small part of that experience with her: what I thought would be good for her to hear then. I'm looking forward to sharing a lot more with her. What I want to tell *you* is that millions of people – I'm sure of this – will soon be making this same voyage...into uncharted waters, I'll call it.

“The suppression of information that has been going on for centuries, made possible by

the few ruling the many, in total secrecy in many ways, is coming to an end. The Internet, which governments and the elite ridicule because they fear it, has helped immensely to initiate this awakening of course, and it's important to realize that this has been in the service of our natural human desire for truth. Knowledge. Of course there's much online that's frivolous, and worse – that's also part of who we are now. But, no matter how 'New Age-y' this may sound to you, human consciousness is expanding. It has to if we're to survive; and necessity, as it always has, will continue to serve as a catalyst and incentive.”

Here he paused, his eyes commanding my attention, then said, “Unless you choose to hang on to what is really a very limiting sense of yourself – what amounts to a death grip – in the equally limited material world we've been taught, brainwashed really, to believe in, you have nothing to fear.”

“But fear itself,” I added, to include myself in the conversation.

Frank smiled. “Exactly. It's time to remove the blinders. We need to know what we're up against.”

I knew by now what Frank was talking about. That *if* 9/11 was in fact the treasonous mass murder that Truthers believe it to have been – against Americans, Iraq, Afghanistan and the planet itself – then the society we imagine ourselves a part of doesn't really exist. It's a fantasy perpetrated by the government and the media, on behalf of the true holders of power in the world today. For a crime of such magnitude to be carried out so successfully and, far more frighteningly, covered up so thoroughly and for so long, implicates the nation's highest levels of leadership.

I would hope, given that conditional “*if*,” that you can, on broad terms, agree with this assessment; that if we disagree on the state of the union today it's because you *can't* accept a

crime of this scale, and all the reality-shattering implications that come with it. You don't believe 9/11 was an inside job, a false flag operation. That, of course, is what confounds most people.

But whatever else it was, 9/11 was an extraordinarily complex operation in which numerous significant mistakes were made. Perhaps emboldened by past successes, its perpetrators over-reached themselves and took for granted that a compliant media would keep most Americans and the world in the dark. That kind of self-defeating arrogance is called "hubris" and it has led to the downfall of oppressive regimes and institutions since the time of the ancient Greeks, who gave us the word. Now, thanks largely to the Internet, its informational and communications effectiveness seriously underestimated, many 9/11 operational blunders have been brought to the public's attention – the most damning being the self-evidence, for those willing to trust the testimony of their own eyes, that all three World Trade Center buildings were brought down by controlled demolition.

The perpetrators must have assumed they could cow the American people into disbelieving this overwhelming visual evidence, as they had been bullied and betrayed half a century ago into accepting the murder of President Kennedy as the crime of one man firing three miraculous shots and a magic bullet from a high-powered rifle – even after the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that "President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy."

No doubt the real "evildoers" also surmised that, encumbered by a steady diet of disinformation, 9/11 Truthers would greatly compromise their efforts to convince the public about the truth of 9/11 by quarreling amongst themselves about the demolition technology used. Was it placed charges alone as in conventional demolition, or was Nano-thermite the weapon of choice? Or, with or without the thermite, were the buildings brought down by nukes of some

kind?

After the meeting arranged by Anita with the McGuires, I researched the nuclear theory on the Internet and came across yet another hypothesis which has brought additional confusion to the argument. Dr. Judy Wood, probably the most controversial figure in 9/11 research, believes that some kind of directed energy weapon (DEW), developed as part of Reagan's \$30-billion Star Wars misadventure, was responsible. (On the Internet is speculation that this is a weaponized application of Nicola Tesla's discovery of a form of "free" energy that can peacefully power the planet if developed for that purpose. *Thrive*, a fascinating documentary that you can watch for free online, does an excellent job of explaining this.)

Dr. Wood coined a new term, "dustification," to describe how the World Trade Center buildings largely turned to dust in midair as they fell, the reason there was so little debris on the ground after the towers came down. She has impressive scientific credentials (you can look them up if you're interested) but is roundly ridiculed by many of her colleagues in the 9/11 Truth Movement. Some even call her a "gatekeeper," the pejorative term Truthers apply to those who stand between the excruciating truth of 9/11 and its acceptance by the general public.

When I called to thank Sharon, my friend in Portland who helped *open* the 9/11 gate, and my eyes, for me, she said that another friend's pungent response had been, "Thanks for ruining my life." I understand, believe me. But in this case I'm afraid the bliss of ignorance will turn out to be the deadliest high of all.

So here then, with my name attached, is Frank's story. I hope it stimulates you to learn as much as you can about what's going on in your world. It *is* yours, you know – as much yours and mine as anyone's. And with that comes responsibility. I believe we're up to the task. The information now available on 9/11 is voluminous. You might start with *Gold Warriors* or

Heidner's "Collateral Damage" – Google them.

In your reading and research, trust your God-given common sense to help you separate the factual from the false. Don't be afraid, or reluctant, to look for it.

Good luck and God bless.

THE END

Although its central characters are fictional, the story you have just read is based on the tragedy we all know so well – or, more correctly for many of us, not so well. Following is a partial listing of more than 3,500 architects, engineers, professional pilots, & influential people in government, the military, intelligence & law enforcement either calling for a new investigation of 9/11 or who actually refer to a 9/11 cover-up. (There are many more names at www.patriotsquestion911.com.)



**General Albert
Stubblebine**

General Albert Stubblebine, U.S. Army (ret) – Commanding General of Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), 1981 - 1984. Also commanded U.S. Army's Intelligence Center. Former head of Imagery Interpretation for Scientific and Technical Intelligence. 32-year Army career. Inducted into Military Intelligence Hall of Fame, 1990.

"One of my experiences in the Army was being in charge of the Army's Imagery Interpretation for Scientific and Technical Intelligence during the Cold War. I measured pieces of Soviet equipment from photographs. It was my job. I look at the hole in the Pentagon and I look at the size of an airplane that was supposed to have hit the Pentagon. And I said, 'The plane does not fit in that hole'. So what did hit the Pentagon? Where is it? What's going on?"



Francesco Cossiga

Francesco Cossiga – President of Italy, 1985-1992. Also served as Former Prime Minister, Undersecretary for Defense, and President of the Italian Senate.

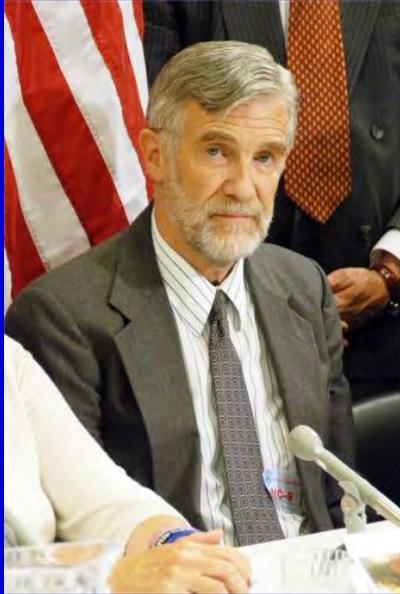
"The non-authenticity of the video is supported by the fact that Osama bin Laden in it 'confessed' that Al Qaeda was responsible for the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers. However, all of the democratic areas of America and Europe, with the Italian center-left in the forefront, now know that the disastrous attack was planned and executed by the American CIA and Mossad ... to falsely incriminate Arabic countries and to persuade the Western Powers to intervene in Iraq and Afghanistan."



Capt. Russ Wittenberg

Capt. Russ Wittenberg, U.S. Air Force – Former Air Force fighter pilot, over 100 combat missions. Commercial pilot for Pan Am and United Airlines for 35 years. Had previously flown the actual two United airplanes that were hijacked on 9/11.

"The government story they handed us about 9/11 is total B.S. [Flight 77] could not have flown at those speeds which they said it did without going into what they call a high speed stall. The airplane won't go that fast if you start pulling those high G maneuvers at those bank angles. To expect this alleged airplane to run these maneuvers with a total amateur at the controls is simply ludicrous."



Raymond L. McGovern

Raymond L. McGovern – Former Chairman, National Intelligence Estimates, CIA. Responsible for *President's Daily Brief (PDB)* for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. 27-year CIA veteran. Former U.S. Army Intelligence Officer.

"I think at simplest terms, there's a cover-up. The 9/11 report is a joke. The question is: What's being covered up? Is it gross malfeasance, gross negligence? Now there are a whole bunch of unanswered questions. And the reason they're unanswered is because this administration will not answer them. This is the bottom line for me; just as Hitler in 1933 cynically exploited the burning of the parliament building, the Reichstag, this is exactly what our President did in exploiting 9/11. The cynical way in which he played on our trauma, used it to justify making a war of aggression on a country that he knew had nothing to do with 9/11. That suffices for me. That's certainly an impeachable offense."



Andreas von Buelow

Andreas von Buelow, PhD – Former State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Defense of West Germany. Former Minister of Research and Technology. Member of Bundestag (Parliament) 1969-1994.

"The official story is so inadequate and far-fetched that there must be another one....The planning of the attacks was technically and organizationally a master achievement. To hijack four huge airplanes within a few minutes, and within one hour to drive them into their targets with complicated flight maneuvers! This is unthinkable without years-long support from secret apparatuses of the state and industry."



Col. Robert Bowman

Col. Robert Bowman, PhD, U.S. Air Force (ret) – Director of Advanced Space Programs Development under Presidents Ford and Carter. Air Force fighter pilot, over 100 combat missions. PhD in Aeronautics, Nuclear Engineering.

"A lot of these pieces of information, taken together, prove that the official story ... of 9/11 is a bunch of hogwash. It's impossible. ... There's a second group of facts having to do with the cover up. Taken together these things prove that high levels of our government don't want us to know what happened. Who gained from 9/11? Who covered up crucial information? And who put out the patently false stories about 9/11 in the first place? I think the case is pretty clear that it's highly placed individuals in the administration with all roads passing through Dick Cheney. I think the very kindest thing that we can say about George W. Bush and all the people in the U.S. Government that have been involved in this massive cover-up ... is that they were aware of impending attacks and let them happen. However even that is high treason and conspiracy to commit murder."



General Leonid Ivashov

General Leonid Ivashov – Joint Chief of Staff of Russian Armies on 9/11/2001. Chief of Department for General Affairs in Soviet Union's Ministry of Defense. Chief of Military Cooperation Department at Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense. Essay: Regarding 9/11:

"Only secret services and their current chiefs – or those retired but still having influence inside the state organizations – have the ability to plan, organize and conduct an operation of such magnitude."



Paul Craig Roberts

Paul Craig Roberts, PhD – Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury under Ronald Reagan. "Father of Reaganomics." Former Associate Editor of the *Wall Street Journal*. Currently Chairman of the Institute for Political Economy and Research Fellow at the Independent Institute.

"There are not many editors eager for writers to explore the glaring defects of the 9/11 Commission Report. One would think that if the report could stand analysis, there would not be a taboo against calling attention to the inadequacy of its explanations....We know that it is strictly impossible for any building, much less steel columned buildings, to 'pancake' at free fall speed. Therefore, it is a non-controversial fact that the official explanation of the collapse of the WTC buildings is false."



Catherine Austin Fitts

Catherine Austin Fitts – Assistant Secretary of Housing under George H.W. Bush. Former Managing Director of Wall Street investment bank, Dillon, Read & Co.

"The first category of people who benefited were those who are guilty and complicit in designing, implementing and financing the 9/11 operation. On such a sophisticated and successful covert operation, the people responsible would have had budgets and financing and would have organized the operation to maximize their political and financial benefits.... The official story could not possibly have happened. It's not possible. It's not operationally feasible. ... The Commission was a whitewash. "



Barbara Honegger

Barbara Honegger – Senior Military Affairs Journalist at the Naval Postgraduate School (1995 - present). White House Policy Analyst, Special Assistant to Pres. Reagan (1981-83).

"The US military, not al Qaeda, had the sustained access weeks before 9/11 to also plant controlled demolition charges throughout the superstructures of WTC1 and WTC2, and in WTC7, which brought down all three buildings on 9/11. A US military plane, not one piloted by al Qaeda, performed the highly skilled, high-speed 270-degree dive towards the Pentagon. Air Traffic Controllers on 9/11 were sure [it] was a military plane as they watched it on their screens. Only a military aircraft, not a civilian plane flown by al Qaeda, would have given off the 'friendly' signal needed to disable the Pentagon's anti-aircraft missile batteries as it approached the building. Only the US military, not al Qaeda, had the ability to break all of its Standard Operating Procedures to paralyze its own emergency response system."



Fred Burks

Fred Burks –State Department Interpreter for Pres. George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Vice Presidents Dick Cheney and Al Gore, Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Madeleine Albright. 18-year State Dept. career.

"How is it possible that our military's highly touted missile detections systems could not locate Flight 77 in the 42 minutes it was known to be lost before it crashed into the heart of the defense system of the U.S.? An even bigger question is why isn't our media asking these questions? Why isn't our military spending many millions of dollars to find out why military defense systems failed on 9/11? Why is it that the 9/11 Commission budget was far less than the budget allotted to the Challenger Disaster or even the Monica Lewinsky affair?"



Capt. Gregory M. Zeigler

Capt. Gregory M. Zeigler, PhD, U.S. Army – Former U.S. Army Intelligence Officer

"I knew from September 18, 2001, that the official story about 9/11 was false....Anomalies poured in rapidly: the hijackers' names appearing in none of the published flight passenger lists, BBC reports of stolen identities of the alleged hijackers or the alleged hijackers being found alive, the obvious demolitions of WTC1, 2, and 7, the lack of identifiable Boeing 757 wreckage at the Pentagon."



Major Douglas Rokke

Major Douglas Rokke, PhD, U.S. Army (ret) – Former Director U.S. Army Depleted Uranium Project.

"When you look at the whole thing, especially the crash site void of airplane parts, the size of the hole left in the building and the fact the projectile's impact penetrated numerous concrete walls, it looks like the work of a missile. And when you look at the damage, it was obviously a missile."



Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski

Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, PhD, U.S. Air Force (ret) – Former Political-Military Affairs Officer in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Staff Member, Office of Dir. of the National Security Agency. 20-year Air Force veteran.

"Reading through the official 9/11 report, I quickly lost my focus – apparently emulating the 9/11 commission over the past 20 months. One wonders if the entire commission wasn't secretly replaced by pod people from the old Soviet Central Committee. I naively expected more constructive and useful information in the report."



Col. George Nelson

Col. George Nelson, U.S. Air Force (ret) – Former U.S. Air Force aircraft accident investigator and airplane parts authority. 34-year Air Force career.

"The government alleges that four wide-body airliners crashed on the morning of September 11 2001, resulting in the deaths of more than 3,000 human beings, yet not one piece of hard aircraft evidence has been produced in an attempt to positively identify any of the four aircraft. On the contrary, it seems only that all potential evidence was deliberately kept hidden.

With all the evidence readily available at the Pentagon crash site, any unbiased rational investigator could only conclude that a Boeing 757 did not fly into the Pentagon. Similarly, with all the evidence available at the Pennsylvania crash site, it is most doubtful that a passenger airliner caused the obvious hole in the ground and certainly not the Boeing 757 as alleged.

As painful and heartbreaking as was the loss of innocent lives and the lingering health problems of thousands more, a most troublesome and nightmarish probability remains that so many Americans appear to be involved in the most heinous conspiracy in our country's history."

AFTERWORD

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS, “GOOD GERMANS” & THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Well over half a century ago, sometime during adolescence in an idyllic small town environment without a political thought in my head, I became aware of what historians and pundits had to say about what led up to World War II, in which my uncle, fresh out of high school, fought as an infantryman in the Battle of the Bulge under Gen. Patton. I couldn't get my mind around the idea of the “good Germans” who had allowed Hitler to commandeer their country and then followed him more or less blindly into national immolation. The more I learned over the years, the more newsreel footage I was exposed to of *der Führer* leading his massive rallies, the harder it was to comprehend what had become of a supposedly civilized European nation beneath the upraised right arm of a psychopath.

Long before I became particularly interested in learning much about world history and began to read to give myself the rudiments of an education, this conundrum bothered the hell out of me. Hitler and the Holocaust and World War II in general flew in the face of what I'd been led to believe in my sheltered little corner of the American Midwest was mankind's gradual but inexorable evolution as a moral creature. I was late coming to this realization of course; among tens of millions of others on the planet, Sartre, for example, had already beat me to it with his popularization of existentialism. Hell yes, God was dead! Or else it was all his fault. How could

you have faith in a supreme being who could let such horrible things happen?

Is that why, with all the other atrocities that have occurred throughout history, this was the one I seemed fixated on? Or was it simply because this one had occurred during my lifetime, although well before I could experience anything but its aftermath? I pondered this, even vaguely wondering whether I could possibly be a reincarnated German who had died during the war. I knew little more about reincarnation than its definition, maybe something I might have read in *Readers Digest*, which my parents subscribed to for a while, and didn't take the thought seriously. Now that I've come to disbelieve much of what we've been taught through our cultural upbringing, I have re-entertained the notion though only as a possibility.

What's far more striking to me upon recognizing 9/11 for the state crime against humanity that it was and is, is the parallel between the German nation of the '30s and '40s and our own now. Let me quote at length from *9/11 & the New World Order*, one of the better books on the subject among the many I've read:

“The [world] Elite destroyed the Germans, the finest nation at that time, during and after the two wars. Listen to the lament of General Patton, who was murdered in what was made to look like an accident, because he understood that U.S. policy during and after the war was designed to build the Communists:

Actually the Germans are the only decent people left in Europe. It's a choice between them and the Russians. I prefer the Germans....What we are doing is to destroy the only semi-modern state in Europe, so that Russia can swallow the whole.”

Wait a minute, what's the author talking about? “*U.S. policy...designed to build the Communists?*” He elaborates but I'll quote just a few sentences of his book to clarify:

“Through their enormous wealth, control of media and the academia, and through their control of leading governments, the Elite sets up false paradigms to divide mankind and keep it in a state of perpetual conflict and bloodshed. The Bolshevik Revolution in

Russia illustrates this point with great force. Such is the ability of these families to deceive and divide mankind that it takes a person of my generation a long time to accept, or even entertain the fact that the Communists were funded and supported by these families and that Communist or Socialist systems were erected to serve their interest. Karl Marx, Trotsky and Lenin were on the payroll of these families, these so-called international bankers....If the American citizens do not rise quickly and with full force to meet the Elite intrigue in time, the Elite will destroy the U.S. It will almost certainly do so before there is such an awakening among the people that they are able to organize a sustained and successful movement against the hijacking of their country by a cabal of families, some of whom do not even reside in the U.S. and yet own it.

The advice of Professor Peter Dale Scott (to whom I referred earlier for his conceptualization of *deep politics*) is highly instructive:

U.S. citizens should study Germany in the 1930s, to see how a civilized nation, under stress, momentarily lost track of its inherent moral virtues and lapsed into a disastrous course of repression, xenophobia, and ultimately war. Most of us in America, including myself, have experienced the same powerlessness that “good Germans” did under Hitler. They too were vaguely aware that members of another ethnic group were being rounded up and illegally detained, yet they too felt unable to do anything about it.”

Scott then quotes from *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, written in 1939 by Sebastian Haffner, which Scott says “has a chilling relevance to the situation ‘good Americans’ find themselves in.”

Haffner writes:

It was just the automatic continuation of ordinary life that hindered any lively, forceful reaction against the horror. I have described how the treachery and cowardice of the leaders of the opposition prevented their organizations being used against the Nazis and offering any resistance. That still leaves the question why no individual ever spontaneously opposed some particular injustice or iniquity they experienced, even if they did not act against the whole....It was hindered by the mechanical continuation of daily life.”

The author concludes this section of his book with a warning: “The Americans have stood up in large numbers but the ‘mechanical continuation of daily life’ and a mindset created from school days, reinforced 24/7 by the corporate media, a media which is nothing but a propaganda arm of the banking cabal, has, thus far, prevented the great mass from joining them. Amid widespread discontent, America’s descent into dictatorship and eventual bloodshed

continues. This will also lead to the eventual subjugation of U.S. sovereignty by outside forces such as NATO, headquartered in Belgium and controlled by the Rothschilds.”

In a decade of reading and (mostly online) research in attempting to learn the truth of 9/11 and what’s really going on in the world, I’ve often come across the following poem by German pastor Martin Niemoeller on his choice not to act during World War II:

In Germany they came first for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.
Then they came for me,
and by that time no one was left to speak up.

One of my best friends during a 19-year tenure in Los Angeles is now a “freeway flyer,” a non-tenured professor with a doctorate who commutes among three of L.A.’s institutions of higher learning to teach film studies. Married, he is multilingual, cultured, well-read and obviously well-educated. His father, a judge in pre-war Germany, emigrated with his family as part of the diaspora of prescient German Jews who got out before Hitler came to power. In America he became a gardener.

Though he was a very good one, with a predominantly German emigré clientele wealthy enough to provide him eventually with a home in one of L.A.’s most desirable neighborhoods, you have to wonder how he felt about the change of occupations. I assumed that when I shared an earlier screenplay version of my novella *False Flag* with his son, my friend would be most receptive, given his family’s experience. Instead he replied simply, “That’s not my conspiracy.”

By the way, the author I’ve been quoting, and have intentionally left unnamed until now, is Mujahid Kamran, a Pakistani long associated with Punjab University as professor, chairman of

the Physics Dept., and finally Dean, Faculty of Science. A Fulbright Fellow at the University of Georgia in the U.S., he was given the International Einstein Award for Scientific Achievement in 2010.

What does he say about those largely responsible for the murderous, unholy mess in the Middle East today? “The people in the U.S. represent the finest part of mankind and the international bankers know it. The Americans are blessed with wonderful qualities of the head and heart – this is unacceptable for those who want to set up the New World Order.”

Mr. Kamran has a higher regard for the American people than do I. He is obviously less judgmental. I tend to divide my compatriots largely into those involved in the execution or cover-up of the mass murders of 9/11, and those only too willing to accept the government’s ludicrous version of how it happened and who the perps were. After all these years and after all the revelations of false flag activities not just on 9/11 but in many other incidents all over the world, words I put into my character Frank’s mouth in *False Flag* – “*It took me years even to begin to grasp the depth of our government’s involvement. We can’t expect the average person to be up with us on this. Of course they’re in denial about it. I sure as hell was at first.*” – no longer apply. If Thomas Jefferson is correct in declaring that “eternal vigilance is the price we pay for liberty,” then we Americans have been bankrupt for a long time.

(Since I wrote this, in Oct. 2015, I’ve seen numerous articles with polls purporting to show an increasing percentage of Americans who no longer believe the government’s version of what took place on 9/11. I only hope they’re right and that this promising development continues.)

What prevents my complete slide into misanthropy is in part my refusal to believe that the selfish, warring way of life in the world today is the best that we human beings can do. It’s

not. I am confident that evolution, consciousness, will get it right. Through us or without us.

In my decade of 9/11 research, I've come across almost as much information relating to what, for the sake of convenience, I'll call "spirituality" as I have the profusion of conspiracy theories that the mainstream media make it a point to ridicule at every opportunity. The current state of the world is a lot easier to accept when not experienced as the be-all and end-all of human experience, and I'm open to this perspective for several reasons.

First of all, as Frank spoke for me in *False Flag*, the massive cover-up of 9/11 has been successful because much of the upper echelons of American society are complicit in it. The rest of us are living either a lie or a fantasy, take your pick. That being the case, I'm skeptical about not only what our culture claims to be true but what it ignores or denies. My early drug experiences had already revealed how limited our consensual view of reality is.

Another basis for my openness toward the spiritual and discussion of "higher consciousness" stems from my good fortune to have been involved in a TV series on paranormal phenomena. I arrived in L.A. in the mid-'60s with the relative close-mindedness of your average Midwestern 20-something, amused by my California friends' confident conversations about astral-tripping and such, and thanks to the gates of perception which swung open with the three-plus years we spent interviewing and filming many of those blessed or at least familiar with apparent paranormal abilities, my narrow mind expanded somewhat. Not just from the experiences themselves but far more from the extensive reading they led me to. For example, the quarterly journals of the Society for Scientific Exploration, a professional organization of scientists and scholars, many of them tenured Ph.D. physicists, committed to studying unexplained phenomena that cross or lie outside traditional scientific boundaries.

As it became increasingly obvious that the World Trade Center towers had been

destroyed in a controlled demolition of some kind, it didn't surprise me that few scientists were willing to risk their positions and reputations to confirm this. It doesn't take an event of such world-shaking magnitude to separate those truly committed to science from the drones who merely teach their particular specialty, whose true commitment is to serve as gatekeepers for the prevailing scientific paradigm on which their careers are built.

This became clearer to me when I spent a summer organizing the voluminous files of the late Christopher Bird for his widow Shabari. The author of *The Divining Hand: the 500 Year-old Mystery of Dowsing*, generally considered *the* book on the subject, Chris had supplied a generous blurb for my own book on dowsing, and Shabari asked me to put in order his years of correspondence with many of those practicing on the frontiers of science. It was a labor both fascinating and discouraging as I learned how most of them had been turned away, kept at bay by the scientific community, their years of work ignored or actually destroyed upon orders of one governmental body or another. (Chris, by the way, was co-author of the very successful *The Secret Life of Plants*, among numerous other works.)

There is yet another significant reason for my willingness to keep an open mind on matters spiritual or relating to consciousness as an energy more cosmic than merely human. The subject of a scientific presentation made recently to the American Psychiatric Association by a psychiatrist I know well was the nature of consciousness. The focus of the presentation was a series of extraordinary videotaped sessions in which a young American high school dropout (who later obtained an LVN license), fluently recited and translated mystical concepts in four archaic Sanskrit-related languages which she said had been spoken to her by an Indian holy man while she was in a dream state. A baffled Sanskrit scholar confirmed not only that her translations were accurate but that the obscure passages were from several different ancient

traditions and time periods.

Is consciousness, then, merely a production of the brain, as accepted scientific dogma currently maintains, or is it the primary substance or substrate of reality? Alternatively, is there a middle ground where energy, mind, and matter all exist in a continuum as parts of basic nature? The APA presentation wasn't the first to posit such questions; the possibly cosmic nature of consciousness has become a hot topic in some branches of the scientific community. And as a good friend of the psychiatrist who made the videotapes and the APA presentation, I've been aware of this discussion for years.

It's because of these experiences, then, despite my utter certainty that 9/11 was not just an inside job but one of many ongoing and deadly false flag operations – *the reason it's more important than ever that we awaken to the truth of 9/11 now!* – that I hold out more than hope alone that the thrilling message the Internet has been humming with for some time, like native drums in an earlier age, is bringing us truly good news. Ten-thousand years of patriarchal empire may be coming to an end. Not only that, but there are many claims – far too many to ignore – that our world is undergoing an expansion of consciousness unlike anything in recorded history. This may be what the thousands of crop circles that have been appearing all over the globe for the last few decades are intended to communicate to us.

The worldwide phenomena of crop circles are ignored by the mainstream media for the same reasons we are misinformed about the spectacle of the World Trade Center towers turning to dust before our eyes. These unexplained, ineffable symbols appearing spontaneously in fields of grain, in sand, on ice, even according to some reports in forest canopies, should also awaken us to the fact that something extraordinary is taking place in the world. (As for the possibility that crop circles are all hoaxes, as we have been disinformed by the media when they are

mentioned at all, when you have the time to educate and inspire yourself, check out some of the remarkable documentaries on the subject.)

If predictions of enhanced human consciousness are a forecast of the near future, the current escalation of violence around the world may represent the last futile gasp of those who have plotted for generations through wars and ruthless depopulation schemes to achieve a New World Order, in which the many are to become virtual slaves to the very few.

For all those who find such speculation laughable, I'll say only that the outcome is still unknown, while the fact that 9/11 was an inside operation is undeniable. Three high-rise buildings collapse within seven hours of one another into their own footprints in near free fall? This should have been, at long last, our wake-up call! Those who cravenly cling to denial – who refuse to accept even the possibility that these were controlled demolitions of some kind, with all the terrible implications and consequences inherent in such a crime – have neither credibility nor moral authority. *WAKE UP!*

Of the hundreds of 9/11 Truthers on a mission to disseminate that wake-up call as widely as possible, it's my perception that among the most active and authoritative there is a critical Triumvirate to whom we owe the most. One is David Ray Griffin, whom we met in my story delivering his presentation on the science-denying “miracles” necessary for the destruction of the three towers on 9/11 to be anything other than controlled demolitions.

Another is Richard Gage, a San Francisco Bay-area architect who founded Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth in 2006 and has arguably done more to bring 9/11 truth to members of those and other professions than anyone else. Currently more than 3,000 architects and engineers and 22,000 members of the general public belong to the organization.

The third crucial Truther is Christopher Bollyn, an erudite world traveler and author of

many articles and the controversial, meticulously documented best-seller *Solving 9/11: The Deception That Changed the World*. Bollyn, who lived for a time on an Israeli kibbutz, pins the planning and execution of 9/11 on Israel's national intelligence agency Mossad. His unrelenting message is that we avoid the diversionary divide-and-conquer machinations of the cover-up, arguing over details, and hold the mass murderers accountable. Like anyone daring to connect Israel with 9/11, Bollyn has been slandered as an anti-Semite, but his extensive body of historical research has no quarrel with Judaism or the Jewish people. Zionism and Israeli crimes against humanity are the subjects he inveighs against.

(I'm careful to make the same distinction in my story. Allow me to revisit if I may the comments of my Jewish character Lois from chapter 11:

“Well I can't speak for anyone but myself, but what distresses me is the confusion between Jews and Zionism that many people have – that has been deliberately instigated by the media, and by those who use it to *sow* confusion. Zionism isn't part of the Jewish religion; it's a nationalist movement, that has gone far beyond the founding of the state of Israel. There are many Jews who vehemently oppose Zionist ideology. Especially the Orthodox of course, but not exclusively by any means. Even Jews who consider themselves loyal to Israel – Israelis and non-Israelis alike – are very much against the treatment of the Palestinians for example.”

She looked at her companions for reactions and took a drink of her wine. When neither of them spoke she continued. “As for the Mossad, they no more speak for Jews than the CIA does for Americans – of any religion. Could they have been involved in some way? I wouldn't be surprised. It sure as hell wasn't the skirt-chasing Arabs, many of them still alive, who the government claims hijacked the planes.”)

I've been reading differing accounts for some time of how and why an expansion of consciousness within humanity is about to take place. Some are vague or extremely far-fetched; others reinforce one another with the information they impart. For fellow 9/11 Truthers, like my friend Jim, who's not just a lapsed but more like a renegade Catholic and who has no truck with the mystical or paranormal – with a reality, in other words, beyond the one we've inherited, that

we can perceive with our five senses and that falls comfortably within the parameters of our cultural consensus of what is and is not – perhaps that’s your own personal gatekeeper at work.

In any case we can’t just wait to be rescued and ushered into a new era in human history. It’s way past time to get busy. God, Allah, the Great Spirit aren’t dead and never have been or we wouldn’t be here. Their gift to us is consciousness, if these aren’t in fact *names*, perhaps embodiments, of pure consciousness itself. It’s time to accept the gift of life, our spiritual existence, with the reverent gratitude and sense of responsibility demanded of us if we are to co-create a world we wish to live in and to share with other inhabitants of the planet.