

1939

BY

Robert P. Fitton

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## 1

Kate wanted to kill herself legally and Andy was helpless to stop her. He skidded to a stop fifty feet from the shopping plaza's termination clinic and scrambled from his little green Saab. She had threatened to end her life so many times because of the debilitating pain, but he always talked her out of it. He slipped across the gritty, salted sidewalk and shoved the glass door against the lobby wall.

The receptionist behind the counter lifted her head, but kept her eyes on the colorful monitor graphics. "Yeah..."

"Where is she? Where's my sister?"

She squinted and finally looked up. "Who the hell are you?"

Andy locked both hands around the counter edge and spoke slowly, but his emotions threatened to overtake him. She clicked the mouse and another Supernet site appeared. He yelled over the accompanying music.

"My name is Andy Reese. My sister Kate left a note saying she was on her way over to this... this *clinic!*"

A man with greasy blonde hair, clad in a green lab coat quickly shut a metal door behind the receptionist. "This is a legal termination clinic."

"My sister, where is she?"

"Some woman named Karen Reese," said the receptionist, checking something else on screen.

"Kate. Her name is Kate," said Andy."

The guy folded his arms. “ All patients records are strictly confidential according to universal coverage.”

Andy dove across the counter and slid into the office. The man jumped back, but Andy clawed his lab coat. Only his martial arts discipline prevented him from destroying this drone. “ Listen, you get me to my sister... Her disease is not life threatening.”

“ According to the law any client may enter a termination facility and be treated.”

“ *Treated?*” asked Andy.

“ I hope they send you away for this invasion of our privacy!” barked the receptionist.

“ Shut up! Where is she?”

“ Morally, I don't have to answer your questions.”

“ Morally? What do you know about morals?” He slowly crunched the man's skull against the metal door. “ I want my sister out of here!”

“ You'll pay for this, you bastard! There are laws protecting termination clinic employees as well as clients.”

Andy tightened his grip around the man's chin and pressured his head back. “ You let me inside or I'll kill you!”

The man's faced flushed red as he choked. “ You're too late.”

Andy released his hand and stepped back. Tears rose in his eyes as he collapsed into one of the vinyl chairs. The woman clicked the mouse and his hollow voice cut the silence. “ And that's it? You... you just let somebody walk in here and take their life?”

“ I’m e-mailing the Lawyers Union,” said the man, rubbing his chaffed throat as he pointed. “ You’ve broken the law, you prick. We have our rights.”

Andy lowered his head into his hands. He visualized a sun drenched image of Kate’s straight brown hair and medicated green eyes as she lounged on her wicker chair yesterday afternoon. Talk of checking into a termination clinic ceased days ago. After shopping this afternoon, he had planned to bring a specially prepared meal to her, but he received a call from the observatory. While he did not have to drive up the mountain, they needed him to investigate some high-energy readings beyond Antares, in Scorpius from his apartment computer. Now Kate was dead because he had stayed home. “ I loved my sister. Don’t you people understand that?”

The guy shook his head. “ You are in big trouble, dude.” He opened the metal door and disappeared into a green tiled room out back.

Numbness settled over Andy’s shoulders. The woman behind the desk continued with her Supernet activities as if he was no more than an annoying fly buzzing around the office. A bony framed woman within shriveled countenance and expression of perpetual annoyance now entered the office from a side door. “ Mr. Reese, we will have to ask you to leave the premises. You are committing a federal crime by remaining here.”

His anger stirred with sadness as he pictured Kate’s verdant eyes again. Before her bone marrow problems she was so energetic and a catalyst in his own life. All his emotions twisted like muddied water down the drain. He banged his elbow against the metal door hard enough to dent it. The two woman behind the counter stepped back and the receptionist turned from the

web site. He produced a muffled wail as he lifted the counter door. “ You damned people. You murdered my sister! You murdered her!”

The front door rattled and cold air swept inside. A security team of two men and a woman, dressed in brown and green combat uniforms, bolted through the open doorway. They surrounded him with long barreled weapons and the short blonde woman with cold steely blue eyes faced him. “ Disruption of a termination clinic operation is a federal offense, Mr. Reese.”

“ How do you know who I am?”

“ You’ve been scanned,” she answered quickly and unemotionally.

“ Are you kidding me?” Andy stared at the heavy rifles as clinic workers gathered behind the counter like spectators at a sporting event.

“ What the hell is left? The Supreme Court makes it legal to kill yourself with no questions asked? If you want to do it, you do it.”

“ Let me talk to him, Sergeant,” said the nurse in the green fatigues. She told Andy she was in the room when they injected Katie.

“ Sure, you get paid for this. You work in a damned termination clinic and you take a paycheck for helping people kill themselves! That’s sick! You hear me, sick!”

She looked concerned, but Andy would not trust someone who just assisted in killing Kate. “ I can get you some sounder. It will make you feel better for a long time, Mr. Reese. Fix you up.”

“ Sounder. They have all the names to make you think it’s just something you take for a headache... Where is my sister’s body?”

“ I’m sorry, Ms. Reese’s body will be incinerated as per her wishes.”

“ No! At least let me bury her! Have a funeral!”

“ That will not be possible, Mr. Reese,” said the nurse. “ No legal instructions were given. The law is quite clear on this matter.”

“ What the hell has happened to this world? ” An elderly woman in a wheel chair and two young woman appeared by the door. “ So, what’s wrong with her? Too old?”

The sergeant checked a hand-held communication unit. “ The supplementary report on you Reese says you are a martial arts practitioner. You could face additional charges...”

Andy closed his eyes. He offered no resistance as they placed the expandable plastic restraining rings around his wrists. “ We will have no disruption of terminal clinics,” said the sergeant.

“ Might disturb the dead,” said Andy.

“ Sergeant, get him the hell out of here. We have clients,” said the nurse.

“ Yes, Sergeant, we wouldn’t want the lady to have a heart attack and die.”

“ Bring his ass to detention.”

Andy struggled at first as they led him out the front door into the darkened shopping center’s frozen parking lot. The cold night air stung his glazed eyes and sweaty skin. “ I don’t get it, you’re arresting me and they just killed my sister.” The camouflaged cruiser van was parked a few feet from his Saab and next to a prodigious snow bank, brightened by the moonlight. He looked up at the stars and across the snow sifted mountain peaks. “ Are you really a pro-termination advocate, Sergeant?”

“ You mind your own fucking business, Reese,” she said as they swung open the van doors.

As the team prepared to push him inside, Andy looked her in the eye.  
“ It doesn’t make it right. My sister is dead,”

She chuckled and shook her head. “ Don’t be a wimp.”

\* \* \*

Cody slowed his shiny red BMW and the engine whined. He popped a second bright green pill. “ You know, sometimes it’s best to shut your mouth when it comes to the law, Andy. You want a pill? It’s FDA legal. You’re not supposed to drive with it, but what the hell.”

Andy shook his head. He was not going to lecture Cody again about the stupidity of keeping his blood levels elevated. “ Thanks for getting me out.”

“ You owe me, man. How about taking in some virtual stuff back in the apartment?”

“ No.”

“ When’s your trial?” he asked and flipped the dash monitor.

“ I don’t know. I’ll leave it for my lawyer whenever I get him.”

“ You got the cash and you’ll get off. That’s the way it works in this world. What about your Saab?”

“ Impounded.” A knife pierced the forehead of the man on the screen and blood erupted from the fissure above his eyes. “ I don’t want to watch this, Cody.”

“ You’re becoming a real prude, Andy, you know that?” Cody flipped the screen and two bare ass women kissed on satin sheets. Andy banged the power switch. “ Hey, man, there’s no violence there.”

“ Just get me home.”

“ That first flick, my friend, The Cruzean Connection, was number one at the box office last year. Wicked gore... Number one, man.”

Andy grabbed the door handle. “ Number one... So what? That means nothing.”

“ You need to get laid, pop some colored jumbos and chill out, man. Even the President pops colored jumbos. But she was a super model, what do you expect?”

Andy looked at Cody’s distorted face as the car slowed and stopped abruptly. “ I’ll see ya.”

“ I can call the escort service. Get somebody over here before midnight. Keep you company. Or maybe some virtual servicing.”

Andy did not look back and marched up the snow bank walk. “ Don’t waste your money.”

The moon hovered near the mountains and the stars crystallized over the snow capped countryside. Cody’s car fishtailed at the corner and disappeared behind the next street’s chunky snow piles. Despite the frigid air, Andy dallied on the walk and tracked a pinpoint satellite across the sky dome. Since he was a little boy he was in love with the sky; enough to earn his doctorate and study radio and optical signals for a living. When he was not driving to the **SKYSCAN** facility atop the mountain, he was aligning his home computers into the world wide and orbital tracking systems. The sky was cold and silent, and in some ways preferable to the media noise and astounding lack of perspective everywhere. And now Kate was dead.

He clicked the front door locks with his remote and continued up the walk. The inner stairway was warmer and he pulled back the Velcro on his

coat as he trudged up the carpeted stairs. Kate's narrow face, vibrant eyes and ready smile stayed with him to his apartment. Her bone disease was not on the list of miracle cures over the past few years. He pushed his remote again and opened the apartment door. Kate would have faced a long battle with constant, pain inducing therapy, but he could not support her termination.

His computer turned on the lights and then spoke to him. "Room temperature: seventy-two degrees, Andy. Is that acceptable?"

"That's about the only thing that's acceptable," he said as he threw his coat over the kitchenette chair. "I want to scan."

"Program executing."

He opened the refrigerator and took out nutrient juice pack. Across the room his large desk monitor brightened with the **SKYSCAN** program. He pushed the straw into the juice pack and pulled back his desk chair.

"Inner solar system, Jovian moons."

"The observatory wishes you to scan the Sigma--"

"You will implement my program, computer."

The screen fluttered and a numbered program flashed in yellow letters on a blue background. Kate never understood his fascination with astronomy. She lectured him about his hobby diverting from true employment. The lectures stopped when the doctorate degree was posted on his office wall at **SKYSCAN**. A crisp image of Jupiter cast a red glow across his sweatshirt once the room lights dimmed. He stared at the multitude of swirling gaseous bands and the eternal red spot, but quickly was lost in thoughts of Kate riding her bicycle years ago before the millennium. Mom and Dad were still alive and the wrecking ball had not leveled his family's house in Tobin Springs.

They even chain sawed the huge pine tree planted by his father when Andy was three years old. “ Sleep soundly, Katie. Sleep soundly.”

He had the computer utilize the Ptolemy telescope in lunar orbit to scan the crater packed moon, Io. Once it implemented the visual scan of the Jovian system with other frequencies, Andy leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. Somehow he would have a church service for Kate. He grit his teeth and shouted. “ I just don’t understand why killing yourself is legal!”

“ Is that a question for me?” asked the computer.

“ Sure, you answer it.”

“ McCain vs. Oregon in 2012 specifically allowed the states to allow an individual to end-”

“ Shut up!”

“ Is that a command?” asked the computer.

“ No... no. I want to send my extraterrestrial message now.”

“ You have an incoming e-mail from Cody and an attached list of escort services.”

“ Table it. No, delete it. Bring up my salutation on the hyper-band.”

“ Implementing...” Andy watched as the Ptolemy image swung to another Jovian moon, Ganymede. Andy studied its cracked surface. “ Do you wish a live message or the recording salutation to the stars?”

“ Recorded.” He did not have the will to record a new message.

“ First signal on audio and the rest hidden.”

Andy soon heard his own voice, lively and not affected by grief, broadcast from the powerful gain antennas in earth orbit. “ This is Andrew James Reese speaking from the planet earth from the year 2015 AD.”

“ Do you wish update of year?” asked the computer.

“ Sure, why not?”

“ This is Andy James Reese speaking from the planet earth from the year 2016. I am human being, a scientist, twenty-four years old, searching for intelligent life in the universe. By the time you hear this message I will be long dead, that is of course unless you are cruising around us here on earth.

My planet suffers not from poverty but from abundance. Things once deemed important are now annoyances. There are no consequences as we sink in our own prosperity.”

“ Do you wish me to automatically update your age on your birthday?” asked the computer.

“ Yeah...”

“ By the time you get this message, maybe we will have straightened ourselves out. We used to live in a world that wasn’t perfect, but at least a place where most people were guided by an inner compass.” Andy smacked the desk. “ For all the good this will do. Maybe all civilizations become self-indulgent ... I can’t believe Katie is dead... Computer.”

“ Yes.”

He stared at Ganymede’s shattered crust. “ Bring up family album, lower corner of screen. And then I want access to the historical photo sites.”

“ Do you wish me to list viewing history?”

“ No, I’ll determine where I’m going,” said Andy and he sipped the nutrient pack’s cool liquid.

“ Message is repeating to the galaxy.”

“ Are you cracking a joke, computer?”

“ Do you wish me to?”

“ Forget it.” A picture of Kate and himself on their bikes, appeared in the monitor’s lower corner. “ My God, what have they done?” Katie was so innocent after she lost her tooth and her poodle eyes pulled him back through the years.

“ Do you wish access to family video and audio disks?”

“ No.” Another picture of Andy and Katie at a zoo in Denver prompted him to clamp his wet eyes. He folded his elbows on the desk and cried into the stuffy darkness. Maybe the computer could not sense his grief or his distraction and it said nothing as he wept.

## 2

The repeating beep awakened him and he sat up in front of the monitor.

“ You have an incoming message,” said the computer.

Andy squinted at the clock in the lower corner of a refreshed image of Jupiter. “ Who’s calling me at three-fifteen in the morning?”

“ It’s odd.”

Andy yawned and for a moment actually forgot Kate was dead. “ I really need to get to bed... What’s odd?”

“ The nature of this reception is incoming.”

“ You said that.” Andy stood and chucked the drink pack in the wastebasket.

“ No, from space. A disturbance.”

He turned and faced the Jupiter image. “ Disturbance? I don’t see any disturbance.”

“ The disturbance is around Ganymede and it’s not visual. Its more of a distortion. I don’t have the ability to tell you why.”

“ Somebody will pick it up.”

“ No, it’s on a thin waveband, directed off a local cell tower.”

“ What? Are you sure?” asked Andy.

“ It has visual content and is current. Not recorded.”

“ Okay, let’s see it. I want to get some sleep.”

“ Full or partial screen?” asked the computer.

“ Just play it.”

At a dark table two men with white straight hair and smooth bronzed faces sat in carved wood, high backed chairs next to a middle-aged woman with red hair. They were clad in pale smooth green cloaks within a snowy image of sandstone columns and a long open window. Craggy mountain peaks were back dropped by a magenta sky, layered with swift moving deep gray clouds. The man in the center spoke English with a Jamaican or Caribbean accent “ We wanted to contact you directly, Andy. We see you and are aware of your work with **SKYSCAN**.”

“ Who are you?”

As the old man continued the signal popped in and out like a bad microwave transmission. “ We speak to you, Andy from the six hundredth year from the Unification of the Seraph enclave on Ganymede. You see us within a compressed frequency through time.”

“ What? Computer, is that true or is some Supernet hoax?”

“ The signal is emerging through a distortion on a thin beam directed to your SI provider on the tower. Whomever is on this frequency is really transmitting to you.”

“ Why are you calling me?”

“ You called us,” said the woman.

The third man spoke. “ We live in a genetically pure time. No defects allowed. Everyone is free to pursue and recreate. To be virtual and non-offensive. Perfection and equality for everyone.”

Andy fell back in the chair and stared at the fleeting clouds.

“Then you’re telling me you are from *my* future?”

“We have no countries, cities or states,” said the woman.

“Only the individual and the pure state, enforced by the Moloch.”

“They have evolved and cannot be considered human any longer,” said the old man.

“We hide here, in the Ganymede enclave, away from earth and the Moloch, because we care about the values of the past,” said the woman.

“What do you want?” asked Andy.

The old man’s bushy white brows slowly rose. “The Moloch will eventually find and possess us. We need your help.”

“My help? Why?”

“Because,” said the other man. “The essence of true humanity involves dealing with fallibility and imperfection.”

“I’m not quite sure what you want.”

“Even we have lost much of our humanity and we fear our signal may be gathered by the Moloch even at this distance. We want someone closer to antiquity to go back in time.”

Andy grinned. “This *is* some kind of hoax.”

“You just lost your sister. The right of termination had begun, Andy. You will live another eight years, but you will be interned for challenging societal changes.”

“Eight years?” The signal faded to snow. “Computer, get it back.”

“It is no longer there,” said the computer.

“Was transmission really through time?”

“I don’t know. It came through the cell tower and the SI provider.”

Andy clamped his fists and closed his eyes. “ This is somebody’s idea of a bad joke. How did they know about Kate?”

The computer did not answer, but the signal crackled back on the speakers, and the three forms appeared.

“ Can you see us, Andy?” asked the old man.

“ Yes, I see you. Who are you?”

“ You probably want to know how we know about your personal history.”

Andy leaned toward the screen. “ Yes, and my sister’s death. I don’t find your knowledge amusing.”

“ We banked antiquity sequences when we first received your signals. It may be some time before actual extraterrestrials receive the signal. Our settings are gathered through time.”

“ Okay... Why do you want me back in time?” he asked and then he laughed. “ Wait a minute... This is ludicrous.”

“ Extrapolations can highlight certain people and events back in time,” said the woman. “ We have reason to think you can help them change the course of human history.”

“ Change?”

The old man cleared his throat. “ The Moloch and our world won’t allow simple human responsibility in the face of technological change.”

“ We believe,” said the woman. “ We can extrapolate alternate histories. There are a number of important themes in your time, Andy, which if altered, may temporarily restore humanity’s potential. Whether such a change is permanent is a matter of debate even among us.”

Andy stood and his smile stuck to his face. “ Come on.”

“It’s true,” said the old man. “You can prevent certain trends.”

“I’ll assume you people are real,” said Andy. “How do you, if you are ahead in time, transport *me* back in time?”

“Gathering your signal in an open area. Waves returned through time,” said the old man.

“Waves?”

“Gathered back. We can’t be taken back from our time because the waves radiate backward, but we can gather you and continue you backward. We have awaited such an opportunity. You are the one.”

“Right,” replied Andy, chuckling. “Sure... sure. Tell me how.”

“You must be in an open area and have a signal. A wireless phone from your era. We know where your apartment building was located, but we need a signal.”

Andy’s brow tightened as he concentrated. “There’s an open field near my apartment complex.”

“Good. You need to be in that field at night so the frequency is the strongest into space. We will gather it and you.”

“How far is the field from you right now?”

“Two hundred maybe three hundred yards. Hey, wait a minute, I’m not volunteering a trip through time.”

“Go into the field only when you feel comfortable and use your phone device for two of your minute intervals. We will gather your location and we have your assigned frequency.”

“Just where do you want bring me?” he asked, still not convinced.

“1939 AD, Andy. 1939, just before the Twentieth Century’s Second World War.”

“ Look, like I said. I’m not volunteering for anything. I still don’t believe this is even real.”

\* \* \*

At first he went out to the field on a lark, but some forlorn hope kept him out there every night for a week. He placed his boots in the snow expanse and within foggy breaths lifted his cell phone toward the stars. The first night he remained out long enough to see the moon set behind the mountains, but as his confidence in the Seraph transmission waned, he limited the sessions under the stars. By Monday he attempted a two-minute signal and Tuesday night was cloudy.

“ Why go back through time anyway? And why don’t they hear me?”

The computer was still aligned to Ganymede. “ The signal no longer exists, Andy.”

“ Maybe it was a fluke or worse a prank,” said Andy.

“ The signal was real and originated, according to scans on a direct path to Ganymede and the cell tower. Then to the SI interface.”

Andy peered through the window panes at the stars above the field.

“ I see what I was doing.”

“ What was that?” asked the computer.

“ Putting up this elaborate smoke screen because of Kate’s suicide.”

“ Andy.”

He turned from the window and back to his desk. “ What?”

“ The signal was real.”

## 3

March was colder than February. Some nights when he mourned Kate, he would engage in protracted martial arts bouts in the gym. When in a more sedate mood he donned his heavy coat, gloves and orange stocking cap, and trekked into the field, sometimes spending hours outside before leaving for the observatory around midnight. He believed what the computer told him about the signal's authenticity, but he kept the information to himself as well as the Seraph offer to send him back through time.

For weeks he studied disks of the period almost eighty years past. He read about the unfathomable atomic bombs ending the war and how earlier the fearful British population listened when German V-2 rocket engines cut high in the air as a deadly silence preceded the inevitable explosion. The rise of fascism across Europe and the spread of Japanese imperialism was not of interest to him in grade school, but images of the demonic Adolph Hitler's dramatic speeches to prodigious, swastika waving crowds unfolded on the monitor. Goose stepping soldiers and behemoth tanks rolling into helpless cities were captured from old black and white films. The magnetic hold of Hitler and the brutality of the Nazis shook him. In 1939 the United States, led by the charismatic Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had not fully recovered from a time of great unemployment and diminished production and faced the prospect of fighting a war against Hitler and the Japanese. Why would those people on Ganymede want to send him back to such a tumultuous time?

As Andy studied the incoming data sheets from last night Wilton moved over to the radio telescope monitors. “ Andy, may I have a word with you?”

He looked up and focused at Wilton’s creamy blue eyes. “ Something wrong?”

“ Well, actually yes. Dr. Bowers has asked me to speak with you about your probation from the arrest at the clinic.”

“ What’s the problem?”

“ Apparently some bureaucrat in Washington has caught wind of your court hearing and-”

Andy stood. “ Listen, I was sentenced to a thousand hours community service and I have to attend reorientation classes.”

“ Yes, we know you’re working on correcting your original behavior, but you’ve actually been out protesting in front of termination clinics. While we can live with the arrest record...”

Andy laughed and shook his head as he paced. “ Isn’t that nice of you? My sister is murdered inside one of those horror chambers and you can’t live with the fact I got a little upset.”

“ She made the decision and she had the right,” said Wilton.

“ The right to kill herself? She was depressed because of her disease! Screw you, Wilton!” He cut across the room and scooped his jacket off the chair. “ Screw **SKYSCAN**.”

“ Do I treat this as a resignation?”

Andy stopped at the door and turned before he slammed it. “ You treat it any damn way you want. Why don’t you watch TV tonight? Maybe you’ll see me get arrested again!”

\* \* \*

Andy held a candle with Kate's college photograph taped to the base. He marched with the protesters in the freezing parking lot air, only fifty yards from where she was murdered. As the crowd sang a hymn similar to a Gregorian chant, four security team members emerged from a camouflaged security van near the department store. Marching in a termination clinic protest was a direct violation of his parole. When one of the members pointed at him, Andy veered away from the protest, but all four security people followed him down the concrete sidewalk along the plaza store fronts.

He darted around the corner and the candle flame went out as he scuttled along the building. Within the crisp white halogen light, he spotted a metal fire ladder. He dropped the candle with Kate's picture as he raced along the cinder blocks. With a running leap, he scampered six feet up the wall and grabbed the ladder's bottom rung. Before the security team rounded the building, he had hoisted himself up the cold metal bars.

Blue and red security lights flashed across the gravel roof and the silhouetted metal ducts. Headlights swung around back as another van raced into the rear lot. An amplified voice shook the winter air. "We know you're out here, Reese. You have violated federal parole and will be arrested!"

Andy stopped near the steamy vents up front, removed his cell phone from his coat and dialed his computer. The line rang and he had the computer connect to the SI provider as he looked skyward. Spotlights hit the upper ducts now and another team member spoke into the amplifier.

“ You have obstructed access to a federal termination clinic, Mr. Reese. We will take you in by force if necessary!”

Jupiter was only a brilliant speck in the sky without the computer’s enhancement and his whispering breath was, but hazy puff in the freezing night. “ Where are you?”

“ Mr. Reese, you have violated federal law and a Supreme Court decision. Please surrender peacefully.”

About the time he heard them ascending the ladder, a red celestial body expanded near Jupiter. “ What the heck is this?”

The enlargement continued until the body assumed the size of the moon, but with orange-red and yellow pock marks and indefinite brown edges. A single blue beam, outlined an aqua spiral speeding toward him. His ears and hands stung from the cold as the spring coils narrowed and surrounded him within a ten foot radius. Through spaces between the coils he saw several armed and uniformed security team members climb onto the roof.

“ Where is he?” shouted the a little guy with a stogie stuck in his mouth as he raised his weapon.

Andy recognized the Seraph woman’s voice. “ In the field, something blocked your signal. We couldn’t align and gather you until now.”

“ They’re going to capture me.”

“ No one can see you.”

The aqua spring began a slow rotation as the team members criss-crossed the roof, sometimes passing directly through the spirals. The presence of the men and women in combat fatigues and the confusion in the plaza parking lot was obliterated by the rapidly spinning blue and green spirals. The

old man's voice punctuated an accelerating blare. " You are being brought to a city America, the state of Iowa, in June, 1939, AD."

" I am very leery of this."

" Do you want to stay in your time?" asked the old man.

" Be arrested and die in eight years? Oh, no..." Andy stared into the aqua rings. " How can I change anything?"

" A man named Herman Geiger, who died sometime at the New York World's Fair, in the summer of 1939, is a pivotal figure in time. The police or government covered up his death because of the pending war. We only know there are no records about him after the summer of 1939."

" How is he pivotal?"

" Geiger's works are buried in archival capsule recovered from the 1939 World's Fair in what used to be New York City. It was originally placed in a vault during the antiquity period of September, the twenty-third, 1938, and thousands of years later extricated to the safety of the enclave. Geiger's works relate to humanity's reaction to the tidal wave of technology in the then twentieth century."

Andy's feet were no longer on the roof stones, but floating within the blue-green light. The loud clatter rushed toward him like the approach of an oncoming ultra speed train as he yelled. " Is Geiger in Iowa now, is that it?"

" No, you need the means to survive as well as travel to the fair. We located in that same year, a young girl, Lucy Apel, recently graduated from school. She won a writing competition, stating what the New York World's Fair meant to her. The people at the fair paid her expenses to travel from her father's farm in Hancock. That's all we know. She lived another sixty years. But she corresponded with Geiger."

“ So, you’re telling me I have to stop Geiger from being killed at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York?”

The woman spoke again. “ We can only calculate alternate histories. From what we see, Geiger’s impact will cross all tiers of society by 1957, AD. Large rallies were held around the United States and the world. All we are asking is humanity be given the gift of thought and consequences of actions.”

“ I don’t understand.”

“ To think. To put technological change in context, historically and ethically. We won’t even begin to tell you the vapid morality here. Just look at the burgeoning apathy around you.”

“ I’m not a do-gooder, ” he shouted.

“ No American died in the Second World War when Geiger lives. His words fueled a movement called America First that garnered popular support against that world war.”

“ Wait... I’ve watched disks of Hitler and the Japanese. Just what does Geiger’s not dying at this fair do?”

“ Britain was invaded, but held as a protectorate. In fact Germany turned toward Russia and won. But the guerrilla war continued in Russia until pro-democracy governments in the surrounding ethnic countries triumphed in 1955. The Japanese Empire slowly disintegrated and China emerged as a power in 1986. Hitler left the United States alone. He died from reaction to drugs, diabetes, and a heart condition in 1949. The thousand year Reich soon imploded.”

“ I don’t know if I want to get in the middle of this.”

“ Meanwhile Geiger and America First are given credit to having spared American lives. Geiger directs his attention to the human response to technology, pressuring lawmakers to set standards and not let technology run wild. He chides the churches and volunteer organizations into fulfilling a role and most of all he gets people to accept responsibility for their actions in his social technocracy movement. He makes people think about the consequences of their actions. Geiger lives until 1996.”

Andy closed his eyes briefly in the spiraled light. “ This is all very complicated. How can you possibly know what will happen if Geiger lives?”

“ These calculations are possible... We have explored the lives of hundreds of people. It is Geiger who can make the difference. But we still have the Moloch to contend with.”

“ You have mentioned the Moloch before.”

“ We fear them,” said the old man. “ You don’t understand. Humans became their own evolution. They are capable of much in their evolved structure.”

The woman spoke next through the battering cacophony. “ They can overtake human consciousness.”

“ What?”

“ They are highly evolved, Andy. You are being brought back now as we speak.”

“ I am? But I don’t understand how the Moloch can effect consciousness,” said Andy within the aqua glow.

“ Their thoughts are pure energy. They possess human minds.”

The signal was weaker as the woman continued. “ You stop them forcing them out of consciousness.”

“ I don’t understand.”

“ The Moloch will not remain in consciousness unless forced out.”

“ I don’t get it. Are you telling me the Moloch are back in 1939?”

“ They will cease to exist in the future if Geiger lives,” said a third voice, barely audible. “ Maybe things are the way they are because *they* killed Geiger. We don’t know.”

“ No, let me think about this,” said Andy, rubbing the back of his neck.

“ It is too late. You have already been gathered,” said one of the men.

“ Good luck,” said the woman.

“ Your acceptance will make a difference,” added the old man.

“ God’s speed.”

“ Wait!” The loud crescendo slowed and bright breaks appeared in the spiral. “ How do I contact this Lucy Apel? Where will I find her?”

## 4

Daylight pierced between the aqua rings as the entire spring diminished in intensity. An overhead red traffic light flipped to green as a truck engine grumbled, and several antique black cars shifted forward. Engine exhaust infiltrated the disintegrating spirals. The traffic moved and Andy stood on an uneven cement sidewalk with grass shoots sprouting through peripheral cracks. The distant drawl of a baseball announcer broke the warm humid air near the hardware store's green and white awning. Andy located the wood veneer floor model radio wedged between glossy painted push mowers and wheelbarrows with varnished wood handles. The sun heated his face as he ripped off his bulky winter coat and tossed it into the trash barrel. As he approached a man in a white shirt and maroon bow tie swept the sidewalk under the awning. "Excuse me."

The man looked up and leaned on the broom. "Yes, sir, what can I do for you?"

Andy studied the wood veneer floor model radio with its knobs and numbered dial. "I know this maybe a crazy question, but... where am I?"

The man yanked out a red handkerchief and dabbed his forehead. "Let me get this straight. You want to know where you are here in the city, or you want to know what city you're in?"

“ Both.”

“ What are you ridin’ the rails or somethin’?”

“ You mean, did I arrive by train? No.”

The man raised his wiry brows and stuffed his handkerchief back in his pocket. “ Cards are on the radio, son. Where do you think you are?”

“ In the Midwest, hopefully Iowa.”

“ We’ll you’ve got the state right. You’re in Des Moines. On the corner Hamlyn and Main.”

“ Then this is Iowa. They did it...”

“ You know of any other Des Moines?”

“ Can’t say that I do.” Andy panned the sky. The he swung his eyes down to the constant traffic and the men and woman along the far sidewalk. Some of the men spotted hats and spit polished shoes. The ladies looked formal in their bright dresses and spiffy footwear. He spun around when he heard the bat crack on the radio and the crowd roar as somebody smacked out a base hit.

“ They need Hornsby. He retired two years ago.”

“ Rogers Hornsby... Unbelievable.”

“ He was unbelievable player.”

“ Is this 1939?”

“ Now you want to know what year this is?” The man placed his hand on Andy’s shoulder. “ Mr. Horton keeps a bottle of moonshine in the cabinet upstairs. You want to sit down and relax? Or maybe you’ve already had a drink.”

“ No, no... How far is Hancock from here?”

“ Hundred and fifty-two miles, straight up Highway 17. Through corn, corn and more corn.”

Andy’s mouth hung open. How would he live in 1939 with no means of support? He needed a plan, but his mind stalled as he studied the brick storefronts. “ This is incredible... Where’s the library?”

“ Huh?”

“ The library, I need to look up something.” The man studied Andy’s sneakers. “ Work boots.”

“ Fancy... Library is five blocks down on your right next to the new post office. You walk to the flag and you’ve gone too far.”

“ Thank you,” said Andy and he extended his hand.

“ Name’s Tom Stanley.”

“ Reese, Andy.”

“ You take care, Reese, Andy. Come back if you need anything.”

Andy nodded and half smiled as he drifted down the sidewalk. His heart thumped when he peered through the haze hanging over the long street. The ball game mixed with the click and grinding of manual transmissions and crunched sand pebbles along the sizzling asphalt. A dull melancholia settled over him like the haze. Minutes ago he was in the Colorado cold, protesting his sister’s death and pursued by the security team. This city’s life was slower. He sensed a lack of urgency, unlike in his own time, as he plopped himself down on a wood bench.

Two ladies in colorful sun dresses carried huge strapped pocketbooks down the sidewalk. Atop a black, fluted metal pedestal the large clock’s pointed hands inched toward noon and the aroma from a nearby delicatessen wafted across the street. Dark cars with free standing headlights and bright

chrome radiator grills glistening in the sunlight, were parked at an angle to the curb. The downtown had several department stores and an overflow of small shops still survived a decade of depression. He had studied the Depression on his disks and was aware Franklin Delano Roosevelt, former Governor of New York, was the President of the United States.

Perplexed, he slid out his leather billfold and flipped through numerous plastic credit cards and a wad of crisp bills gathered from the ATM last night. But last night was seventy-seven years from now. The wooden phone booth near the drug store across the street reminded him of technology's continuous march toward his own time. Any information about Geiger and his views on technology was probably at the local library.

His concentration was shaken by a red tractor with oversized, tread tires, and an empty wood framed wagon in tow. He stood, as he did at baseball games for the national anthem, and now accepted the last vestige of humanity, trying to salvage basic human values in a future world gone bonkers, had sent him back to change time.

With Kate so brutally taken away, he sensed a civility and purpose he could not fully comprehend. In the baking sun he thought about the baseball game, and while he was not sure about details of Rogers Hornsby's career, he knew Hornsby was a great ball player in this era. He strolled in the shadows under the store front awnings and stared further down the sidewalk at the limp post office flag in the heavy air. Hancock was a hundred and fifty-two miles away, and somehow he had to get there and survive.

Ahead, the library's tapering slate capped dormers added a gothic flavor to the brick exterior. Andy checked the street and darted through the wavy, rising heat. He stepped onto the sidewalk and trotted up the library's

sharp granite steps. Inside the open doors, he sensed the brutal pace of the next century did not exist here, and rather than succumb to this period's imperfections and lack of technological prowess, he felt at ease.

Spinning metal pedestal fans propelled the scent from hundred of stacked books outside. Translucent burnished yellow shades were positioned halfway down the open windows. Andy crossed the creaky, smooth wood floorboards and stood in line behind a woman at the main desk. Two little kids clung to her faded green, polka dot cotton dress as the librarian vigorously stamped black ink onto the manila renewal cards.

The curly haired girl smiled at Andy, giggled and buried her face into the mother's dress. "Thank you, Mrs. Beecham."

The woman glanced at Andy, held the books under her arm and brought the children out the front doorway. Mrs. Beecham raised her dark brows at Andy. "Yes, sir."

"I don't know where to begin," said Andy.

"What can I help you with?" she asked.

"I'm looking for some books by a man named Herman Geiger and some information on the New York World's Fair."

She nodded and rounded the wood counter. "You'll find information about the fair in Life Magazine in the reference room, along with the other periodicals of course." She pointed toward a high ceiling, apricot walled room with long tables and stacks. "Now Geiger. Yes, I'll check the cards for you."

"Thank you."

She tiptoed to several oak filing cabinets between the doors and first set of paned windows. A slight hunger in his stomach reminded Andy of his

predicament. Mrs. Beecham slid open a long tray filled with tabbed, alphabetized cards. She fanned through the cards, but and stopped abruptly.

“ Yes, we have several of Mr. Geiger’s books here at the library. Mr. Geiger was born July 22, 1900 in Gutenberg, Germany.”

“ Good. Thank you,” said Andy as a stocky man in a checkered blue jersey walked through the door. Almost immediately he stared at Andy, furrowed his brow and veered into the stacks. The old man’s warning from the Seraph enclave on Ganymede sounded like an alarm bell through time. He wondered if this man was controlled by the Moloch.

“ Sir,” Said Miss Beecham.

Andy’s head snapped back. “ I’m sorry.”

“ If you will come with me...”

“ Sure.”

She moved her slight frame like a fluttering butterfly through the arched opening to the next room. Andy briefly saw the man in the checkered shirt glaring at him from the side stack. “ You know that man?” he whispered.

“ The man in the checkered shirt. He just came inside.”

“ Mr. Billingsly? He is the high school principal.” She stopped at the end of the stacks and raised her index finger to the duodecimals traced in white ink on the stitched book binding. “ Smart man, but very impatient.”

“ I’m sure he is.” Andy glanced back, but was still uncertain how he would discern an individual controlled by pure energy consciousness.

“ Sir,” said Mrs. Beecham, halfway down the stacks. “ Progress in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, from last year. The Great Technocracy from 1932. The Ethical Response from 1927. This book is available in both English and

German. And The Future of Man from 1921, also available in both languages.”

“ I appreciate your help.”

“ My pleasure. If you have any additional questions I will be at the front desk..”

“ Thank you.”

As she pranced back, Andy dragged all four bound books off the wood shelf and hauled them to slate tables under the large half moon windows. Two sedans and a wood station wagon in the dirt parking lot caught his eye as he lowered the books onto the table. At the desk the high school principal handed a book to the librarian

Andy pressed his lips as the car raised dust in the parking lot outside. Traveling to Hancock and locating Lucy Apel seemed prudent, or he could go to New York City himself. The Seraphs must have considered all the alternate time lines and finding Lucy Apel seemed his best option. Hitchhiking a hundred and a half miles across the plains was feasible, yet, how would he survive? During the Great Depression soup kitchens and churches helped the downtrodden and bums rode the rails. He tapped his fingernail against his teeth and opened Geiger’s book written just last year.

A black and white photograph of Geiger in a bow tie and dark suit, was smooth behind an onion skin page. He held a webbed pipe in his hairy left hand, his eyes were probably brown and intense, and he had a charming smile. Andy checked the bold caption.

## **Professor Herman Geiger**

“ Well, Geiger, they say you’re a pivotal point in time.” Andy watched the green leaves flutter above the parking lot. “ And it’s already summer. I wonder, Professor, if you’re still alive or dead at the fair.”

The concise biography indicated Geiger was born on July 22, 1900 and taught history and philosophy at Gutenberg University until 1933. When Hitler came to power in January, Geiger left Germany and settled in Sweden briefly. By 1934 he was teaching at a small college in upstate New York, extolling a powerful theme called Social Technocracy. He did not want to thwart technology but live with it and use it prudently. His seven ethics in progress involved technology serving man and man serving an ethical perspective.

Andy leaned back in the chair and stretched. The Seraphs must have believed Geiger would implement his philosophy if he survived the fair. Andy was unsure how such a philosophy could erase a history laced with turmoil and societal laxity. “ I’m not up to this.”

Without a notebook and paper he would have to absorb what Geiger wrote in his books. He settled back in the chair and skimmed the pages. As the afternoon progressed, his eyes blurred and through hunger pangs, he stopped understanding what he read. He pushed the chair back, stood and walked to the window. Geiger simply wanted people to think about their actions and take responsibility. The pedestal fan breeze cooled the sweat beads on his forehead as he gazed outside. Geiger insisted on people solving problems with unusual solutions.

Andy meandered to the reference area and glanced at the Des Moines Register. He searched the stained wooden shelves for a biographical section.

Locating Geiger before he was killed at the fair meant checking his status at Amesbury Union College. He slid out a thick almanac from 1938, remained in the stack aisle, and thumbed the clean paper pages to a personalities section. Past movie stars, presidents, and sports heroes, Geiger was listed as an author was a full professor at Amesbury. He shut the book loud enough to echo throughout the room and then pushed it back through the empty slot in the stack.

As he plodded back to the table he took his cell phone from his pants pocket and smiled when he realized it was useless. Nor could he could not talk, fax or even e-mail. He jabbed the **SEND** button anyway and listened to modulating tone. The LCD readout flashed: **NO SERVICE**. He dropped the phone back into his pocket.

At the newspaper stack he stopped, grabbed some recent editions and found a red leather chair next to a small oak table. He opened the pages to drawn, black ink advertisements, depicting men in sharp, neatly cut suits and woman in buttoned down dresses. Appliances were bulky and antiquated, but appeared advanced to the people of this time. Prices were absurdly low. He observed stories references to FDR, Clark Gable, Joe DiMaggio, and Adolph Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland. On each printed page he checked for pertinent information about the New York World's Fair, but instead found reflections about Neville Chamberlain appeasing Hitler at Munich last September. The Seraphs had given Andy awesome power, but tampering with history and a madman like Hitler seemed beyond his capacity.

He closed his eyes. Working on the Apel farm might allow him to survive in this time and tag along with Lucy Apel to the New York World's Fair. Fashioning that scenario and preventing Geiger's death would require fast

talk and luck. He opened his eyes and gripped the edges of another newspaper from three days ago. Buried in the back pages was a story describing the numerous national pavilions represented at the fair. A mammoth white ball called the Perisphere was visible beyond statues positioned along a long mall. The Perisphere was a geodesic dome, coated with white stucco and located exactly next to a high, thin pointed Trylon obelisk. Only financial considerations prevented an even larger Perisphere. The article referred to FDR himself having opened the fair in April.

Andy's stomach now demanded food and he set down the paper. Without further delay he would need to find a soup kitchen or food pantry and have to think about sustaining himself back here. He folded the paper and was about to stand. Another front page headline caught his eye.

## **Local Girl Wins Fair Contest**

**Hancock...Friday... A local Hancock High senior has won a writing contest, sponsored by New York World's Fair's President, Grover Whalen. In a statement released Friday, Whalen announced Lucy Apel, a class valedictorian, was selected from five thousand nationwide finalists to travel this summer to the New York World's Fair.**

**Miss Apel's essay was drawn from the fair's overall theme, the World of Tomorrow, is entitled "How We Face Tomorrow." The fair, constructed on 1219 acres of a former Flushing garbage dump, now features pavilions from 60**

**countries, dramatic water fountains, and an ever present alabaster geodesic dome and pointed obelisk. From her family's farm in Hancock, Miss Apel's father indicated the family may travel to New York this summer and visit with relatives in New Jersey. Miss Apel will accept the award in late June and receive unlimited admission to the fair for her family.**

**A full printing of Miss Apel's essay is recorded on page 45.**

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Andy folded the heavy white newspaper to page 45, and in the cool fan currents, pressed it on the slate surface. Cradled between a corn and soybean report and a story of municipal improvements was a half page depiction of Lucy Apel's essay.

## **How We Face Tomorrow**

**by Lucy Apel**

**Class of 1939**

How wonderful it is to live in our time. Surviving hard times not only allows us to see where we have been, but now we can imagine the hope of tomorrow. We are alive at the cusp of great innovations and inventions, destined to ease the burdens

of mankind. In New York City men have provided us a glimpse into the future.

Did you know great concrete highways will extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Thirty years from now you will step inside your streamlined car in Boston and drive at high speeds along roadways to Los Angeles, California. You need not stop at traffic lights or wait for pedestrians to cross the street. You can see this at the General Motors Futurama at the New York World's Fair. Our lives will be streamlined.

In my kitchen I will be surrounded by new inventions. Dishes will be washed automatically. Vegetables need not be canned in a time consuming process, but will be taken simply from a freezer and heated on the stove. A working robot called, "Elektro," is already drawing in visitors at the fair. Maybe he will sweep the floor for me or change the bed linens. All of these innovations will give me more time with my family.

And at night we will no longer listen to radio. Strange as it seems, something called television will show us movies on a small screen in our living rooms. Such a demonstration is already in place at the RCA exhibit at the fair. I will sit with my hus-

husband and children and be brought to far away places.

Maybe we will live a place called Democracy, although you are supposed to wait a hundred years according to the people at the fair. They say everyone will march and sing in unison in the world of tomorrow. How we face tomorrow is critical. I look forward to tomorrow's innovations, but I always remember what my father has told me since I was a little girl: "If it sounds too good to be true it probably isn't." My father can be cynical and I am wide eyed. I say let us dream about the future and explore the innovations at the fair, but let us always use what my mother calls, "common sense." In closing let me use one more quote. The German philosopher, Herman Geiger, captured the essence of what is to come when he said ten years before he fled Nazism's unfulfilled promises. "My eyes marvel at the future, but my feet are firmly planted in the past."

Lucy Apel

April 19, 1939

Hancock, Iowa

“ *Geiger.*” Andy fell back in the chair. “ She read Geiger. That’s the link in time.”

## 5

That evening Andy was fed and given a small room by a Presbyterian church recommended by Mrs. Beecham. In this era, he was amazed at the magnanimous attitude of that pastor back in Des Moines. The next morning, after a clean shave, some potatoes and meat hash for breakfast, as well as a short religious service, he set out hitchhiking on the highway leading to Hancock. He dumped his cell phone and credit cards into a paper grocery bag and ditched the bag into a truck loaded with rubbish.

Across the heat gradient he trudged along the vast open cornfield stretches. A blue sedan stopped outside the city, and an older man and woman from Des Moines brought him to the next town. He found a truck driver on his way to Oregon and willing to stop in Hancock.

As the truck clattered down the straight highway, the driver prattled about Joe Louis beating Max Schmeling in one round a year ago. Andy dozed in the moist air and tried to form an image Lucy Apel. Her words were both poignant, prescient and paralleled Geiger thesis. Andy's tentative plan was to pose as a writer wishing to transcribe Lucy's trip to the New York World's Fair, but he questioned if he really could gain the family's confidence.

\* \* \*

Hancock's buildings had popped off the horizon like toast from the toaster slots. Farmland radiated outward from a row of buildings with cars parked diagonally out front. Fear gripped his tense, fatigued body as he stepped down from the truck onto the hot asphalt. With no money and no means to make money, he would not only need to convince Lucy's father of his writing enterprise, but of a second plan to work on the farm for food and board. He spotted slowly spinning red, white and blue barber pole, extending outward at an angle from a brick facade. Across the clear clean window were gold letters shadowed in black.

## **DOMINIC'S BARBER SHOP**

In the lower corner a maroon printed baseball schedule for the local high school baseball team and a larger colorful advertisement for a circus traveling through town were stuck with clean tape near an invitation, formally written for the senior class graduation. Out of the radio the ubiquitous baseball game crowd drifted into the warm air. Andy moved onto black and white linoleum tiles and the strong breeze from three overhead fans cooled his jersey.

The game was broadcast from a black Bakelite radio with linear slots over a circular orange speaker. Three white knobs were located under a num-

numbered frequency dial. It was positioned on the marble counter between a bottle of white opaque Brylcreem hair tonic, an adjacent pale green bottle of Wildroot, and the electric hair clippers. On one of the side tables was a red banner magazine, dated May 1, 1939 in white letters, with a clear black and white picture of a young, smiling Joe DiMaggio, Yankee's baseball cap tilted upward, on the cover. Andy looked across the barber shop, but in the eyes of the barbers and the men waiting for haircuts, he saw suspicion.

“ Afternoon,” said the barber with gray hair, dark eyes, and a large nose. With a pair of chrome scissors he rapidly snipped a police officer's short gray hair.

“ Afternoon,” replied Andy.

The barber up front had thick glasses and moved the clippers slower over a teenager's bushy auburn hair. He glanced at Andy but did not say anything. Andy turned toward first guy. “ I'm trying to locate the Apel farm.”

“ Just passing through, are you?” asked the police officer.

“ Depends... I'm a writer.”

The cop sat up quickly and the barber retracted his scissors.

“ I'm the law here, mister, who are you?”

Andy stepped back. “ Andy. Andy Reese.”

“ John has had problems out there and in town. People on his property and stalking Lucy.”

“ I'm not sure her winning this contest was a good thing if people are going to be trespassing,” said Dom. He extended his hand and squeezed.

“ Dom Malzone.”

The cop stared at Andy. “ I'm writing a book about Lucy Apel's trip to the New York World's Fair.”

“ Oh, Lucy. Smart girl,” said Dom.

“ Class valedictorian,” said the second barber. “ Everybody likes Lucy.”

“ Why? When a stranger comes to town I want to know why.”

“ Hobart, be quiet, will you and let the man feel welcome. This guy just got to town. He hasn't been out at John's place.”

Andy was comfortable with his cover story, but by parroting it, he put himself one step closer to altering history. People intruding on the Apel farm might signal arrival of the Moloch through time and he wondered if the Seraphs were truthful about Geiger. One of the magazines on the side tables referred to a story about Hitler's designs on Europe.

“ I read Lucy's essay in the Des Moines paper.”

“ You know how many people entered that competition, Mr. Reese?” asked Dom. The cop's eyes were still fixed on him. “ I'll tell you how many. Thousands. Thousands from all over the country sent their essays to New York City. Right, Phil?”

“ Tough competition.”

“ She seems to have been influenced by a man named Geiger,” said Andy.

“ She was influenced by Mavis and John,” said Hobart.

“ Lucy is a brain,” said the kid in the next chair.

“ John says it isn't from his side,” said Dom.

“ Good head on her shoulders. How many outs?” asked the other barber.

“ Two outs. So, you really going to write about the World's Fair?” asked Dom. “ I saw in Life Magazine they got this big round ball the size of

a skyscraper. I read they call it the big apple. How the heck do you get the money to build something like that?"

"They gut dough in New York City," said Phil. Through his glasses he pretended to possess extensive knowledge of New York City.

"The haves and the have nots. If you're a have, you build a big apple."

Hobart gawked at Andy as if he had committed a crime. Then Dom looked over. "The President of the fair, this high mucka muck named Grover Whalen, see he wrote the letter to Lucy personally."

"And he called the Register," said Phil. "Right from New York."

"Where is the farm?" asked Andy.

"Just outside of town," said Dom. "Three miles south."

"Maybe I should call first."

"John told me he has his shotgun ready if anyone bothers Lucy," said Hobart. "He and I have an agreement for me to watch Lucy while she's at the fair."

Dom rolled his eyes and then turned to Andy. "You can try and call, but you're not gonna get that farm. Apels don't have a phone. John says if you're on the phone, you're not working. Farm work isn't easy, Mr. Reese. People in town here helped them with the cost of the trip. They leave next week. The Apel boys and Porky will run the farm."

"Next week?" Andy pressed his lips and turned toward the front window's reversed lettering. He still feared tampering with history. Through his conflicting emotions he somehow understood Geiger's ability to make people think and take responsibility, yet change would only result from personal motivation not edicts, rules and regulations. Being back in time meant he

would never see Kate again, but if she were to be born in an altered future, maybe she would not die in a termination clinic.

“ You need a cut?” asked Dom as Hobart got up and dropped coins into his hand.

“ Who me?” asked Andy.

“ No, the fifty people waiting in line behind you.”

Andy smiled as Dom rang up a mechanical cash register with large keys, pop up numbers, and a NCR logo. “ When I’m ready I will stop by.”

“ Okay.” Dom grabbed the broom from the paneled sidewall and bent the bristles across the black and white linoleum squares. “ Now, John and his boys come in for supplies at the feed and grain on Saturday afternoons. Sunday everyone is at the ten AM service.”

“ People go to church here,” said Hobart. “ We ain’t city folk.”

“ Huh?”

“ People can pursue their own ends,” he said, pointing. “ We don’t need twisted magazine articles. I’ll be watching you, Reese.”

“ Yeah, yeah,” said Dom. He slapped a towel over Hobart’s face, finally squelching his caustic comments. “ What our chief is trying to say is people have roots here, Andy.”

“ I guess they do.” Andy looked through the front window at the sunlit buildings. The breeze from the fans had cooled his sweaty skin.

“ What about the graduation?” asked Phil.

Dom slapped his razor on a strap. “ Yeah, right. Lucy is the class valedictorian. She’s going to give her essay as a speech tonight.”

“ The Register is sending a reporter down here for it,” said Phil.

“Bright girl that Lucy,” said Dom. One of the Cardinals stuck out ending the inning. “They left three guys on base!”

“If Lucy’s so bright, why does she have that spoiled brat, Brucie Benson, as a boyfriend?” asked Hobart from under the towel.

“His father owns the half the real estate in this town,” said Dom.

A shiny black Ford pulled into one of the diagonal parking space across the street. The driver’s door slowly opened and a good-looking guy with slick hair and a straight nose stepped outside. He wore pleated pants, a white shirt with suspenders, and a dark tie. A taller man with trimmed bristly gray hair, but also dressed well, got out the passenger door and gazed down the sidewalk. Andy’s wondered about the Moloch consciousness. The two men talked on the sidewalk and walked under the store front awnings. Andy saw Virginia plates.

Dom held the razor in his hand. “Being a writer must bring you all over the place.”

“Yes, sir,” said Andy, looking back. “You wouldn’t believe where I’ve been.”

# 6

Andy thanked the hefty lady with the white apron wrapped around her pink flowered dress. He sidestepped along the bleachers, gnawed a third ham and cheese sandwich and let the tingling red punch swish around his mouth. None of the ladies in the high school gym questioned who he was nor his liberal food intake. The large, black framed Roman numeral clock on the airy blue wall above the bleachers ticked toward seven p.m. He set the glass on the long white table cloth and walked through the open doors. The sun hugged the corn stalks and projected an orange hue across an open air crowd nestled in between the brick school and cornfield. A central aisle led up from a gravel lot bordering Main Street to a green canopy shielding a front gray stage back dropped with a white banner with green letters:

**HANCOCK HIGH SCHOOL**

**CLASS OF 1939**

**Verbum sapienti**

A scent of fresh flowers sauntered through the warm evening air. Ladies wore colorful dresses and most men had stripped to white shirts and loosened or removed their ties. Suit coats were draped over the wooden folding chairs. Dignitaries and probably teachers sat on the glossy black and gold captain's chairs near a central wood podium decorated in green and white, and surrounded by cascading red roses. None of the students were on stage or near the front row's empty chairs. Andy would not recognize Lucy Apel if she crossed the stage right now. He checked the rows of the brawny men and hearty women seated next to antsy children. A slim lady with permed brown hair and a bright red dress, positioned herself in front of the piano, lifted her fingers to the keys, and set off a rousing serenade of Pomp and Circumstance. The audience responded with a quick round of applause as boys in green robes and girls in white robes with matching caps and tassels lined up along the brick school. He was drawn to a girl with short, straight black hair, midnight eyes, and a pumpkin face. She trotted up the stairs, gracefully crossed the stage and sat to the left of the podium.

A couple of adults approached her, shook her hand and offered a few words. Andy was convinced she was Lucy Apel. He was not sure why he found her so compelling. Perhaps it was her role in the Seraph history change. His preoccupation was broken by the presence of the two men from Virginia, standing in the sunlight next to their sedan, parked across from the gravel lot. The Seraph warning about the Moloch jolted his fast beating heart. When the men wandered across the gravel lot toward the assembly, Andy retreated into the gym doorway, and the two men sat in the back row.

\* \* \*

The sharp shadows, thatched with bright beams cut through the cornstalks. Andy focused on a burly man with a full mustache seated by two strapping young men and a thin woman with gold wire rimmed glasses. The dark eyed girl on stage would occasionally look at them and smile as perfunctory speeches, extolling the school and town, hung in the humid summer air.

But Andy was worried about the two men in the back row. The man with straight nose wrote vigorously into a three ring notebook while the older guy studied the stage. Andy thought about questioning them about their presence at the graduation. The girl stood quickly as the crowd applauded. Her dark hair rested perfectly on her white robe and in her hands were several pieces of white paper. She smiled and approached to the wooden podium, shuffled her papers and panned the audience.

Her voice was smooth and melodic. “ Mr. Cogswell, Mrs. Atherton, councilmen, and fellow students. My name is Lucy Apel and I’ve lived seventeen years on this planet. Many of you have been here a little longer. Some a lot longer.”

Chuckles, like an aberrant pinball bounced through the crowd. Lucy smiled and pushed back her green and white tassel. “ I have been most fortunate to win a writing contest offered by the President’s Committee of the New York World’s Fair.”

This time applause shook the assembly, but she raised her palms.

“ No, I didn’t say it for applause. I think,” she said as the ovation diminished. “ I think the committee and the fair itself is trying to bring this country forward from the depths of depression. President Grover Whalen and others have done this by construction on 1216 acres of a former Flushing Queen ash dump; a marvelous exhibition that looks to the world of tomorrow.

I have seen newsreels of the fair. President Roosevelt realized the importance of the fair by traveling to New York and officially opening the fair to the nation and the world. He said and I quote: ‘... the eyes of the United States are fixed on the future.’

The world of tomorrow beckons for us all. New innovations will dazzle us and the convenience of innovation will provide us with outstanding leisure hours, easing the drudge of the past. But with that convenience and added time will come the greatest challenge of all.

Herman Geiger asks us to use prudence within the new social technocracy.”

Andy turned from the two men in the back row and focused clearly on Lucy in her white robe.

“ Professor Geiger believes, unlike the past, where boundaries were duly set for us all, the future will require us to be, and I quote: ‘ the guardians of practicality and morality.’”

The two guys in the back row also perked up when she mentioned Geiger and the younger guy took copious notes.

“ What does this mean? Don’t we all make out own moral and practical decisions now? Well, yes, we do. Let me give you an example. When my mother and father were born there was no radio. No Jack Benny program or

Burns and Allen. And especially no Martians landing in New Jersey.” The people laughed. “ Thank you, Mr. Orson Wells. Last October at the Halloween dance I believed for a few minutes that Martians *were* landing in New Jersey because I wanted to believe. What a powerful force radio is. We have to decide what we believe just as we used to judge a man’s word, but drama is more alluring. In the world of tomorrow it will become increasing difficult to challenge what is handed to us. Not only on radio, but in an increased ability to travel from place to place on super highways, leaving the roots of a small town like ours behind.

People will have more time, yes. Newer and quicker appliances will accomplish that. But what do we do with all that extra time? Will we become like self-indulgent spoiled rich kids and never have enough and expect things will be given to us? These are serious questions and like Professor Geiger has said, we had better think about them or fall into the future without questioning the ramifications of our great technology.”

Lucy turned to the teachers and dignitaries on the platform. “ Now, I have been asked to read my essay to the President’s Committee of the New York World’s Fair.”

Andy noticed the two empty chairs in the back row. The two guys retreated across the lot. The younger one carried his notebook under his arm as the older man gestured with his hands. Lucy took out another piece of paper as they crossed the street.

“ How wonderful it is to live in our time. Surviving hard times not only allows us to see where we have been, but now we can imagine the hope of tomorrow. We are alive at the cusp of great innovations and inventions des-

tined to ease the burdens of mankind. In New York City men have provided us a glimpse into the future.

Did you know great concrete highways will extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Thirty years from now you will step inside your streamlined car in Boston and drive at high speeds along roadways to Los Angeles, California. You need not stop at traffic lights or wait for pedestrians to cross the street. You can see this at the General Motors Futurama at the New York World's Fair. Our lives will be streamlined.

In my kitchen I will be surrounded by new inventions. Dishes will be washed automatically. Vegetables need not be canned in a time consuming process, but will be taken simply from a freezer and heated on the stove. A working robot called, "Elektro," is already drawing in visitors at the fair. Maybe he will sweep the floor for me or change the bed linens. All of these changes will give me more time with my family.

And at night we will no longer listen to radio. Strange as it seems, something called television will show us movies on a small screen in our living rooms. Such a demonstration is already in place at the RCA exhibit at the fair. I will sit with my husband and children and be brought to faraway places.

Maybe we will live a place called Democracity, although you are supposed to wait a hundred years according to the people at the fair. They say everyone will march and sing in unison in the world of tomorrow. How we face tomorrow is critical. I look forward to tomorrow's innovations, but I always remember what my father has told me since I was a little girl: "If it sounds too good to be true it probably isn't." My father can be cynical, but strong and quick in his judgments, and I am wide eyed. I say let us dream

about the future and explore the innovations at the fair, but let us always use what my mother calls, “common sense.” In closing let me use one more quote. The German philosopher, Herman Geiger, captured the essence of what is to come when he said ten years before he fled Nazism’s unfulfilled promises. ‘My eyes marvel at the future, but my feet are firmly planted in the past.’

Lucy Apel, April 19, 1939, Hancock, Iowa.”

Andy’s skin erupted with goose bumps as the group stood and applause rocked the thick air. He alternated glances between Lucy and the men now next to the sedan across the street. As the principal introduced the president of the class, Andy slipped along the brick building. What if the Mo-loch were back here and watching the key players on the timeline? He remained against the brick facade and tried to unravel Lucy’s true place on the Seraph timeline.

The two men wandered down the sidewalk and entered a little restaurant with a flashing red sign in the window. Andy skirted the assembly and reached the sidewalk. He jogged across the street to the car window. A Washington, DC newspaper, Geiger’s book on technology, and two empty Coke bottles were strewn across the front seat. Other papers, several with headers from the Bureau of Protection were strewn over the back seat.

Andy raised his brow, checked the restaurant and pivoted in the road. He moved diagonally until he was safely behind the brick wall and breathed rapidly as he placed his open palms against the cold bricks and rough mortar.

The class president had finished his speech, but unlike Lucy’s grand ovation, received a tepid response. The principal and a couple of older people, perhaps teachers, stood next to a wide table stacked with thin dark

books. Andy again eyed the car as principal announced the awarding of the diplomas. The agents concern with Geiger elevated the professor's importance in history and Andy's new awareness of what Seraphs wanted him accomplish left him shaken.

He stood unobtrusively near the brick building and stared Lucy Apel on the stage. She smiled as each of her fellow students climbed the stairs and trekked across the stage to receive their diplomas. The Geiger connection to her was unclear. He tapped his thumbnail against his teeth. Seventy-five years from now the technology promised at the fair would supersede the dreams of this era. The individual responsibility proclaimed by Geiger existed in the future, but had blended into a skewed acceptance and blind faith in new innovations.

“Lucy Anne Apel,” said the principal.

Lucy stood to a rumble of applause, crossed the stage, and the principal placed the black diploma book in her hand. She smiled at the family in the front row and then shook the principal's hand. Andy caught sight of the agents again, holding green soda bottles at the curb. For the next ten minutes they stood like weather worn statues until the principal finished awarding the diplomas and spouted forth a chain of monotonous remarks about the class of 1939. As the agents drifted a few feet down the sidewalk, the piano player again broke into Pomp and Circumstance and Lucy followed her classmates off the stage. Her family and the rest of the crowd stood within a strong round of applause as she whispered something to a blonde girl next to her and then produced the same wide smile Andy found interesting. The class and the audience headed for the gym, but the two agents lingered near the edge of the cornfield.

## 7

More metal pedestal fans transformed the heavy air into lighter and cooler currents. Under the retracted basketball backboard Andy nibbled on tuna fish sandwich halves and chips, and maintained an inconspicuous presence at the food and punch table. Lucy Apel listened to a tall, shallow faced kid with a snooty voice and then scurried over to her girlfriend. Within the crowd, the solid framed man with the bristly brown mustache, accompanied by a thin woman with peppered hair, in a gray and mauve flowered dress, and wire rim glasses, spoke with the principal. Across the gym Lucy and her girlfriend giggled as they drifted toward the outside door. Andy gripped his punch glass when the two agents approached her in the doorway and led the two girls outside. A few moments later the blonde friend rushed back into the gym and Andy marched across the squeaky, polished floorboards.

Around the bricks he stuck his head into the warm, fresh air. Lucy's confused expression near the stage turned fearful as the men loudly badgered her. Maybe they were questioning her about mentioning Geiger in her essay. The broad shouldered John Apel, trailed by the blonde girl, passed Andy through the gym door. He broke into a trot and pointed his finger.

“Get away from my daughter!”

The younger agent flipped identification. “Sir, we have legal rights to be here. We are agents of the-”

Lucy's father's fists tightened. "I don't give a damn who you are!"

The agent with gray wispy hair and wide suspenders continually jabbed his finger and his eastern accented words cut the early evening air. The cords in John Apel's neck protruded through tightened skin. Andy left the punch glass on the grass and paralleled the empty wooden seats.

"You had better understand," said the younger agent. He sounded cocky and self-assured. "War is on the horizon in Europe."

"Don't you read the newspapers?" asked the older guy.

"I know about war. And I don't take kindly to browbeating," said John in a clear, well enunciated voice. He adjusted his maroon tie. "My daughter responded to a contest offered by the president of the New York World's Fair."

The older guy fingered his chest. "She is on thin ice, Apel."

"Why don't you head back east where you came from, Mister?" shouted John. "Are you the ones snooping on my property?"

"We just got into town," said the older man.

"You're a liar."

Andy slid along the last row of chairs. Lucy turned, looked at him for several seconds, but spun back as the agent scolded John. "Your daughter has corresponded with a German national."

"Professor Geiger left Germany because of differences with Hitler. You've got it wrong," said Lucy, pushing back her tassel. Then she took off the cap. "My letters to Professor Geiger relate to his books and theories."

"Geiger is a social activist and may even be a communist," said the young agent forcefully. "He could even be a Nazi sleeper."

“ He’s not a communist nor is he a Nazi,” replied Lucy. “ That’s just not true.”

“ Are you privy to report on this man, young lady?” asked the older guy in a heavy eastern accent.

“ I wrote to him three times. That’s all.”

“ We could take you in right now,” said the young agent. “ It’s time you answered some questions.”

John Apel’s dark eyes ignited and he shoved the young man hard enough to send him tumbling onto the stage. The older guy grabbed John’s shirt, swung his fist into John’s jaw and knocked him onto the grass. Lucy rushed to her father. “ Leave my father alone!”

“ You are coming with us, Miss Apel. You will answer our questions for the record. ”

“ You hit my father!”

When the younger agent grabbed Lucy’s arm, Andy shot from the chairs and leaped through the air. The heel of his foot connected into the agent’s side, just below the ribs, and forced the air from his lungs. He smacked the guy with several quick leg thrusts. The older man produced a gun from under his coat, but Andy quickly kicked it across the stage, and the agent grabbed his wrist. The younger agent, hunched over, held his ribs and winced as he shuffled back. “ Japanese stuff!”

“ I need my gun,” said the older man.

“ Get out of here!” yelled Andy.

John sat up his daughter’s arms.

“ You have attacked two agents of the Bureau of-”

“ You get lost or I’ll get the local police over here. I don’t think

they'll be too keen on you harassing townspeople here in Hancock."

Neither man said anything. The older guy, still holding his wrist, stepped slowly on stage and retrieved his gun. He stuck it under his suit coat. Andy kept his extended hands in a slow circular motion as he crept forward. With fear battered expressions, the two men edged toward the center aisle and backtracked to the street. They crossed the street and as they got inside the sedan, Andy wondered why he was not under arrest. They were pushy and abrasive, but still looked human. How would he recognize the Moloch?

John called from behind. He was on his feet and held his jaw next to Lucy. "I've ever seen anything like that! Where'd you learn to fight like that, Mister?"

Andy turned once the car had disappeared down the street.

"Instruction. You need to call your police chief. That guy, Hobart."

"Hobart?" asked John, laughing as he rubbed his chin. "He couldn't fight his way out of a paper bag."

"Dad and Hobart don't get along," said Lucy.

With a firm, tough grip he squeezed Andy's hand. "John Apel."

"I'm Andy Reese."

"He packed a wallop, son."

"But Mr. Reese packed a bigger wallop," said Lucy.

John tightened his brow. "You're fighting skills are impressive, Mr. Reese. Real impressive."

"He had it coming."

"Dad, Mr. Reese the kind help we need... By the way, I'm Lucy."

"I know."

"You do?"

“ Well, you gave that wonderful speech.”

“ Mr. Reese,” said John, touching his jaw again. “ We need protection. People have been stalking my farm and Lucy here in town. I don’t know who they are and Hobart is useless as... well he’s useless. I’m afraid Lucy’s essay has stirred things up.”

“ What do you do, Mr. Reese?” asked Lucy.

“ I’m a writer amongst other things. I actually came back to ask you if I could chronicle Lucy’s trip to New York. I read her essay in the paper.”

“ I understand.” John looked Andy over. “ I don’t know if I want any more coverage of Lucy’s opinions. Like I said, things got crazy since the essay was published. Again, I’ve had trespassers on my property. And here in town people following my daughter. Right Lucy?”

“ Strangers,” said Lucy.

“ Well,” said Andy, smiling. “ I can assure you I’m not a trespasser nor a stalker.”

“ No, I don’t think that for a minute,” said John. “ I am grateful to you, Mr. Reese, but I don’t want any more publicity for Lucy.’

“ Where are you from, Andy?” asked Lucy as they started back to the gym.

“ Colorado. I just thought it was great you won that contest, Miss Apel and that essay was brilliant.”

“ Why, thank you,” she said, placing her hand on her chest.

“ Please accompany us into the gym, Mr. Reese. If the radio’s signal is good FDR’s fireside chat is being broadcast at eight-thirty in the gym. And I want to talk to you.”

“ *FDR*... that’s incredible,” replied Andy.

Andy wondered, as they walked along the chairs and toward the gym doorway, whether the agents would return or if his attack would prompt a more extensive investigation. They should have arrested him and again he questioned whether the Moloch had influenced them. Near the doorway he stayed next to John Apel and Lucy. Another wood veneer radio with a glowing yellow dial and a maroon fabric covered speaker, was placed next to a crude microphone inside the gym. A sharp voiced announcer designated a Chicago station and a second voice, probably from the network, soon echoed throughout the gym. “ The Radio address of the president, broadcast from the White House:”

The next voice was both reassuring and commanding. Andy squinted and panned the crowd, young and old, gathered around the radio. “ My friends: I think the American public and the American newspapers are certainly creatures of habit. This is one of the warmest evenings that I have ever felt in Washington, D. C., and yet this talk tonight will be referred to as a fire-side talk.

Our Government, happily, is a democracy. As part of the democratic process, your President is again taking an opportunity to report on the progress of national affairs, to report to the real rulers of this country --the voting public.

The Seventy-Fifth Congress, elected in November, 1936, on a platform uncompromisingly liberal, has adjourned. Barring unforeseen events, there will be no session until the new Congress, to be elected in November, assembles next January.

On the one hand, the Seventy-Fifth Congress has left many things undone. For example, it refused to provide more businesslike machinery for

running the Executive Branch of the Government. The Congress also failed to meet my suggestion that it take the far-reaching steps necessary to put the railroads of the country back on their feet. But, on the other hand, the Congress, striving to carry out the Platform on which most of them were elected, achieved more for the future good of the country than any Congress did between the end of the World War and the spring of 1933.”

Lucy whispered as Roosevelt’s words filled the gym. “Radio has great power.”

“So, does FDR,” said Andy.

She nodded and motioned him back. “FDR is a charismatic speaker and leader, but he would not be able to do what he does, and lead the way he does without that radio.”

“You sound like you’re still giving your speech.”

“I am always giving my speech,” she said with a puffy laugh.

“Have you read Professor Geiger?”

John turned briefly from the gym and Andy lowered his voice. “A little.”

“What Professor Geiger says relates to the technology. We have to think.”

“FDR gives a speech and it’s a big deal,” said Andy.

“You mean New Deal,” she said with a grin. “Just look inside, Mr. Reese. I don’t doubt the President has important things to say, but the human tendency is just to accept the authority because of the technology. Because we hear him on the radio. Do you understand?”

“Unfortunately, I do.” The President’s chat continued inside, but she had made him think about what Roosevelt said.

“ You will remember that a year and a half ago, nearly, on February 5, 1937, I sent a Message to the Congress dealing with the real need of Federal Court reforms of several kinds. In one way or another, during the sessions of this Congress, the ends -- I spoke of, the real objectives -- sought in that Message, have been substantially attained.

The attitude of the Supreme Court towards constitutional questions is entirely changed. Its recent decisions are eloquent testimony of a willingness to collaborate with the two other branches of Government to make democracy work. The Government has been granted the right to protect its interests in litigation between private parties (involving the constitutionality of Federal statutes) when the constitutionality of Federal statutes is involved, and to appeal directly to the Supreme Court in all cases involving the constitutionality of Federal statutes; and no single judge is any longer empowered to suspend a Federal statute on his sole judgment as to its constitutionality. A justice of the Supreme Court may now retire at the age of seventy after ten years of service, and a substantial number of additional judgeships have been created in order to expedite the trial of cases, and finally greater flexibility has been added to the Federal judicial system by allowing judges to be assigned to congested districts...”

“ Did you hear what he said?” asked Lucy.

“ Yes, he wanted to pack the Supreme Court.”

“ FDR knows what he’s doing,” said John.

“ Dad loves FDR.” She yanked Andy back to the doorway again.

“ Yes, he did want to pack the court. Someday somebody is going to come along and sell a whole bill of goods and everyone will buy it. The country needs Roosevelt now, but believe me, people have *to think*.”

“ You speak beyond your years, Lucy.”

She lowered her voice again and pressed her lips before she spoke.

“ No... I just think.”

Andy looked back at the radio. “ It makes no difference to me whether you call it a recession or a depression. In 1932 the total national income of all the people in the country had reached the low point of thirty-eight billion dollars in that year. With each succeeding year it rose. Last year, 1937, it had risen to seventy billion dollars -- despite definitely worse business and agricultural prices in the last four months of last year. This year, 1938, while it is too early to do more than give a mere estimate, we hope that the national income will not fall below sixty billion dollars, and that is a lot better than thirty- eight billion dollars. We remember also that banking and business and farming are not falling apart like the one-hoss shay, as they did in the terrible winter of 1932 to 1933.”

\* \* \*

Andy stood with John Apel just outside the gym door as FDR’s voice reverberated inside. John nudged his ribs. “ That man saved my farm. FDR and Henry Wallace. I’ll vote for him as long as he runs.”

Andy grinned. Roosevelt sounded as if he were ending the talk. “ This being a free country with freedom of expression --especially with freedom of the press, as is entirely proper -- there will be a lot of mean blows struck between now and Election Day. By "blows" I mean misrepresentation and personal attack and appeals to prejudice. It would be a lot better, of

course, if campaigns everywhere could be waged with arguments instead of with blows.

I hope the liberal candidates will confine themselves to argument and not resort to blows. For in nine cases out of ten the speaker or the writer who, seeking to influence public opinion, descends from calm argument to unfair blows hurts himself more than his opponent.

The Chinese have a story on this -- a story based on three or four thousand years of civilization: Two Chinese coolies were arguing heatedly in the middle of a crowd in the street. A stranger expressed surprise that no blows were being struck by them. His Chinese friend replied: "The man who strikes first admits that his ideas have given out."

I know that neither in the summer primaries nor in the November elections will the American voters fail to spot the candidate whose ideas have given out."

John instructed Andy to wait at the door. He headed inside and talked to his wife as the crowd filed by Andy at entrance. Mrs. Apel raised her hand to her mouth when John pointed to the outside door and thrust his leg out. She nodded and John escorted her to the doorway. "Mr. Reese, this is my wife, Mavis."

"Mrs. Apel, pleasure to meet you."

"Thank you for helping John. There's been so much trouble since Lucy won that contest. Lord have mercy on us all."

"Sounds that way," said Andy.

"Well, that's what I want to speak to you about," said John. "I can size a man up and you're okay. I want you to stay with us at the farm for the next week or so. You can write what you want, although I'd appreciate if you

didn't publish it right now, and I want you to accompany us to the fair. If you have time to spare."

Andy smiled. "I don't know what to say."

"I'll pay you a small stipend and we can feed you, Mr. Reese, and get you into the fair. I want my daughter safe, even in New York. You just demonstrated you can keep Lucy safe. What do you say?"

"That's all I wanted in the first place."

John held his forearm tightly. "I just want to make sure no one hurts my daughter."

"But I haven't even given you references," said Andy.

"References mean nothing. You can get anyone to say anything. I prefer to judge a man on an individual basis. What do you say?"

"I'll make sure she's safe."

"Good, then you'll do it?" asked Mrs. Apel.

"Yes."

John shook his hand and smiled. His teeth were straight, but tainted.

"Good, I can't wait to tell loud mouth, Hobart, he's staying back in Iowa."

"Now, John. Hobart has always been a little... well, jumpy," said Mrs. Apel.

"He doesn't know when to stop," said John, looking outside. "My son, Ned is bringing up the truck."

"And Harley has that hot rod."

"It's not a hot rod, Mavis."

"So, he says, John." She turned to Andy. "Where are you staying now, Mr. Reese?"

"Andy... And I just got into town this afternoon."

“ Oh, well, get your luggage then,” said Mrs. Apel. “ We have room in the side house.”

Thoughts of the Seraph’s spinning spiral returned. “ I, I had a mishap. My luggage was lost.”

“ Stupid railroads,” said John.

“ Boys have extra clothes,” said Mrs. Apel. “ Come with us, Mr. Reese.”

She held Andy’s wrist and led him along the chairs. Andy stared at the empty space across the street where the two agents had parked the sedan. In the dusk light, a loud little black Ford pick-up truck with a short bed stopped at the curb. Lucy moved inside the cab next to a kid with dark hair and a blue checkered shirt. He stuck his elbow out the open window. A second vehicle, louder and polished blue with spiffy chrome, pulled along the sidewalk and idled behind the truck.

“ I’ll ride with you, Mavis, in Harley’s car,” said John.

“ Oh, no. I’m not riding in that... machine.” She returned to the truck.

John shrugged his shoulders. “ Women... Come on, Andy

At the car window Harley leaned over. His voice had a clear tone.

“ Is he the one who beat up the two guys, Dad?”

“ Yup. Yup. Saved my skin. He’s going to New York with us. Andy Reese, this is my son, Harley.”

Harley had dark eyes like Lucy and his mother. “ Andy, what you did for my father. Thanks.”

“ Sure.” Andy slid inside and was wedged between Harley and John. He extended his arms along the back of the seat as Harley shifted and nudged near the truck’s bumper. Lucy turned in the cab.

“ Keep your distance, hot shot,” said John.

“ Yes, sir,” said Harley with a wide grin. The wide contours of his face looked more like his John, but with dark eyes. Once Ned moved the truck forward, Harley maintained at least three-car length distance.

“ You one of those Chinese kickers, Mr. Reese?”

“ A martial arts practitioner.”

“ Oh...”

The car hummed past Dom’s barber shop down Main Street.

A few hundred yards ahead, Harley downshifted and banked left where the pavement ended. Lucy, Ned, and Mrs. Apel were in the headlight glare as the truck bounced down the dirt road. At dusk the cornfields lining the road assumed taller, silhouetted forms like rows of silent soldiers. John twisted his lips. “ You boys are going to have to run this farm while we’re in New York.”

“ Don’t worry, Dad, we have Porky.”

“ That’s exactly why I worry.” John tapped Andy’s arm. “ I was telling my wife, I won’t need my shotgun with you on the property, Andy. That really was quite a display.”

“ Shotgun?” asked Andy.

John and Harley exchanged quick glances. “ Yeah... Lucy and Mrs. Apel are nervous about it.”

“Dad fired at two guys last month,” said Harley, gripping the wheel with one hand. He popped the clutch and moved the column shift with the other hand. “They were back again last week.”

“Near the side house. Same two guys. Young guys. Looked European. Foreigners.”

“Hobart saw them hanging out at the coffee shop,” said Harley.

“Out of towners... No offense, Andy.”

“That’s okay.” He was still not sure if the Moloch control had spread to human beings. Maybe these evolved humans would never pass back through time. “Why were they on your property?”

“My question exactly. I called out to them.”

“They just stood there,” said Harley, turning at the corner. Ahead, a white house with a long front porch was positioned under wide tapering trees and a number of barns at the bottom of a long cornfield slope. Barbwire followed the wide boards of an unpainted fence beyond the corn into the yard.

“They didn’t run until Dad fired the gun in the air.”

“I don’t take kindly to two things, Andy: Men who don’t give a full day’s work-”

“What about Porky?” asked Harley.

“Porky excluded... And anyone who threatens my family is my enemy.”

“Lucy says they were Nazis were after Geiger back east,” said Harley.

“Lucy has an imagination. That Geiger put too many ideas in her head. I’m counting on your fighting skills if anyone shows up, now or in New York City, Andy,” said John as they passed through the open front gate. “So, you keep an eye out.”

“ I will,” he said. Harley’s foot hit the brake pedal and the hot rod kicked up the dirt. The white house’s sloping porch was dark and Andy did not see telephone poles or electrical lines along the road. He smiled and shook his head.

“ What’s so funny?” asked John.

“ I just realized you don’t have power out here.”

“ This isn’t the big city, Andy.”

“ It’s coming,” said Harley “ Like the dark ages out here.”

John leaned over Andy. “ I’ve lived fifty-two years without electricity.”

“ I’d like to be able to listen to Fibber McGee,” said Harley.

“ Look what radio did with that Wars of the Worlds,” said John as the truck stopped under the tree branches.

“ War of the Worlds,” said Harley. “ I didn’t believe it.”

“ I did for a while. We were at the Higgens’s house while Lucy was at the dance with Brucie Benson.”

Andy ran his tongue along the inside of his mouth and creased his brow. He gazed through the cab window at Lucy’s dark hair and the dust from both vehicles billowed behind and huge, convoluted, white-orange cumulous clouds hung over the farm house trees. Andy watched her emerge from the truck and wondered about her importance in time. Her rounded face, tiny nose and jaw was tinted in dusk’s eerie glow.

He stepped onto the dirt driveway. The peppers chirping inundated the night and an acrid stench alternately wafted by the vehicles. Lucy pointed to the fleet of scattered lightning bugs alternately pulsing light in the encroaching darkness. “ There, John” said Andy. “ Now, you have power.”

“ Bugs won’t run radios,” said Harley.

Mrs. Apel carried Lucy’s cap and gown up the porch steps.

“ Do these go back to Mr. Dylan, Lucy dear?”

“ Yes, Mom.” Lucy walked toward Harley’s car. She also inherited her father’s wider frame and her mother’s dark eyes and hair. “ So, you really want to write about me, Mr. Reese?”

“ Well, it would appear my primary job is protecting you.” She seemed to like that. “ But, yes, I would love to hear you opinions and write about your adventure, Miss Apel.”

“ Oh, you can call me Lucy.” They followed the rest of the family toward the porch. “ Everyone calls me Lucy.”

“ Only if you call me, Andy.”

“ Yes, Mr. Reese,” she said and then her laugh erupted. “ Okay, Andy.”

John struck a match on the clapboard. He touched an oil lamp wick and lifted the lamp from the wall. Ned joined Harley and quickly lit the inside lamps. The high ceiling, yellow striped wallpaper and lace curtains materialized in wavy amber light. A sooty odor and a hint of the evening’s supper were in the stuffy air.

Mrs. Apel turned near the kitchen. “ Lucy, would be so kind to make the extra bed in the side house?”

“ Sure, Mom.”

“ Ned, you go out there with her,” said John.

“ I thank you both for this opportunity,” said Andy.

“ No, no. I feel like I can finally rest easier,” said John.

“ Maybe he’ll place that shotgun back in the cabinet,” said Mrs. Apel.

John put his arm around Andy and walked him into the parlor. He again struck a match and a yellow flame ignited from the oil lamp hung on the blue flowered wallpaper. “Have a seat, Andy.”

“Thank you, sir.” He had not planned to call John so formally.

John removed a cigar from a box on the table. “I’d offer you a cigar but you’re too young to be smoking. How old are you?”

“I’ll be twenty-five next month.”

“Oh... You sound like you’ve gone to college.”

“I went to Southern California Polytech.”

“What?”

“SCP, Los Angeles. I’m a... I study astronomy and have an engineering degree. The fair is right up my alley. Before I find a full time job I’d like to write about the fair and Lucy’s trip. And...”

“Here comes the other shoe.” John puffed on the cigar and then held it between his fingers. “Look, I’m a cynical man, Andy. You could be Joe Blow or Joe Stalin for all I know, but I have two reasons for accepting your offer. I told you I can size up a man pretty quick. Second, I’m deadly serious when I tell you I’ve never seen anybody fight like you did back at the school. I have intruders on my property and Lucy thought she was being followed as number of times in the last two weeks. Hobart has poo-pooed it all. What were you going to say?”

Andy swallowed. “I left Colorado because my sister just died.”

“I’m sorry,” said John and his eyes filled. “Listen, we can talk later. Sometimes these things take time, Andy. We leave for New York in the truck a week from tomorrow. My sister Charlotte has a place in Credwell, New Jer-

sey. We'll stay there while we're at the fair. The boys and Porky will work the farm."

"Is Lucy going to school?" asked Andy.

"She doesn't have plans for that. Most girls out here, Andy, get married and have kids." He brought the cigar up, puffed again and kept it between his teeth. "In a way I'm glad she'll be gone for awhile and away from Brucie."

"The boyfriend?"

John shook his head and ripped the cigar from his mouth. "Oh, Lucy, she's a little naive. Brucie Benson says what you want him to say... Anyway, you watch Lucy here and back east. You'll get room and board and later, the story if you need to write it. I'm sorry about your sister."

"Time will heal it, Mr. Apel."

"John... and have we got an agreement?"

Andy grasped his extended firm hand. "We have an agreement."

## 8

The floor creaked under the kitchen's worn blue marble linoleum and dim light strokes strayed onto a busy diagonally patterned brown and beige wallpaper. Mrs. Apel escorted Andy past the worn wood table and chairs and they exited through the white-framed screen door. Andy's eyes quickly adjusted to the gray shaded tree branches and barn outlines. Dim yellow oil lamps burned in a small white ranch house, sandwiched between the corral and the gambrel-roofed barn.

“ So, Andy, you're a writer?” asked Mrs. Apel.

Andy panned the stars from Cygnus to Hercules. “ I think I know more about the stars.”

“ Who's your favorite?”

“ Well, I study them.”

“ You mean fan magazines?”

“ Oh...”

Andy glanced at her as they crossed the packed dirt. He took in some pungent barnyard odors, and listened to the occasional pig grunts from the pen near the barn. The approach of a night train, signaled by faint a low-pitched whistle, beckoned over the darkened fields.

“ You know, I’m a little reluctant for Lucy to be getting all this praise showered on her, you know, winning the World’s Fair contest. Things have gotten tense since that happened.”

Andy nodded as they neared the side house’s screen door. Lucy’s contagious laugh drifted outside along with what sounded like a muffled engine motor. She tucked in the sheets on the front room cot. “ Sounds like your daughter likes to laugh.”

“ She does. Among her other talents. My daughter seems to challenge everything.”

Andy stopped before they got to the door. “ I think she’ll be just fine.”

“ This fair thing should be an experience. I keep telling John I need a camera to remember it all.”

“ A what?”

“ Camera, but we can’t afford it. Do you own a camera?”

“ Film camera?”

“ Is there any other kind?” asked Mrs. Apel.

Andy once owned a film camera as a boy, but his digital camera sat on the shelf of his apartment eighty years hence. “ I guess not. I own a camera, but it isn’t here.”

She nodded, but held his wrist before they went inside. “ This man, Professor Geiger, Andy... he and Lucy have corresponded. See, he’s from Germany and now John says that’s why agents from the government were questioning Lucy and pressuring John after the graduation... Or at least they were until you stepped in. I don’t want you to get in trouble either.”

Andy held her hand. “ Mrs. Apel, I think they thought they could come into a rural town and harass Lucy. They know she’s done nothing wrong and I don’t think they’ll be back.”

“ Are you sure?”

“ Yeah.”

“ But people have been on the property, too. None of this started until Lucy won the essay contest.”

“ Then I’m glad I’m here. Come on, let’s go inside.”

She twisted her lips as he opened the screen door and walked ahead. With a quilt and a wide smile Lucy crossed the room. Persistent revving emanated from one of the back rooms. “ I don’t think you’ll be needing this tonight with the heat, Mr. Reese.”

“ It does get warm in Iowa.”

“ Only if you’re not from Iowa,” she said. “ Can I see what you’ve written? Writing is something I like to do.”

“ I would if I could. I’m afraid I’ll have to purchase more supplies. As well as clothes. My belongings are... missing.”

“ We were sorry to hear about your baggage,” said Mrs. Apel.

“ Those sure are odd shoes though,” said Ned. He looked a lot like Lucy, but taller. After a few seconds he stooped and squinted at Andy’s sneakers. “ They comfortable?”

“ Yeah.”

“ You tell give me the address of the company. I want to write and get a pair. How much will it cost me?”

“ I got these for about sixty...”

“ Sixty cents. That’s worth it. Yup. If they’re comfortable.”

Lucy turned at the edge of the cot. “ Heck, Neddie, it costs seventy-five cents to get in the fair.” She leaned over and pretended she held a cigar in her fingers. “ Of course Andy will have to cough up the change,” she said in a New York City accent.

“ You’ll have to appreciate my sister’s sense of humor, Mr. Reese,” said Ned. “ She’s always clowning around.”

“ That was Groucho.”

“ Groucho?” asked Andy. “ I guess we all need a good sense of humor.” In many ways Lucy’s attitude reminded him of Kate when she was well.

“ How did you find out about this contest anyway?” asked Ned.

“ He read it in the paper way out in Colorado. Right Andy?” asked Lucy as she ran the chrome tap and filled a glass.

“ How *did you* find out to enter the contest?” asked Ned.

“ Anybody else want water?” asked Lucy.

“ Don’t waste it. We don’t want the well to go dry again,” said Mrs. Apel.

“ Hope those days don’t come back, Ma,” said Ned.

“ Well,” said Lucy, smacking her lips.

“ Lucy, please,” said her mother. “ That’s rude behavior.”

“ It’s like this, Neddie. I’ve always been a girl looking to the future. And... I wanted a free pass to the World’s Fair.”

“ Lucy is very frugal,” said Ned.

“ So, you got a pass for your entire family?” asked Andy.

“Yup. And whoever tags along.” She put her arm around her lanky brother. “See, Neddie. I planned it well. A few well chosen words, a smattering of prescient thoughts-”

“What does the Sam Hill does that mean?” asked Ned.

“Looking ahead,” said Andy.

“Lucy, you’re so full of it,” added Ned as he pushed the screen door.

Lucy cupped her hand and called out as the door slammed.

“Neddie. I’ll keep a room for you in my house when I’m rich and famous.”

“Lucy, you’ll wake Porky,” said Mrs. Apel. “They really do like each other, Mr. Reese.”

Lucy finished the glass of water and set it on the red-checkered tablecloth. “Ned is smarter than he thinks he is. Smarter than Harley.”

“Now, Lucy don’t be comparing your brothers,” said her mother.

“Harley is a workhorse.”

“Yes,” she said turning to Andy. “My mother is right. Everyone has their own redeeming values. And,” she said, raising her finger. “The ability to face the future with responsibility and prudence.”

“Sounds like professor Geiger,” said Andy.

Lucy turned quickly. “You, I like. But if you’re going to stay out here, Mr. Reese, you’d better like to play Monopoly.”

Andy’s computer had a three dimensional Monopoly game board.

“Sure, I know how to play.”

“You’re hired.” She smiled, kissed her mother and headed out the screen door. “Good night all and to all a good night.”

She disappeared into the barnyard shadows and reemerged a few moments later at the farmhouse's kitchen door. He smiled at Mrs. Apel as the buzz snoring continued in the back room. "You have quite a daughter."

"She's always been a handful."

"Intelligent."

"Oh, always looking into things," said Mrs. Apel as she straightened the sheets and fluffed the pillow. "Had to know about everything. How it worked. When she was five years old she had John's gold watch apart on the kitchen table."

"Really?" He glanced toward the back room.

"May the watch rest in peace. She took it apart and it's sitting in my dresser drawer."

"That noise..."

Mrs. Apel broke into a full smile and laughed. She adjusted her glasses. "Why, that's... that's Porky. He's John's old friend and works here on the farm."

"I can make room for you in the house, Mr. Reese."

"No, no, this is fine."

She tucked the handkerchief in her pocket. "We have some of Ned's clothes and I think even John's will fit you until you find your things."

"I insist on helping you out here... earning my keep."

"That is most commendable. Thank you. Not an easy life on the farm, but then again, in a week we'll be on our way to New York City or I should say New Jersey and John's sister's. But I reiterate my husband's concerns: Watch my daughter, Mr. Reese. Keep Lucy safe. Promise me that."

The Seraphs warning of the Moloch shook Andy now. Then two government agents came to mind as he swallowed. “ I promise... I’ll keep her safe.”

\* \* \*

Porky’s snoring cranked like an unrelenting piston in the night. Andy leaned his elbows along the corral boards and looked up at Jupiter, a bright pinpoint, as the warm, humid air brought in more barnyard smells and rustled the leaves. The Seraphs were not on Ganymede in this time period, but did find sanctuary on that Jovian moon in the distant future. He had accepted his journey back into time at the moment he materialized on the Des Moines street, but making sense of his challenge was a more formidable task. Helping Geiger survive would enable Adolph Hitler to win The Second World War and live another few years. Although he had committed himself to accompanying the Apels to New York City, he was hesitant about warning Geiger or preventing his death at the fair. It was possible the Seraphs were lying or had made mistakes in formulating alternative histories.

“ Andy?” said Lucy. The screen door shut and she moved along the side house. In the dim light she carried some folded clothes, a couple of letters and paper. “ I didn’t see you inside.”

“ Just enjoying the stars and the smells.”

She looked skyward. “ Edwin Hubble says the stars are moving away at high speeds.”

Andy raised his brows and placed his hands on his hips. “ You’re quite precocious, you know that? That is exactly what killed the steady state theories.”

“ I read about that. How the universe is static.”

“ It isn’t,” said Andy. “ See, you *are* precocious.”

“ Who me?” she asked and smiled. Andy sniffed the pungent night odors. “ The hogs leave their signature.”

“ I guess you get used to it.”

“ I was born to it... Mom sent me out with some of Harley and Dad’s clothes.”

“ Great.”

“ Their work boots are back in the house. You can get those in the morning. And I have some paper and pencils.”

“ Thank you. I appreciate that.” She handed everything to him.

“ So, you think the fair is a lot of hype?”

“ Hype?” she asked.

“ A lot of false promises.”

She shook her head and ran her fingers through her dark hair.

“ Oh, no. Not at all. I think much of what is at the fair will happen. That’s not the problem.”

Andy turned from the corral fence. “ What will happen?”

“ The television thing. Seeing and hearing. I think people will watch like they listen to radio..”

“ It will become much like radio,” said Andy. “ But the news will become entertainment.”

“ I like entertainment... but not on the news. The news should be reporting. People won't accept anything less.”

Andy sat on the bench across from her. “ People gradually accept most anything.”

“ Your as confident as my dad. He gets something in his gut and he never deviates from it. Sometimes he gets cynical. But he knows when he's right.”

“ Your dad knows the world, what about you?”

Lucy propped her elbows on the table. “ Me, I am wide eyed and I admit it. The promises at the fair of television, cars on super highways, and the city of tomorrow is something that I find fascinating.”

“ I understand.” Andy visualized how things changed over the next several decades. “ What does Geiger say?”

“ Ah, funny you should ask. I have his three letters here... so you can read them for your book. Professor Geiger challenges everyone to take responsibility and think when encountering technology. Like any indulgence you need to know how and when to use it.”

Future virtual rooms flashed into Andy's thoughts. “ You mean how we react to it.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Are you scheduled to meet with Geiger?” asked Andy.

“ You'll see in the letter, he will be at the fair off and on this summer, according to Mr. Davenport, the official that's supposed to coordinate everything up there... Geiger spends time at the Soviet Pavilion or the Court of Peace. I have a map of the whole place.”

“ Court of Peace, what's that a judicial thing?”

“ No, silly, that where all the countries have their pavilions. FDR opened the fair from there.”

“ You don’t seem to like FDR or at least you challenged every part of that fireside chat.”

“ My friends,” she said, producing a surprisingly close approximation of Roosevelt’s voice.

Andy grinned. “ That was good.”

“ I like FDR. Some things were necessary in the crisis. Had to be done by the government because of the slump. ”

“ Agree with him?” asked Andy as he yawned.

“ I agree with Professor Geiger. Individual responsibility, but it’s getting late and it’s been a long day.”

“ Congratulations on your speech, Lucy. I really liked it. It was dynamic just like FDR or JFK...”

“ JFK? Who’s JFK?” she asked.

“ Just checking if you’re listening.”

“ Well, I thank you for your accolades. Good night, Mr. Reese. Have a good night’s sleep.”

“ With that bear in the back room?”

Lucy smiled and looked at the side house. “ Porky’s been known to wake the dead... That’s why he’s in the side house.” She started back outside. “ Good night. I’m glad you came to town.”

“ Good night, Lucy.”

She again merged with the barnyard shadows, reappeared at the screen door and slowly closed the outside door once she entered the darkened kitchen. Andy held the clothes as he headed back to the side house and let

the screen door hit his sneaker. The snoring sputtered like a portable gasoline generator. He set the clothes on the chair, but gravitated to the oak desk's lamp flame and sat in the chair.

Geiger's letters were inside blue legal sized envelopes and postmarked from Ithaca, New York. He slid good linen quality paper, thick and pressed with a raised grain and watermark.

Dr. Herman Geiger  
Amesbury Union College  
64 Harpen Flat  
Ithaca, New York  
May 14, 1939

Dear Lucy,

Congratulations and kudos for your essay. Looking ahead into the future is not an easy task. I was struck by your insightful and prescient thoughts of the life ahead of us. Technology is a wonderful gift to mankind, easing the burdens and the drudgery of our forebears. You are right when you consider mankind's reaction to technology. I wonder what we will do when our leisure time expands. I am a little cynical because I truly believe man must be directed and focused in his efforts. Maybe focus is possible as chores ease and wonders expand. In my own lifetime I have heard radio waves evolve from a few crude signals to a fireside chat from the President of the United States. Television is the next great change and I fear greatly the impact, and I believe it will be total, of a technology that makes it's participants passive viewers. What will we believe and what will we become?

Good luck at the fair and congratulations on your intuition. Always listen to it.

Sincerely,

## Herman Geiger

Dr. Herman Geiger

He stared at Geiger's letter for a few seconds in the yellow light and gently folded it back into the envelope. Geiger's ideas were incredibly compelling in both accuracy and ability to gauge human tendencies. The professor seemed personable and gracious in his response to Lucy's initial letter. He picked up the second envelope, post marked May 30, 1939. The inside letter looked identical to the first letter.

Dr. Herman Geiger  
Amesbury Union College  
64 Harpen Flat  
Ithaca, New York  
May 29, 1939

Dear Lucy,

Thank you for your second letter and for your question about how we should react to radio broadcasts. I am elated you have read two of my books at your local library. Since I left Germany in 1933 to escape the Nazi horrors, I have become more and more convinced that people will believe what they are told. I think radio is a prime example of this and Hitler's and Dr. Goebbel's use of that medium and the film medium is a paramount example of my thesis. We are all human and want to believe many primal illusions. These mediums have credibility. When used responsibly, as with President Roosevelt's leader-

ship during the hard economic times, the mediums flourish. But even Roosevelt tried to pack the Supreme Court with justices more akin to his New Deal programs. My point, Lucy, and to answer your question, is we merely have to use the other side of our human equation: We must think about what we are doing. Hitler would not be in power if people in Germany had not substituted rampant nationalism for human reason. Secondly, we must not become apathetic and let our leaders promote their own agenda on these new mediums. Think and be aware, Lucy. It's a very simple formula.

Sincerely,

**Herman Geiger**

Dr. Herman Geiger

Andy leaned back in the creaky oak chair. For the first time since the Seraphs contact, he fully realized Geiger's brilliance and how his death might change the timeline, but he failed to comprehend how letting Hitler live was a good thing. Even with the Fuehrer dying in 1949 and Germany's empire destined for disintegration, Andy had to fully trust the Seraphs before he acted. "It's so fragile. Change one thing and you risk major changes later."

He took out the last letter without folding the second letter. This letter was typed on a piece of white onion skin paper.

Dr. Herman Geiger  
Amesbury Union College  
64 Harpen Flat  
Ithaca, New York  
May 29, 1939

Dear Lucy,

Of course I will meet you at the New York World's Fair. During the summer, until I resume my duties at the college in September, I intend to devote my time to further the cause of social technocracy. I feel the best way to do that is to be a presence at the fair.

When you arrive at the fair, look for me at the Soviet Pavilion near the Lagoon of Nations or in the Court of Peace, itself. I do look forward to meeting you and having a discussion about the future.

Yours truly,

**Herman Geiger**

Herman Geiger

Andy's lids drooped and he lowered his head. He stood without placing the letters back in the envelopes, pulled back the cot blanket and attempted to blow out the oil lamp. Then he found the knob lowering the wick

and blew again, and the flame went out. As the wick glowed red in the dark, he stripped down to his under shorts and fell back on the sheets.

In the darkness as the snoring continued, Andy knew the Seraphs were aware Lucy Apel was the link to Geiger, and while he was still unsure of their motives, he was certain of their ability to chart timelines. Without the fair's time capsule and Lucy's essay saved in various newspapers, the Seraphs might not have known of the Geiger connection in time. As he drifted off, he understood he had unconsciously developed an agenda to avenge Kate's termination clinic death, but he had to balance those hopes against trusting the Seraph constructed future.

## 9

Porky's undershirt bulged at the corners of his denim overalls. His arms were large, but he did not seem particularly strong, and Andy did most of the fence post lifting atop the hill several hundred yards from the farmhouse. Porky sat on the pile of hand honed fence posts and took out a red handkerchief. He dabbed the dribbling forehead sweat soaking his thinning brown hair. "Nothin' like a good day's work to get the old ticker goin'."

Andy balanced the fence post in the hole and removed his cotton gloves. He walked across the brittle yellow grass and wiped his forearm across his own brow. "Porky."

"Sir," he said, holding his lower back.

"What's the matter now?"

"Just an old back injury from the war. I gotta lose some weight."

"You were in the war?" asked Andy, placing his work boot on the wood stack.

"I don't like to talk about it."

"Oh..." Andy reached for the glass bottle, but Porky had drunk most of the water and Andy did not want to jaunt down to the barnyard pump again. "Let me get this straight. You're thirty-five years old."

"Yes, sir."

“ And the war *ended* twenty-two years ago, which would make you thirteen when it was over.”

“ Oh, I was brought in under a Act of Congress allowin’ younger men to serve their country.”

“ What unit were you with?” asked Andy, imbibing the cool water.

“ You couldn’t spare some water for a guy, could you?”

Andy held the half filled bottle to his lips and slowly lowered it.

“ Porky, I’ve trucked down to that pump four times because you keep guzzling the water.”

“ It’s hot out here.”

“ Take it,” said Andy and he handed the jug to Porky. Across the flatter fields he saw John with the two Apel boys on a red tractor heading toward the barn in the haze. Andy turned back to Porky. “ Porky, you drank it again!”

“ I’ll go back. I’ll go back.”

“ Oh, man,” said Andy.

“ But I am tired, you know.”

“ Tired? I wasn’t the one snoring all night.”

“ I don’t snore.”

“ Yes, you do.”

“ The Shadow knows.”

“ What?” asked Andy, his throat parched.

“ Lamont Cranston.”

“ Who is Lamont Cranston?”

“ The Shadow.”

“ Okay... Look, we need some more water,” said Andy.

“ Don’t you listen to the radio? Monday nights, the Shadow.”

“ So, I have a choice: The Shadow or your snoring.”

“ I ain’t never heard myself snore,” he said and gripped the straps of his overalls.

“ Because you’re sleeping.”

Porky held the bottle with one hand and his back with the other hand as he struggled to his feet. He emitted a series of grunts and groans similar to the pig squeals Andy had heard in the barn earlier that morning. Porky gazed down the hill. “ Like I say, when you help pull that artillery, you’re puttin’ yourself in great jeopardy.”

Andy rolled his eyes. “ We need water is what we need.”

“ We were surrounded and nobody wanted to move that artillery piece.”

“ Right,” said Andy, wiping his brow again.

“ You ever been in combat, Mr. Reese?”

“ Andy.”

“ Andy, shells were exploding and the threat of gas was in the air.”

“ I bet it was.”

Porky handed the empty bottle to him and screwed the cap on the top. “ See, I had to pull that piece myself and I dislodged my disc... under enemy fire of course.”

“ Of course.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Okay... I’m heading back to the pump.”

Porky winced and rubbed his back. “ Would you do that for an old boy?”

Andy looked into his blue-eyed slits. “ Why don’t you get some rest, Porky?”

“ You’re a good man,” said Porky. “ You watch out for them scratchers.”

“ What’s the another radio program?”

“ Scratchers. Them guys John drove out by shot gun. Stalkers. You gut bums and rail riders that drift into town but these guys were scratchers.”

“ Listen, Porky, I’m going to the pump.”

Andy took a step toward the farmhouse, but stopped abruptly when he thought about the Moloch. “ What do these guys look like, Pork? You ever see them?”

“ They can run like hell or they did when John fired his gun. Lucy saw them here and in town.”

“ She did?”

“ Yup. Probably bums ridin’ the rails. You sure you don’t want me to escort you to the pump?”

“ Rest your back,” said Andy with a half smile.

“ Good man,” said Porky, holding his back as he shuffled across the straw grass.

Andy gripped the glass bottle and headed down the hillside, but looked over his shoulder. Porky quickly moved his hand to his back and slowed his pace. Andy grinned. He liked Porky despite doubting everything he said. But his reference to the scratchers was more credible than his other exaggerations. Near the bottom of the hill Andy spotted Lucy and her mother at the clothesline. Her powder blue sundress ruffled in the in breeze like the clothes on the line.

Andy swabbed his forehead again when he reached the yard. He passed John's black Ford truck and veered left to the green metal pump next to the side house fence. Lucy waved and continued plucking wood clothespins from the rope line. Andy wondered if these scratchers were stalking Lucy because they knew of her link with Geiger.

He hesitated next to the pump handle as Lucy and Mrs. Apel folded clothes in the wicker basket. The Moloch, if they were stalking Lucy, had not killed her. He had to assume she was only a sideline player in the historical melodrama, but his own role in saving Geiger from death was a direct threat to the future Moloch existence. Maybe they were looking for him, too.

Lucy carried the clothes basket toward the porch as Andy ratcheted the pump handle. Porky was not visible at the top of the hill, but Andy assumed he was resting comfortably under the tree. With the bottle on the drier dirt, he cupped his hands and captured a sudden cool underground gush. He splashed his sun-dried face and cranked the handle again. This time he placed his head under the spigot. The cold water soothed and cooled his head as he doused his hair. He sucked the water from his hand formed bowl and pulled back his head. Lucy stood, back lit to the sun, with her arms crossed.

"There's wash tub in the side house." Her angular face and dark eyes were sharp against the hazy blue sky. "Working with Porky can be a challenge."

"Challenge? The man spins everything."

"Spins?" she asked and tilted her head.

"You know, he puts his own inimitable twist on it," Andy said as he stood. "Plus, he keeps drinking all the water."

"He's a growing boy," said Lucy, raising her dark brows.

“ If he keeps growing and you’ll have to stick him in a horse trailer.” He scooped up the water bottle and filled it as Lucy howled. “ Did I say something funny?”

“ You’re a scream, Andy.”

“ And his stories...”

“ I’ve heard them all,” she said, but her smile fell quickly. “ Porky and Dad grew up together here in Hancock. He was laid off at the grain elevator. Five or six years ago you couldn’t find a job anywhere. Dad took him on. No salary at first. Just room and board. Meals. And things were bad. Weather was dry... Dad likes Porky and his stories. We all do.” She squinted her eyes as she thought. “ Dad is very practical and knows what he wants. Always doing things to accomplish something, but he’s got a big heart. Although, he doesn’t even know it or show it.”

Andy screwed on the metal cap. “ Porky mentioned the scratchers.”

“ Yup.”

“ You’ve seen them...” He moved with her to the corral fence.

“ Who are they?”

Her smooth forehead compressed into thin ridges. “ I’m not sure. There not the usual drifters you see passing through town. Hair trimmed and clean shaven. Dressed casually, pleated pants and white shirts. No ties. I fist saw them outside the school. They were sandy haired guys in their twenties. Looked Slavic. You know, with the high cheek bones. Twice. Once on a Thursday afternoon and then the next morning. And each time the radio in the gym was filled with static. Maybe they had transmitters. They were watching me. I told Dad, and he, Neddie and Harley came down to the school. The two guys didn’t show up again, or at least around the school.”

“ But they did show up again?”

“ Yes, two more times. Out here during the day. A day like today. The same two guys were wandering around the back cornfield. It was a Sunday and we had just got back from church.”

“ How long ago?”

“ Week ago Sunday. I called Neddie and Harley outside and both the scratchers disappeared into the corn. I didn't think anything of it at first. Last Monday in the middle the night I saw three men in the low light. When they crossed the yard and headed toward my bedroom window, I screamed. Dad was up in a second. The men ran, but were sill in sight by the second barn when Dad fired his shotgun.”

“ He hit them?”

“ No, they got away. We saw the shoe prints in the dirt. Dad figures they brought a truck along the riverbank. We saw the treads, too. I must admit I was scared and have been scared for the last week. See, Dad's been looking around town for somebody other than Hobart to stay with us during the trip.”

“ The car tracks along the river... I'd like to see where it was parked,” said Andy.

“ Maybe we can walk down there later. I don't think Brucie is coming out today.”

“ Your boyfriend?”

“ We went steady, sort of, all this year.” She tightened her brow again and looked up the hill. Then she smiled. “ Did you get to read Professor Geiger's letters?”

“ Yes, I did,”

“ Can you believe he actually wrote back to me?”

“ You did win a national contest.” Andy leaned against the fence.

“ He seems like a man who is passionate about his beliefs.”

“ It’s as if he can see the future,” she said.

“ Just like the New York World’s Fair?”

She shook her head. “ In a different way. He thinks about his place in the world rather than getting swept by new technology, but I don’t think he is anti-technology.”

“ Nor do I.”

“ I check with my parents. Let’s see if we can go down to the creek. You could see the tire tracks right there.”

Andy looked up the hill. “ I have to get back to the fence mending.”

“ You don’t have to work for your keep. Dad told Mom that this morning.”

“ We wouldn’t want Porky to overexert himself.”

She grinned. “ That is something none of us will ever have to worry about.”

## 10

Mrs. Apel and John held hands for a short time and trailed behind Ned, Andy, and Lucy. The sunlight pierced between the tree leaves, creating shadowed patches across the grass blades, and the rock strewn creek's churning brown waters nearly erased the persistent peepers as the cooler evening air advanced. Andy described his afternoon with Porky at the fence and Lucy's laugh mixed with sound of gurgling water. "Did he tell you how many times he's been married?"

"We estimate six," said Ned.

"What?" asked Andy, tilting his head in the gentle breeze.

"That we know of," said Lucy. He was married before he went to the war."

"Then he really was in the war?" asked Andy.

"Sure, but nobody seems to know where for sure and nobody remembers him enlisting according to Dad."

"Dad went over for a year," said Lucy, her brow, depressing as it did when she talked about something unpleasant. But she quickly smiled. "So, Porky may have been in the army, right, Neddie?"

"Dad, in his hearts of hearts, although he'll never say it, doesn't really believe it, but he just lets Porky go on about it. You know what I mean, Andy?"

“ Sure...”

Lucy pointed to a tree cluster about a hundred yards down the rounded grass bank. “ Right down there is where they parked their car.”

“ An old Chevy,” said Ned. “ I mean old. They had trouble starting it. We would have caught em’ if we hadn’t come down on foot.”

“ You see plates?”

“ I thought New York or New Jersey, but I’m not sure,” replied Ned.

Lucy quickly changed the subject. “ So, Porky was married to Julia Comstock before he allegedly went overseas.”

“ Julia Cornstock?” asked Andy.

“ No, *Com*-stock. But that was annulled somehow because she and Porky were drunk and ended up married in the Calhoun County. Then Porky says he got shipped out.” Andy rolled his eyes as they approached the trees. “ And then there’s his war record.”

Ned pressed his lips into a smile. “ Porky’s medals for bravery under fire got lost in shipment back home.”

Andy was still laughing when he saw tracks in the hardened soil. He traced the treads across the dirt into the straw grass leading into a field with higher green grass. Then he looked up at both Lucy and Ned. “ Who were they?”

“ I’m sure it has something to do with my winning the contest. I know it does. The essay was published twice in the Des Moines Register and who knows where else. You said you read it in Colorado, Andy.”

“ Right...”

“ They were probably more of those government people. Like the ones Andy flattened,” said Ned.

“ Maybe,” said Andy. Shoe prints were pressed into the dry soil down the river bank..

“ Some of those shoe are ours,” said John as he and Mrs. Apel reached the cluster. Mrs. Apel adjusted her glasses and John looked up. “ Stamped Brockton, Massachusetts? We don’t own anything like that.”

“ What about Porky?”

“ I don’t think Porky could navigate down here,” said John, smiling, but then Mrs. Apel folded her arms. “ What?”

“ Porky means well,” said Mrs. Apel. Lucy smirked, but her mother raised her finger. “ Let’s not be making fun of Porky. He tries.”

Andy and Lucy looked at each other. “ Okay, Brockton, Massachusetts. And plates from new Jersey or New York. Does that mean anything?”

“ Brockton makes shoes,” said John. “ Thing is, those two guys were scared away.”

“ John thinks they sent the two men at the graduation,” said Mrs. Apel.

“ Slavic looking scratchers,” said Andy.

“ Doesn’t mean the whole thing isn’t related. My daughter writes an essay and government people stick their noses into my business,” said John.

“ Like FDR,” said Lucy.

“ I was a Hoover man. Herbert Hoover was from Iowa and fed people in Europe after the war.”

“ The war to end all wars,” said Mrs. Apel.

“ Tell that to Herr Hitler,” said John. “ I just hope my boys don’t have to go off to Europe.”

Andy again remembered the alternate history of Geiger and Hitler not attacking the United States.

“ We’re ready to fight, Dad.”

“ No...” John’s far away, painful look shook Andy and further made him hesitant about tampering with history. “ No one is ever ready.”

Mrs. Apel took his arm and they moved together along the riverbank as Ned picked up a few stones and skimmed them down the river. Lucy motioned Andy down the moist dirt incline and onto to a rock protruding over the river like an oversized potato. She sat and let her feet dangle near the fast moving water. In the evening haze her face had a smooth pastel glow. “ I’ve come down to this rock since I was a little girl.”

“ Nice and quiet.”

“ Exactly. I can always get my thoughts together down here. I composed most of my essay right here.”

“ I can see why.” He watched John and Mrs. Apel continue under the riverbank branches as Ned skipped more rocks across the creek’s brisk current. Lucy smiled toward to the forested hills beyond the creek. “ Who are your heroes, Lucy?”

She raised her dark brows and he thought she was taken off guard, but she answered quickly. “ Joe Louis.”

“ Joe Louis? You’re a boxing fan?”

“ No. A Negro is heavyweight champion of the world, Andy. Who would have thought it?”

“ You do or you don’t like that?”

“ I think it’s great. All those people who think Negroes are inferior. Look at Jesse Owens. Hitler was enraged when he sprinted to victory in the Olympics. He was livid and left the stadium at the Berlin games. I like people

who defy the status quo. It's all a matter of thinking. Professor Geiger says you need to assess the situation and simply ask whether it makes sense."

"Geiger is from Germany."

"Yes, but he isn't a Nazi." She rested her elbows on her knees.

Andy remained astounded the Seraphs knew about Geiger.

"Who else?"

"I admired Amelia Earhart. It's been two years, but I think she's alive."

"The plane is gone."

"You said that with certainty. You know something the rest of the world doesn't?"

Andy raised his brows. "The Pacific is a big place."

"She was bold, almost reckless, but she did cross the Atlantic right after Lindbergh."

"True on all counts. She was a person who upset the status quo because nobody thought a woman could do it."

"That's right. People have preconceived notions." She stared toward the opposite bank again. "You know, I don't know what to think about you."

"And I bet you've been thinking about it, too."

"I'm always thinking to the point where my mother and father are sure I'm absent minded or forgetful. I'm really not. I'm just thinking."

Andy crossed his arms. "And what does your thinking tell you about me?"

"Contradictions."

"What else?"

“ You went to school for astronomy.”

“ I did.”

“ Okay, I’ll grant you that.”

“ Thank you.”

“ Now, you have a college a degree,” she said.

“ I have a doctorate.”

“ You do? How old *are* you?”

“ I’m twenty-five.”

“ So, you’re *Dr. Andy Reese*?” He had never seen an astonished look upon her face. “ You could be here spying on me.”

Andy cupped his hand and whispered. “ Don’t let it get around.”

“ Dad says you wouldn’t have popped them the way you did if you were one of them.”

“ No, I am just Andy Reese and I find the idea of the world of tomorrow, as promoted at the fair, strangely compelling.”

Lucy looked up quickly. “ Okay, smart guy. Name those stars coming out up there. I know my constellations. That is the swan and it is a summer constellation.”

“ Deneb and the one you can barely see is Albireo.”

“ What about the bright one right next to it.”

“ Vega in Lyra. Absolute magnitude + 5.0. Distance from earth 26.5 light years.”

“ Maybe you’re just a stargazer.”

“ At heart.”

“ Right answer.” She rolled her tongue along her cheek. “ Hum.”

“ Did I pass the test of will there be a written exam later?”

“ I’ll think about it... *Doctor.*”

“ Nobody calls me, Doctor.”

She smiled and peered into the murky water. “ Dad said your sister...”

“ Her name was Kate...”

“ Sorry.”

“ Life goes on.” Andy pursed his lips. Then he spotted a green, fuzzy patch under the ripples about ten feet off shore. “ What the heck is that?”

“ You see something in the water?”

“ Glowing.”

Lucy rounded her index finger and thumb and produced a shrill whistle. Ned, his arm cocked, held a stone in his hand. “ Ned, call Dad!”

“ What’s the matter?”

“ Something in the water. Get Dad.”

Andy’s heart thumped. The luminescent green object, the size of a baseball, confused him. In this time period only radioactive material would actually glow. John and Mrs. Apel trotted behind Ned.

Lucy’s hands surrounded her mouth as she called out. “ Over here. Something glowing in the water!”

John helped his wife down the grass. “ Lucy, what are you talking about?”

“ In the water, John,” said Andy.

John stopped before he reached the rock. “ What the *hell* is that?”

“ Want me to dive in and get it?” asked Ned.

Andy was more concerned this object was not of current origin and related to the Moloch.

“ It may be radioactive,” said Lucy.

“ You mean like uranium?” asked John.

“ Then we need somebody from the government to come out here and handle this,” added Ned.

“ I ain’t dealing with any more government people,” stated John.

“ Maybe college science department,” said Lucy. “ Andy, that’s where you have connections.”

“ Well, I don’t know...”

“ Damn, that’s very odd,” said John.

“ Maybe we should call Hobart,” said Mrs. Apel.

John slowly turned. “ Now, Mavis, Hobart couldn’t find his way home if you brought him out here.”

With the ensuing darkness the object looked denser and brighter, but Andy was reluctant to summon anyone out here.

“ What do you think it is, Andy?” asked Lucy.

“ I’m not sure, but we don’t want to be exposed to radiation. That’s not good.”

Lucy stepped closer to him. “ That’s what happened to Madam Curie.”

Andy was taken aback again by Lucy’s overall knowledge, but was bothered she was going nowhere with it. “ That’s correct.”

She peered into the blackening water as Andy looked back to where the intruders had parked their car. Now he was beginning to think the Moloch had chased him back in time and was certain Geiger must survive to change history.

## 11

Andy pleaded with the Apels to restrict knowledge of the object. He advised retrieving and burying it before sunrise. Lucy convinced Ned to drive her into town and she contacted a physicist from the University of Chicago. By late morning the following day a red truck rumbled through John Apel's front gate. A middle-aged man in baggy, khaki pants and a cotton white shirt stepped into the barnyard and was met by Lucy and Andy. He introduced himself as Gerald Jenkins and he spoke with professorial authority.

Only minutes after his arrival in the humid heat, Jenkins donned a wide brimmed straw hat, gripped a long wood pole and metal bucket, and followed Andy and Lucy, trailed by the Apel family, to the creek. He first checked the area for radioactivity with a metal rod connected to a hand held box, and when he was satisfied no danger existed, he jimmied the pole through the bucket handle. The sphere cast a faint haze through the sky's blue reflection. Over the next fifteen minutes, after repeated attempts, he rolled the sphere into the bucket and fished it through the currents.

He dragged the glowing bucket from the water, cutting a groove into the rich soil. Ned and Harley moved forward to help, but Jenkins waved them back, but radioactive readings proved negative when he swung the metal rod through the air again. He stood ten feet back, surrounded by the group, gazed into the blazing bucket. "I have never seen anything like this."

“What is it?” asked John.

“I always like to have answers before I offer a scientific opinion, Mr. Apel.”

“How about a little speculation?” asked Andy.

His azure eyes darted between Andy and the bucket. He extended his lower jaw and raised his gray brows. “Speculation? Perhaps we are looking at an object that has come through the Earth’s atmosphere.”

“Alive?” asked Andy.

Jenkins produced a shaky smile. “That would be intriguing.”

“Then, maybe we should just bury it,” said Andy.

“Not on your life. I am bringing this back where my colleagues and I will study it in great detail.” He lifted the wooden pole and threaded it through the collapsed bucket handle.

“You need help with that?” asked Ned.

“Yes, that would be greatly appreciated.”

With Ned on the other end, Jenkins balanced the hanging bucket along the grassy shore and headed back to the farm. All during the trek along the soybean fields Andy wondered if Jenkins was transporting an evolved human consciousness. At the edge of the barnyard Jenkins requested a clear glass jar filled with water, but large enough to accommodate the sphere. Lucy rushed across the yard and into the kitchen, quickly returning with an oversized mason jar. She pumped water into the container and carried it to Jenkins waiting in the barn.

Jenkins positioned the jar atop a new wooden storage crate. With Harley and Ned hoisting the pole, he used a long rake handle to tilt the bucket over the jar. As the creek water spilled from the bucket, the luminescent

sphere, slightly larger than a large tomato, slid with a splash into the water filled jar. Andy took a step forward and stared at the pale green, intricate, mathematically symmetrical network across the object as it slowly settled at the bottom of the jar.

Jenkins used a small pair of black opera glasses to magnify the sphere. He said his closer observation revealed minute worm spirals, subdivided into smaller spirals and glowing within a gooey green substrate below an outer sheath. During the next few minutes as every took a turn with the glasses, the sphere floated a few inches from the bottom, inexplicable gradually rotated and revolved silently like a planet.

The Apels were mesmerized, but Andy wanted to leave Iowa and find Geiger immediately. He looked up and shook his head. “It is beyond our understanding.”

“I don’t know what makes this object glow,” said Jenkins.

“Are you sure there’s no radiation?” asked Andy.

“I am. I deal with radioactive piles all the time, Mr. Reese. What I find fascinating is its motion around the jar.”

Computer chips in Andy’s own time and future machines were reduced to the molecular level, but this sphere represented something incredibly sophisticated. “What are you going to do with it?”

“I would like it studied and all of you people, even though you did not retrieve the sphere, to report any irregularities to your doctor here in town. And one more thing.”

“What’s that?” asked John, staring at the sphere.

“Do not and I repeat, do repeat to anyone what you have seen. We don’t want another Orson Welles.”

“ The Mercury Theater of the Air.” Lucy crossed her arms and leaned against a wooden support pole..

“ Exactly. People will panic. I told you I’ve never seen anything like this in my life. The precision and the unjustified motion.”

“ Then we will continue to keep it hush,” said John. “ Just get that thing off my property.”

“ Yes, sir,” said Jenkins. “ I will do that right now.”

Andy fixed his eyes on the sphere. In the day and a half since spotting the object in the creek, he had not slept well and constantly wondered whether the sphere was related to or was one of the Moloch. He feared the unpredictable, yet, it had not made any aggressive moves.

Jenkins again used the rake to catch the mason jar’s metal handle. He slowly lifted the jar off the crate and deftly positioned it above an open, scuffed, gray metal cylinder on the straw floor. The proliferating green glow formed within the cylinder’s darkened walls and shot forward like a movie projector into the upper haylofts. Jenkins clamped the cylinder shut and again used the wooden pole. “ This canister is insulated with lead.”

“ If it isn’t radioactivity, what is it?” asked John.

Jenkins waddled, carefully balancing the canister toward his truck. “ That is what we intend to find out.”

Andy and Lucy followed him to the truck. Jenkins placed the canister inside a long blue painted bin. He secured the canister and then closed and locked the lid. After pausing, he removed his hat and dabbed his forehead with his folded, white handkerchief. “ Can I still contact you people through the barber shop?”

“ Sure, Dom will get word out to us,” said John. “ Or the other number at Hutch Higgens’s house.”

“ Good.”

“ I have to tell you we’re leaving for the New York World’s Fair in three days, Mr. Jenkins.”

“ The Fair... I would like to go there myself..”

Lucy raised her index finger and grabbed her notebook off the gate. She quickly jotted something on the page and ripped it from the book.

“ This is my Aunt Charlotte’s address and phone number in New Jersey. It’s a party line, but you can get through.”

“ Good. We will inform you of our progress. And again, mum’s the word until we nail this down.”

“ Good luck in that, Mr. Jenkins,” said John. “ This looks like somebody’s idea of a play toy.”

“ Or from outer space,” said Harley.

“ Unknown.” Jenkins smiled and nodded, but thought before he spoke. “ There’s a chance we may not understand this.”

“ Well, at least *we* don’t have to deal with it,” said John and everyone laughed.

“ Your dad cuts to the chase,” said Andy.

Jenkins tipped his hat and went back to the cab. He started the truck and a few seconds later shifted forward. The dust again stirred across the yard as he swung past the farmhouse trees. John stepped forward and placed his hands on his hips as he watched the truck move along the dirt road.

“ Just make sure nobody tells Porky any of this. I sent him to Des Moines for supplies on purpose.”

“ You trusted him with the truck, Dad? Remember he pulled out last week with all the equipment in the bed and forgot to close the gate,” said Lucy, turning to Andy. “ All the equipment scattered down Main Street. Dom saw the whole thing.”

John pinched the bridge of his nose. “ Yes, Dom saw it. And everybody else in town... Porky knows he has to close the truck gate now.”

“ Some of that equipment was pretty bent up,” said Ned.

“ Ruined,” added Lucy.

“ Enough talk about Porky,” said John. “ Point being: He can’t keep his big mouth shut.”

“ Is he that bad?” asked Andy.

“ You might as well have Lowell Thomas broadcast it,” said John and he wiped his brow with jersey sleeve. “ And Andy I want to talk to you.”

Andy shrugged his shoulders at Lucy and she smiled as John led him toward the porch, now in the afternoon tree shade. “ Something wrong, John?”

John leaned against the porch balustrade. “ Well, yes. I’m worried about those men on my property and in town.”

“ They haven’t been around for a week. Maybe they’re gone,”

John stroked his chin and squinted his blue eyes. “ I just have a damn bad feeling. Maybe it’s that thing in the creek. I can’t put it all together. I just want you to please watch Lucy. She was the one they were following around town.”

“ Sure.”

“ Lucy is so, so-”

“ Precocious,” said Andy

“ That’s it. She’s liable to go right up and start talking to strangers.”

“ I understand.”

“ You’ve got fighting abilities, I know that. You’re my daughter’s bodyguard and don’t forget it. Sunday, we’re going over to Hutch’s house. Mavis and I play cards every Sunday night with Clara and Hutch. Lucy is supposed to meet Brucie Benson and go to the movies.”

“ I’m reluctant to be spying on Lucy’s social life.”

John placed his hand alongside his mouth as if he were telling a secret. “ I wouldn’t object if you want to give Brucie the same treatment you have the guys at the school.”

“ Don’t you like him?”

“ Brucie’s a braggart and a hypocrite,” said John.

“ But not a bad guy.”

John’s deep laugh bellowed around the yard. “ That’s funny.”

He smiled and shook his head and put his arm around Andy as he walked him back toward the barn. “ The Big Broadcast of 1938 is playing at the Majestic.”

“ Is that a good movie?”

“ Any movie Bob Hope is in is a good movie. Me, I like John Wayne and westerns. John Wayne is from Iowa. I like Cagney, too. I can remember when we used to watch movies at the Majestic and Helen McCain used to play the piano to Charlie Chaplin, Clara Bow... It was big time when sound came in... Heck, they haven’t even brought electrical power down here yet, but Franklin Roosevelt’s gonna do it.”

“ You like FDR.”

“ Franklin Roosevelt saved this country. Now, I was a solid republican. Herbert Hoover was-”

“ From Iowa.”

“ Right, but I’ll always vote democratic. Franklin Roosevelt saved my farm. We were dry, real dry, not like the dust bowl, but dry and we needed money. Things were bad, Andy. Franklin Roosevelt got us loans. Henry Wallace fought for us, too.” Andy tilted his head. “ Wallace is Secretary of Agriculture. Now he’s from-”

“ Sounds like the whole world is from Iowa,” said Andy, grinning.

“ If it isn’t, it should be.”

## 12

Mrs. Apel wore a light scented perfume and said nothing, when Andy stalled the car at the edge of the property. He thought back to the one time he attempted to drive a standard shift jeep along the California coast. His Saab's automatic transmission was so easy to use. Even John remained silent until Andy ground the gears, finally reaching third gear, and kept driving. Without power steering the truck's huge steering wheel was weighted down.

“ I'm not used to driving a truck,” said Andy.

“ Can't say it's an added load because Porky's not in the truck,” said John, grinning.

“ John Apel don't start making light of Porky again.”

“ Porky was never light,” replied John. Mrs. Apel hid a smile as she looked out the open window.

The Ford rumbled past a sloping road leading to small metal-framed bridge over Harper's Creek. Maybe the men stalking Lucy had retreated over this very bridge. As much as he denied the existence of the Moloch, a glowing green sphere of intricate complexity was found just a half a mile back. The Seraphs had not mentioned Lucy having a direct influence on history. Andy hoped the Moloch, if they now existed in this time, were only observing Lucy because of her contact with Geiger.

The town buildings rose over the rounded knolls ahead. Sunlight shot across the flattened land into Andy's eyes and more green hills to the south. In the mirror the tinted orange rays caught Lucy's rounded face and her dark hair flipped in the breeze. She was only eight years younger and Andy did not think he had romantic feelings for her, yet he found her intellect and disposition remarkable. He passed a red clapboard railroad station and shifted into second gear as the truck rocked over the exposed steel tracks..

“ Now, you've got it,” said John.

“ All right,” said Andy, raising his right hand as he shifted into third. Lucy broke into a round of applause. He smiled and shook his head. “ I guess I passed the driving test.”

“ Good enough for me,” said John. “ Just keep going straight onto Main past Dom's barber shop. You'll see the Majestic on the right. But slow down before you get pinched by Hobart.”

Andy nodded and took his foot off the accelerator. Towns like this in the future were blended into suburban sprawl or existed only in rural areas. Those downtowns would eventually fade away, too. A light inside Dom's shop highlighted the shop's black and white tiles like a television picture in the dark. John shouted out the window. Dom looked toward the street, waved as the truck passed, and continued to snip his scissors through a bald man's side hair.

The bright bulbs surrounding the Magestic's marquee lighted the sidewalk and street. Across the white facade were uneven red letters.

**THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1938**

**--W.C. FIELDS----BOB HOPE--**

**Martha Raye---- Dorothy Lamour**

Andy shifted and stopped the truck along the granite curb. A thin young man in a red plaid shirt, beige slacks and short brown hair talked to the blonde in the illuminated ticket window. John leaned across his wife.

“ There he is.”

“ Brucie?”

“ *Brucie.*”

“ There’s Lorna and Mel,” said Lucy.

The same thin blonde from the graduation waited with a well-dressed kid in red bow tie inside the lobby. “ At least Lorna’s here,” said John.

Lucy called from the sidewalk, but Brucie was slow to turn from the ticket window. John’s jaw tightened and his facial muscles flexed as he ground his teeth. Lucy called out his name and flit across the sidewalk under the marquee. Brucie glanced back. He had a long face with a horse smile and flashy eyes. Andy sensed Brucie’s exaggerated sense of self-importance as he approached the truck.

“ Mr. And Mrs. Apel. How are you?”

“ We’re fine, Brucie,” said Mrs. Apel.

Brucie did not face John directly. “ Good. Good. I just wanted to let you know. My final arrangements to Sacramento College are complete. I shall be leaving in August.”

“That’s wonderful, Brucie,” said John, winking at Andy. “I guess that comes with being a real estate agent’s son.” Then he whispered in a low voice to Andy. “Can’t be too soon.”

“What was that, sir?”

“I said I think college is important,” said John.

Andy wondered why Lucy was denied college while this guy sailed off to Sacramento. She spoke with her friend Lorna as Brucie continued to ingratiate himself with the Apels. Andy peered down the sidewalk as it dimmed into darkness outside of town. He was ambivalent about Jenkins taking the sphere. Although Jenkins would study it, he would never understand its complexity, nor the potential risk of Moloch control of human consciousness.

John pressed his lips before he spoke. “We’ll be back or send Andy here back at nine-forty-five when the movie ends.”

“I have my father’s new Plymouth.”

“That’s nice,” said John. “Andy will be here at quarter to ten.”

Brucie looked inside the truck cab. “You’re the one who beat up those two government guys. My father says you’re lucky the FBI doesn’t come after you. Attacking government personnel—”

“I wouldn’t be too concerned about it, *Brucie*,” said Andy.

“Sure, well we have to get inside before the previews and the cartoons. You all have a great evening.”

“Take care, Brucie,” said Mrs. Apel.

John rolled his eyes and leaned over his wife again. “He’s a phony.” Andy nodded as the sound of a man hocking newspapers papers at the corner echoed down the street.

“What is it, Andy?” asked Mrs. Apel.

“Just looking at the newspaper.”

“One thing about going to the movies, is you get to see the Movietone or Universal News,” said John.

“What?” asked Andy.

“Right there in black and white. We saw the Hindenburg in flames. What an God-awful tragedy,” said Mrs. Apel, leaning over. “Confidentially, I’m looking forward to *Gone with the Wind*. They’re making it into a movie, you know.”

John rolled his eyes. “Do tell...”

“But I don’t think it comes out to later this year.”

“I’m sure we’ll see it,” said John.

Lucy gabbed with Lorna as the two boys went up ahead. Then she raced back to the truck with a folded magazine. She held an ad depicting a hand grasped around a moist, tilted Coke bottle. Under the red circle with the Coca-Cola white lettered logo, was a rendering of the Trylon and Perisphere at the fair. “Look at this!”

“Drink Coca-Cola, Delicious and Refreshing,” replied Andy.

“No, silly. Under the New York World’s Fair. New York World’s Fair 1939 invites you to the World of Tomorrow. Isn’t it exciting?”

“That’s all Lucy talks about,” said Lorna.

“We’ll be there soon enough,” said Mrs. Apel.

“You two,” said John, gazing over Lorna’s shoulder to Brucie near the snack bar. “Enjoy the movie.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

She ran forward with Lorna into the lobby. Andy started the truck and easily shifted into first gear this time. “That wasn’t so bad. Now, where am I going?”

“Just beyond the filling station,” said John. “I hope...”

Andy cruised forward. He was surprised to see attendants working the gas pumps. One guy in a blue striped uniform lifted a long blue car’s dipstick from the under the propped hood as another man scrubbed the windshield.

“What service.”

“No service, you don’t stay in business,” said John. “Take a right.” Andy downshifted and rolled past a busy little cafe at the corner. “Third house on the left. The yellow one with the porch light on.”

“I see it,” he said, thinking he would use part of John’s stipend to buy one of the newspapers. He pulled across the quiet, tree lined street, and stopped at the curb.

“We’re going to listen to the radio,” said Mrs. Apel.

“I have to run a farm. I don’t keep track of the radio listings in those movie magazines you read, Mavis,” answered John. “But I do know that Jack Benny is finishing up the season tonight.”

“He doesn’t keep track,” said Mrs. Apel, elbowing Andy.

“And Fibber’s off. Even Fred Allen’s is going off tonight for the summer..”

“They can’t be on the air all the time, John.”

John raised his finger in the air. “But Sergeant Preston is still on this summer according to Dom.”

“He has a farm to run,” said Mrs. Apel. “Doesn’t keep track of the listings.”

“ You watch that theater, Andy,” said John. “ Remember the two guys stalked Lucy last time she was in town.”

“ Yes, sir,” said Andy as John opened the door and helped his wife from the truck.

“ I don’t care if John Dillinger is reincarnated with the lady in red. You protect Lucy.”

Mrs. Apel pointed to the seat. “ Lucy forgot her purse. You’d better run it back to her, Andy.”

“ Okay.” But he still saw tension in John’s blue eyes. “ I intend to watch out for Lucy.”

“ I know you will, son.”

Mrs. Apel mumbled something as they hiked up the sidewalk. A short man in a shirt and wide paisley maroon tie and a pug nosed, brunette in a green dress appeared at the door. Andy checked the rearview mirror and looped the truck back toward Main Street. He turned at the corner and parked across the street from the theater. On the back of the small cloth purse, a quote attributed to Professor Geiger was attached with a safety pin.

## **When you think, you understand**

As the newspaper hocker rattled off the evening headlines, Andy crossed Main Street and told the blonde at the ticket counter Lucy had forgotten her purse. With roasted popcorn in the air, he continued along the glass-enclosed posters up to the lobby. He stopped at the pink-apricot poster. A smiling Bob Hope in a dark, pin stripe suit, white flower in his lapel, hovered over W.C. Fields and Martha Raye at an antiquated silver, slot-

ted microphone. Fields's mouth slid sideways as if he had just cracked a rude remark. Andy had only seen these people on disks in the future, but they were alive now. He moved across the rug under a branching gold chandelier where people purchased popcorn and candy at the soft drink counter's glass cases.

An usher, in a blue uniform with yellow trim and a little hat, spoke to a woman near a sweeping gold-carpeted staircase. He spotted Andy's approach. "Sir."

"Lucy Apel is she downstairs?"

"No, sir, they went upstairs."

"I have her purse. She forgot it."

"I'll take it to her."

"I'm sorry," said Andy as he clutched the purse. "Mr. Apel has given me specific orders to deliver the purse myself."

"John said that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, I will accompany you," he said as he took out a green, metal and chrome flashlight and clicked the button a few times.

Andy followed him up the stairs, along the ornate, gold flowered wallpaper. They reached the upper doors and he was motioned to the left as if he were in a military parade. The usher flipped on his flashlight and they moved into a darkened aisle visible in the silver light from the wide screen below as an announcer's rhythmic cadence described the newsreel.

Andy was stunned by columns of Nazi troops marching in some kind of odd Prussian step through the crowd-lined streets. Sporadic boos and hisses erupted in the lower theater when the hypnotic eyed Hitler, clad in a

dark sheen leather coat and swastika wrapped on his sleeve, stood in a moving open car. His arm was extended upward at a forty-five degree angle and the terror eked into the theater like the silence before an exploding V-2 missile. Andy's stomach jolted as he again fully realized the ramifications of letting Geiger live.

The usher tugged on his shirt and pointed to Lucy, smiling in the side seat next to Lorna, Brucie, and Mel. The audience applauded and Andy slowly turned back to the screen. "Sir," said the usher. You don't have a ticket."

"Wait," said Andy as white letters appeared on the black screen.

## **PRESIDENT OPENS THE NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR**

The avenues were crammed. A mass of people marched, flags rippled, and prodigious water fountains spouted in the background. The camera switched to FDR behind a deep gray podium stamped with a white Perisphere and pointed Trylon.

The President held his hat over his heart, the clip then switched to his speech and his voice filled the theater. "All who come to this World's Fair in New York... will find the heartiest of welcomes... They will find that eyes of the United States are fixed on the future. Yes, our wagon is hitched to a star... But it is star of friendship..."

The black and white image of men in hats and a few ladies waving handkerchiefs flashed on the screen as the president continued. "... but it is

a star of progress for mankind, a star of grater happiness and less hardship, a star of international good will. Above all... it is a star of peace...

I hereby dedicate the World's Fair, the New York World's Fair of 1939, and declare it open to all mankind."

" Sir, please."

Andy placed the purse in Lucy's hands. He shrugged his shoulders as she watched him glide back to the doors. Once on the second floor Andy faced the usher as he closed the doors. " I appreciate that."

" I am glad Lucy got her purse." He creased his brow. " Are you the guy who cold-cocked the government agent?"

" Who me? asked Andy as he quickly trotted down the stairs.

" Would you show me that Chinese boxing?"

" It's rather difficult." He passed the concession and pushed open the outside doors. The newspaper hocker hollered out another headline recap on the corner. Andy peaked up the sidewalk for strangers and gazed up at the bright theater marquee. The hocker raised his brows and leaned the paper toward him. Andy grasped the crisp newspaper in his hands.

" That'll be a nickel."

Andy handed him the dollar bill John had given him and ninety-five cents instantly fell in his hand. He retreated across the street near the parked truck and sat on a bench under the streetlight. He skimmed the local headlines, but a story on page three about Nazi Germany made him cringe. Images of Hitler back in the theater stirred in his mind.

## Berlin and Soviets Meet

**Moscow....During June, The German government and the Soviet Union have been engaged in meetings concerning trade and economic issues according to sources within the German Embassy. This was further confirmed from the office of the Russian Commissar for Foreign Trade. Talks may lead toward a mutual pact.**

**However, it was learned today that Chancellor Hitler in Berchtesgaden has halted a continuance of further talks with Moscow. A source within the German government still maintains that Russian normalization of relations with Germany is possible.**

Andy set the paper on his lap. Hitler had begun his conquest of Europe and Poland would fall in September. He stared at the bulbs surrounding the Magestic's marquee and wondered if he really should let Geiger live. Geiger's survival from the attack at the fair would allow Hitler, who was probably hoarding people into death camps at this very moment, to perpetuate his reign of death and destruction. He tightened his hands around the page's serrated edges and shook his head. Nobody back here could advise him or show him history's change. Even his own rationality was limited because he did not have all the facts. It all came down to trusting a group of human descendants on a far way Jovian moon in the future.

He quickly flipped the pages to the sports section. No pictures were available in this paper, but he did see Joe DiMaggio's name in a Yankee lineup as well as a reflection on Rogers Hornsby's career for the Cardinals. He skimmed an article about Joe Louis's knocking out some guy named Tony Galento in the fourth round last month. Then he turned the pages to the front block ink headlines. He tapped his finger against his lips and in no way felt competent to judge history's course. Cars occasionally broke the Main Street stillness. Andy concentrated on the white walls tires hypnotic spin and prayed he would make the right decision.

The tenseness in his cheek muscles fell flat when he turned the page again.

## Scientist Shot to Death

Cedar Rapids.... Thursday

A scientist from the University of Chicago was shot to death in Cedar Rapids Friday night local police said. Gerald Jenkins, 56, was found in the front seat of his truck. Jenkins was fatally wounded from the impact of a small caliber bullet in the forehead. The truck was discovered by a milkman on his rounds early Thursday morning. No motive has been given for the shooting nor were any valuables, including Jenkins' watch and wallet taken according to police Sergeant Paul Welles.

Andy slowly set the paper on the bench and began a methodical pace up the sidewalk. It all made sense now. Somehow the Moloch got to Jenkins, and while he had questioned the Seraphs true motives, no doubt remained that the Moloch were back here. Whatever was in Harper's Creek was now back in its owners' possession. He jogged across the street and glanced at the same movie poster of Bob Hope and W.C. Fields. His clammy hands were clenched tight enough to ache at the knuckles.

Minimal traffic passed on the road and the people strolling the sidewalk looked local, but he was not sure. Every face was strange now. He thought about the two government agents back at the graduation. Why should he or Lucy live if the Moloch future was threatened? Maybe they killed Jenkins. A man pinching a nubby cigarette butt stepped out of a side alley. He inhaled quickly as Andy studied his dark eyes and then the guy hurled the cigarette onto the street. Andy moved laterally toward the light from Dom's barber shop, casting a tapering brightness on the sidewalk.

He accelerated his pace toward the motionless barber pole. Dom swept the floor near the chairs, but waved Andy inside. "Well, how's John new worker working out?"

Andy straddled the doorway, but scanned down the sidewalk to the theater. Dom spoke over the jazzy tune on the small plastic radio. "Other than the hogs stench... Well, farm work is tough.."

"Yeah, especially when you're working with Porky."

Andy grinned and his eyes followed the various green and white hair tonic bottles on the marble counter. Then he turned to Dom. “ Anybody else new here in town?”

“ Going to start a club of new arrivals?”

“ You know there’s been people out on John’s property.”

Dom swept the dark, clipped hair into a large copper dustpan.

“ Yeah, John doesn’t know exactly who’s been out there, does he?”

“ Right. You see anybody?”

“ Nope.”

“ You sure?” asked Andy, looking at the radio.

“ You’re way in the middle of Iowa, kid. If someone new came in, I’d know about it.” Andy grimaced at the radio. “ What’s the matter, don’t you like Bennie Goodman? He’s from Iowa.”

“ You sound like John.”

“ Radio gets good reception. That’s coming from Chicago.”

Andy remembered what the intruders had done to the gym radio.

“ Dom, can I ask you a question?”

“ Shoot.”

Andy checked back to the Magestic. “ Anybody interfering with the signal on your radio?”

“ What do you mean?” asked Dom and he fell back into the chair.

“ You mean making it sound kablooey?”

“ Yeah.”

Dom opened his eyes and shrugged his shoulders. “ I can’t say anyone has messed with my radio.” Andy nodded and again checked the sidewalk. “ What’s outside? You girl watching?”

“ I am. Lucy Apel. John wants me to keep an eye on her because-”

“ Of the guys on his property. I get it. I get it. Hobart is not happy about John hiring you... You want a trim, while you're waiting?”

“ I have to watch the theater.”

“ Well, you need a trim.”

Andy stepped fully on the sidewalk. “ Thanks, for the offer, Dom.”

Dom picked up the broom again as Andy wandered back to the theater. Jenkins' death confirmed forces were at work back in 1939, but Andy had no insight as to how he would find those forces or prevent Geiger's death.

“ Hey, Andy.” Andy turned. Dom leaned on the broom handle. He raised his index finger. “ I just thought of something.”

Andy approached Dom in the cooler night air. “ What do you mean?”

“ Come to think of it. Dwayne Piltz from the railroad. I noticed it the other afternoon when he came in. A bad hum in the radio during the game.”

“ Really?”

“ Got worse when he got up to pay and then it went away when he left. Now, I've known Dwayne all my life. He works in the rail yard. I'll ask him if he has anything to do with the railroad that would cause the radio hum. Could have just been a problem with the electrical line. Why all this talk about the radio?”

“ Nothing important.” Andy looked back at the theater. “ I'm sure it was something in the line.”

“ Okay.”

“ Thanks, Dom.” He started down the sidewalk again. “ Remember that trim.”

“ I will.”

Andy passed the storefront windows. With each passing minute the Seraphs warnings about the Moloch evolution from humanity frightened him. What was he up against? He pictured glowing sphere, perhaps a consciousness, capable of infiltrating human bodies. Then he thought about Jenkins shot in the head.

The blonde at the ticket window looked up from a hard bound book.

“ You again. Movie’s been going for half an hour.”

“ I know.”

“ You’re the new guy who’s at the Apel farm.” She raised her plucked brows and closed the book. “ Lucy would have been smart to take you to the movie and not Brucie.”

“ Dwayne Piltz come to the movies tonight?”

She opened a small bottle and painted red polish on her nails. “ Mr. Piltz works for the railroad... No, Mr. Piltz didn’t come to the movies tonight.”

“ Where does he live?”

“ Mr. Piltz. Lives in one of the railroad houses near the station.”

“ Thanks.” Andy nervously twisted his lips as he retreated to the bench. Saying the Moloch consciousness had descended into Dwayne Piltz was risky and he cautioned himself from trying to read too much into the problem with Dom’s radio. A truck whooshed down the road as he again sat on the bench. He positioned his elbows on his knees.

Combating a future evolved human species who utilized energy and consciousness was nearly overwhelming. He believed the Moloch followed him back in time and questioned why he and Lucy were still alive. Perhaps

the Moloch only knew sketchy details about his time travel. They might merely shadow Lucy to find Geiger, but they were capable of murder and they must have killed Jenkins.

He stood, balanced his shoe on the bench and took in the fresh, night air. The Moloch could reside inside Dwayne Piltz. “ They could be anywhere...”

## 13

As patrons trickled from the nearby theater entrance Andy tarried with a new sense of urgency in front of an small appliance store window, smattered with hand written sale banners. Questions about Dwayne Piltz and imagined thoughts of Jenkins sprawled against his truck window, a bullet hole piercing his skull, would not go away.

“ Andy, over here.”

Andy looked up. Lucy walked alone along the ticket window. He cemented a smile on his tired face as he ambled forward. “ How was the movie?”

“ Really funny and good. But guess what I saw?”

Andy guided her onto Main Street. “ What did you see?” He looked back toward the theater marquee. “ Where’s Brucie?”

“ He stayed behind with his buddies. He... never mind.” She stopped in the middle of Main Street. “ They’re making a movie about... about.”

“ About...”

“ The Wizard of Oz. It’s due out in August, I think. *In color*. I’m sure they said it would be in color!”

“ The Wizard of Oz. I’d like to see that when it comes out.”

“ Me, too. Would you go with us?” she asked.

“ Sure.”

Lucy popped the passenger door and got inside. Andy took the keys from his pocket once he was inside. “Lucy, do you know Dwayne Piltz?”

“Mr. Piltz, yes, he works on the railroad. Why?”

Andy opened the door and slid onto the seat. “I have reason to think he might be involved with the men who were watching you.”

“I didn’t see him watching me.”

“Okay...” He started the truck, but forgot to put his foot on the clutch and the truck shot back a few feet.

“Whoa, cowboy!” exclaimed Lucy.

Andy shook his head and they both laughed. “I’m used to an automatic.”

“A what?”

“My transmission.”

“I don’t get it,” she said, tilting her head. “Were you making a joke?”

“Who me?” asked Andy, now not sure when automatic transmissions were routinely manufactured in cars. “Automatic transmission,” she said. “That’s funny.” Andy started the car properly this time and backed onto Main Street. “Judy Garland is playing Dorothy. Dad has the book at home. It was one of the books Mom used to read to us when we were little.”

Andy checked the mirror back toward the theater lights. He needed some way to track the Moloch. “Lucy, where can I get a portable radio?”

“Probably with the automatic transmission.”

Andy creased his brow. “Oh... well that would be awesome, wouldn’t it?”

“ Yes, *awesome*. Where do you get your expressions? Some cars have radios. Why do you need a portable radio?” Andy shrugged his shoulders and drove with one hand on the wheel. “ There’s something I noticed about you.”

“ What’s that?” he asked as he downshifted toward the Higgins’s house.

“ I’m not sure.” Her distant look was disquieting. “ I know you’re from Colorado, but you have knowledge of something else. And I don’t know what that is.”

“ I’m mysterious, eh?” he asked as he stopped the truck.

“ Very.”

He shut off the engine, they got out, and he rounded the hood. “ And you’ll get to the root of it, won’t you, Miss Apel?”

“ I will, Mr. Reese,” she said at the front walk. The porch light cast a thin brightness across the walk and front lawn. “ Electricity... We’ll have it soon. Sort of like Social Security.”

“ Social security?” He stopped midway up the porch steps.

“ Once you have it, you expect it, you need it, you want more benefits.”

“ You’re a bright girl. That program will expand.”

“ Not my thoughts. Professor Geiger. He says it’s the first step to socialism. Dad, of course, and even Mom, think FDR and the whole thing for their retirement is just peachy. Geiger is a for a voluntary system for retirement.”

Andy pressed his lips. To his left two men walked along Main Street and glanced at the Higgins house, but kept walking. Lucy now gazed at the stars. “Where is Geiger now?”

“I assume at his college job.” She continued panning the sky.

“You know, I’m amazed how you spouted off the names of those stars and the distance of Vega. Impressive.”

“That’s what I do.”

The front door opened and Mrs. Apel stuck out her head. “How was the movie, Lucy?”

“Great movie, Mom. You were right. Judy Garland is going to be in the Wizard of Oz in August.”

“Frank Morgan is playing the wizard according to what I read in the magazines.” She turned to Andy. “Everything else all right, Andy?”

“All clear. You want us to come in?”

“No, enjoy the night. John and I will be out in ten minutes. We want to hear the end of Jack Benny.”

Andy shrugged his shoulders as the door closed and he sat with Lucy sat on the steps. Lucy placed her elbows on her elevated knees. “Professor Geiger isn’t very popular anywhere. Hitler threw him out.”

“That’s a plus.”

“It is. Movietone showed how Czechoslovakia was dissolved in March. What’s next?”

Andy was still nervous about tampering with history and letting Hitler live, but he remembered from the future disks, Hitler would take Poland in September. “Hitler wants it all.”

“Geiger doesn’t think so,” she said.

“What do you mean?”

“He thinks Hitler just wants European dominance.”

“I don’t know if I agree with that. Everything I know about Hitler leans itself to world domination and that means America.”

She shook her head. “In a magazine article I read at the library, Geiger claims Hitler would leave us alone. I think he’s right.”

“How come you’re not going to college, Lucy?”

“I want to get a job in Des Moines. Save some money and maybe find a college back east. I’m going to ask people at the fair to suggest a college and maybe get a recommendation. My grades are good.”

“I bet they are.” She peered over the trees. “Lucy, I’d like to call Geiger directly.”

“How?” She pointed skyward. “What’s that rounded area beyond the swan?”

Andy tilted his head back and focused on the sharp star points rounded in the dark sky. “Corona Borealis, the crown. King Minos of Crete had a daughter named Ariadne. She was married to Theseus at her birthplace on the island of Gnosos. But he deserted her and she later married again to Liber Bacchus. She took his name, but the crown given to her by Theseus was transferred into the sky and that is what we see today.”

She stared at Corona Borealis, but slowly smiled as she looked into his eyes. “I can’t believe you know that.”

“I could be lying.”

“No, no. You’re not lying. I know when somebody is lying. Like Brucie.”

“Brucie?”

“ I know he’s seeing other girls.”

Andy pursed his lips. “ Then why bother with him?”

“ This is a small town.”

Someone jostled the front door and Mrs. Apel’s laughter rolled onto the porch. “ He’s so cheap.”

“ Who, Dad?” asked Lucy.

“ No, Jack Benny. He keeps all his money in this giant vault.”

“ I heard him on another program, maybe it was Fred Allen,” said the short man with the maroon bow tie. “ Jack Benny was held up by robbers.”

“ What happened, Hutch?” asked Mrs. Apel.

“ Well, the robber sticks a gun into his ribs and says, ‘ Your money or your life!’ And Jack Benny. Jack Benny pauses and he waits. The robber gets mad and says: ‘Well?’ Jack Benny says with this deadpan delivery. ‘ *I’m thinking about it.*’”

Andy grinned and Lucy produced a big smile as the adults roared. Even John’s low-pitched laugh resonated across the porch. “ And that Maxwell. Did you ever hear a car like that?” asked John.

“ Never,” said Hutch, wiping his eye.

“ Come on, Mr. Apel,” said Mrs. Apel. “ We’ll be here all night.”

Andy and Lucy started down the walk ahead of the Apels. Mrs. Apel’s shoes clattered against the walk. “ So, the movie was good?”

“ I enjoyed it,” said Lucy.

John’s serious countenance contrasted his laughing on the porch.

“ Anything, Andy?”

“ Nothing directly.”

John thought as he stroked his mustache. “ Why don’t you ride back with Lucy and we’ll talk when we get home?”

“ It will probably be a smoother ride if you drive, Dad,” said Lucy.

Andy raised his brows. “ Or awesome.”

# 14

A brilliant star dome arched over the silver hued landscape. Andy leaned against cab's metal frame and stretched his legs across the truck bed. The reassuring train whistle resonated somewhere in the night as his voice vibrated with the bumps. "Beautiful night."

Lucy's laugh filled the breezy night air and her smile was etched in the dim light. "I say Martians could be up there."

Andy had just pointed to Mars's present position. "Or in other places."

"Where were you when they broadcast War of the Worlds?"

"Who me?"

Lucy looked around the truck bed. "I don't see anybody else back here."

"I didn't hear it."

"Congratulations, Andy. You're one of the few people in the US who didn't hear it. I'll bet your were at your observatory. Where is it anyway?"

Andy knew his observatory in Colorado, complete with frequency scanners and computers, was presently a forested mountain top. He quickly thought of old observatories. "Mount Wilson."

"Where's that?"

"Southern California."

“ Oh, so, you’re from Colorado, but you work in Southern California?”

“ That sounds good.”

She grinned. “ You ever see any movie stars out there?”

“ They don’t hang around the mountain at night.” The truck turned left and rocked over the railroad tracks. “ I’m afraid I work a lot. This trip out here is a real break for me.”

“ You get fired?” she asked.

“ No.”

“ Okay,” she said as he leaned back again. “ You just sound like...”

“ Like I’m hiding something.”

She pointed at him. “ Yes, I noticed that from the minute I met you.”

“ Well with my sister’s-”

“ I forgot. I’m sorry. This is none of my business.”

“ That’s okay,” said Andy as car headlights swung around and skimmed the cornfield behind the truck. The lights dipped at the tracks and bobbed up. He feared the Moloch and Dwayne Piltz. “ What kind of car does Dwayne Piltz drive?”

“ Gee, Dad would know that. Do you really think he’s involved with the scratchers?”

“ I’m not sure.”

“ I am sorry about your sister.”

“ She died of a bone disease... very rare.” He glanced over the rolling silhouetted fields ahead. “ But, she’s not suffering now.”

“ I know.” Her glassy eyes turned toward the sky again. Tears inched along her smooth, round cheeks. “ Life is so short. I, I want to do some-

thing. Something important. I can't tell you what. I feel as though life is tugging at me like an invisible force, pulling me toward something meaningful. I've felt it all my life." The tears kept coming. Andy was not sure how to react. "This thing with the fair. Winning the contest. I feel like its all part of what I'm saying. You know, corresponding with an accomplished man such as Professor Geiger. Sometimes I think fate is drawing me forward."

"Don't ever lose that feeling."

"Thank you... I won't..."

"I'd like to talk to Geiger myself," said Andy. The car behind seemed closer.

"I'm sure once we get to New York you can talk with him at the fair."

Andy shielded his eyes to the headlights shining through the dust. He crawled by Lucy and rapped on the cab window. John said something and pulled off the dirt road. The car was only a few hundred yards away when John shut off the engine stepped out the door. "The car?"

Andy vaulted the truck bed. "Yup."

John whispered in Andy's ear. "I have a loaded shotgun under the seat."

"You'd better pay attention if Dwayne Piltz is driving the car."

"Dwayne?" asked John. A black car with a split windshield, headlights exposed on either side of an elevated hood and a flared chrome radiator grill, fishtailed down the road. "That is Dwayne Piltz's Plymouth!"

"What?" asked Andy.

"What's Dwayne got to do with this?" The horn blared, but tapered away as the car zoomed by. The headlight beams formed a moving mass and the taillights brightened red as the exhaust stayed in the night air.

“ Is he out of his mind?”

“ Isn’t that Dwayne Piltz?” called Mrs. Apel from the front seat.

“ Yes, Mavis, Yes, that was Dwayne Piltz. Driving like a maniac.”

John turned back to Andy as Lucy leaned over the truck bed.

“ Now, how did you know that was Dwayne Piltz? And what’s he doing out here at this hour?”

Andy swallowed once. He stared at the gray cornstalks lining the murky dirt road. “ Dom told me when Dwayne came inside the shop last week... See, just his presence in the shop caused the radio to buzz and crackle.”

John wiped his neck with his handkerchief. “ So, what does that have to with the price of beans?”

“ I think it’s related to the people intruding on your property and stalking Lucy in town.”

“ Dwayne ever bother you, Lucy?” asked John.

“ No, I don’t go over to the rail yards.”

John stuck his handkerchief into his back pocket. “ What about those government people? Would they give him some kind of device?”

“ I don’t know,” said Andy.

Dwayne’s car turned and disappeared behind more corn.

“ Okay,” said John, “ Let’s get back to the farm.”

Andy held John’s arm as he faced the cab and with his other hand pointed down the star covered landscape. “ He just turned down there.”

“ I saw that.”

“ Where does that road lead?” asked Andy.

“ To the creek.”

“ Something is going on, John. Something none of us truly understand.”

John wiped his mouth and cleared his throat. “ I’m a practical man. I don’t speculate much unless I see something with my own eyes. I saw and heard men on my property, but I’ve never seen Dwayne Piltz bother us and I won’t base my judgment on Dom’s imagination.”

He opened the truck door and closed it quickly. The truck started as Andy climbed back into the truck bed. As John shifted onto the dirt road, Lucy’s wide brown eyes tracked Andy as he sat against the cab. “ Why is Dwayne Piltz driving down to the creek at ten-thirty at night?”

“ That is the poignant question of the evening, Miss Apel.”

\* \* \*

Andy was not surprised when Lucy wanted to investigate the Dwayne Piltz’s route toward the Harper’s Creek bridge. Running off in the night with her would certainly upset John, but Lucy pressured him in the barnyard. When Mrs. Apel called Lucy from the flickering light around the kitchen screen door, Andy finally agreed to meet her near the side house in an hour. He at once regretted the decision as she gleefully headed back to the house, but like Lucy, his curiosity was insatiable. He could only guess how these Moloch could inhabit Dwayne Piltz’s mind or any human being’s consciousness. On many levels going down to the creek was a huge risk.

Lucy approached the side house less than an hour later. She wore overalls and a white sweater and handed him a chunk of corn bread. An unlit

lantern was in her other hand. Andy ducked out the screen door and closed it gently. She propped her hand to her ear and smiled as Porky buzzed inside.

“ I thought you might be hungry. It’s a mile and a half to the creek road.”

“ That's nice of you,” he whispered. “ I see you have a lantern.”

“ Matches are in my pocket.” She led Andy across the yard toward the field trail leading away from the barn. “ What do you think it all means? The sphere and Dwayne Piltz...”

“ Well...”

The side house lights flashed on and with a crash against the door, Porky, in his red polka dot under shorts and sleeveless undershirt, stumbled into the yard. Lucy covered her mouth and emitted several quick giggles when Porky belched louder than a disgruntled cow. Andy grit his teeth and fell back on the path. Lucy now had both hands over her mouth. Again Porky burped and retreated into the side house.

“ I thought I would die,” said Lucy, holding her sides as Andy sat up. She held out her hand and pulled him up on the trail.

“ He’ll know I’m gone.”

“ He’s still asleep,” said Lucy and they started forward

“ You could get me in trouble.”

“ I like new and exciting things,” she said.

Andy shook his head and followed her as his eyes adjusted to the surrounding darkness. “ I’m just afraid this Geiger connection is dangerous.”

“ What about Dom and radio buzzes?”

Andy steadied himself on the uneven trail. “ Just a conversation.”

“ That doesn’t cut it,” she said as they trekked along soybeans rows.

“ There’s something about you.”

“ Me?”

“ Yes, you.”

“ Am I in trouble?” he asked.

“ I haven’t decided yet, but don’t worry. You have a likable quality.

And who is JFK?”

“ You, Miss Apel, think too much.”

“ Professor Geiger says thinking is the key ingredient of life.”

Andy pointed to the woods. “ This trail leads to that road?”

“ Where Dwayne drove his car at ten-thirty at night. This whole thing is becoming very strange. That glowing thing in the water.”

“ There’s something I didn’t tell you father. What I saw in the paper tonight.”

“ I don’t understand.” They reached the trail between the tree clumps.

“ Something about the men stalking me?”

“ No, Jenkins. He was... he was murdered in his truck in Cedar Rapids-”

“ My God!”

“ And the luminous thing wasn’t mentioned. Somebody got to him.”

She gripped his wrist and stopped him under a low hanging branch.

“ What’s going on here, Andy?”

“ Look this thing is very complicated.”

“ I may be eighteen but I wasn’t born yesterday. Who are you?

*Really.*”

“ I am who I say I am.”

“ Okay, then what do you know that you’re not telling me? I can’t believe they murdered Jenkins for no reason.” She crossed her arms over her sweater. “ Well?”

Andy wanted to tell her everything and his instincts told him she might really accept it. “ Listen, I admit certain weird things are going on here, but these things started long before I arrived in Hancock.”

“ Oh?”

“ Obviously that glowing thing in the river is of great concern to someone, enough to kill Jenkins. *And* you have government people watching you probably because you’ve written to Geiger. *And* somebody else is stalking you.”

“ All mysteries...” They started along the trail again. “ Now you know why I’m suspicious.”

Andy remained silent down to the creek’s grassy banks. The wispy willow branches seemed alive in the wind. “ How far?”

“ Another half mile,” she said, wiping her brow and huffing.

“ How come you’re not sweating or breathing heavily?”

“ I work out.”

“ Why? You a fighter? I get the impression you could have taken Joe Louis, even without all that fancy fighting.”

“ No, I just keep in shape.”

“ Working will do that for you, but I don’t understand why would somebody just *work out*?”

“ Why not?” he asked as he spotted the outline of a small bridge over the river and the road continued up a wooded hill on the other side.

“ Paxton’s Bluff. Road narrows up top and eventually becomes a path. There’s a small lake up there. Farmers sometimes use it during the dry weather. And the caves where my brothers and I used to play. A great place to hide. They used to make moonshine up here during Prohibition.”

“ Caves? Interesting.”

“ I don’t know if we should be inside the caves even with the lantern.”

Andy scanned the river for more glowing spheres. “ Are the caverns deep?”

“ Not really. You just keep bumping your head.... But why would Dwayne drive up here anyway?”

\* \* \*

As they crossed the hollow metal surface the stars shone through the breaks in the silhouetted bridge girders. Once on the dirt road and up the other side Andy looked over his shoulder at the pewter dabbled slope back to the Apel farm. The little ridge tapered southward and he hiked the gravel road reluctantly. The sphere’s energy might even account for the Moloch ability to enter the human body. How that related to Dwayne Piltz was unclear.

" This is strange." said Lucy as she trod next to him. " I just know Dwayne Piltz as a guy who's always worked at the railroad yard, but I never thought he was a nut or anything like that."

Andy nodded, but his eyes were fixed straight up the dimly lit, gravel road. It was impossible in the starlight to discern any tire treads or anything unusual. They had killed Jenkins because of the iridescent sphere and now

Andy and Lucy were charting an unknown course. " Lucy, maybe you should go back to the farm. I don't know how safe it is up here."

" Not in your life. I've never walked away from a mystery. Besides, what are we going to find? A drunk rail road man?"

" I'm not sure. Where are the caves from here?"

She pointed toward foreboding forest branches lurking ahead.

" Another few hundred yards and then the road turns into a trail."

" Okay." Andy looked back over the silver valley fields. " I feel like we're above the world here."

" The world of tomorrow?"

" The theme of the fair. I think Geiger is right," said Andy. They headed for the woods. " Dealing with progress isn't easy."

" The Perisphere and the Trylon represent progress."

" You mean white dome and the obelisk at the fair... Which one is which, Lucy? I get them confused."

" The Perisphere is the white ball and the Trylon is also white and pointed like the Washington Monument. The Helicline is a sloping ramp that connects them both... I can't believe I'm going there. There's an amusement park with a parachute ride just outside the main grounds. I want to try that parachute."

" *You* try the parachute." Andy's face tightened as their shoes ground against the gravel near the woods.

" And I hear there is a frozen alive girl."

" Really frozen, eh?"

Lucy nudged him left at the wooded road where the ridge leveled out. The crushed stones were replaced by packed dirt, strewn with fallen leaves. Lucy grabbed his wrist with both hands. “ Andy.”

“ What is it?”

“ Up there in the bushes.”

A faint glistening point appeared in the brush. At first he feared a Moloch presence, but as he stepped forward, a chrome bumper soon stuck out of the thicket fifty feet ahead. He motioned Lucy forward and they jogged up together. Behind the branches, Dwayne's black Plymouth was mostly hidden by the leaves.

“ Then he must be in the caves,” said Lucy.

“ Maybe.”

The road narrowed at a rusted metal gate. He scrambled under the bar behind Lucy and they moved parallel to the hilltop on a constricted, well trodden trail. Everything he had experienced since contacting the Seraphs now converged into a proliferating fear. The stars seemed to move behind the tree branches as he scurried up a rocky trail toward an overhang and shadowed opening in the ledge.

“ There's bats up here,” she said.

Andy grinned. “ The least of our worries.” But his smile dropped when he noticed a indefinite fuzzy green glow inside the jagged opening twenty feet above.

“ Just like the river...”

Andy crawled to the opening and stared down the rough, green shadowed cave wall. Going back to the farm was the prudent course, but he decided to plod forward. Lucy warned the cave would drip a few feet ahead.

The air cooled as they descended, but a gentle hum drifted upward as a deeper emerald sheen covered Lucy's round face and dark eyes. The narrow passageway flared outward. An inner cave brightened enough between the side boulders for Andy to shield his hand above his eyes. As they rounded the rocks, several dozen densely packed green spheres, geometrically perfect, floated and rotated slowly fifteen feet up in the dank air.

“ Oh, Lord,” whispered Lucy, her face flat and her eyes locked. “ Not of this planet.”

Andy would not tell her this life form was the eventual human evolution. The mathematically perfect symmetry was intricate and varied in intensity. “ Not life as we know it, Lucy.”

The green luminescence slowly revolved as single toward them.  
“ Andy!”

He took her hand and backtracked back up the rock-lined passageway. Several times she bumped the lantern against the ledge, but the luminous, vibrating conglomeration advanced up the cave. Lucy dropped the lantern, but Andy scooped it up, and they scampered toward stars spanning the cave opening. They leaped onto the ledge and careened down the rock slope.

Near the woods Lucy clutched his arm. The spheres squeezed through the opening and rose over the ridge like a quilted hot air balloon. His bones hummed and rushing air whipped the tree leaves as the mass expanded over the hill. With the intensity a rocket engine, the cluster shot away from the hill, produced a blurred blue streak over the stars and a booming thunder throughout the valley. Then it was gone.

In the reduced light Lucy released her grip but her mouth hung open.  
“ Tell me what it was.”

Andy pressed his lips. “It’s gone.”

“You know. I know you know.”

“How would I know?” he said, holding her shoulders. “Lucy, you know as much as I do. It had to be another... form of life.”

She panned back to the cave. “Why is Dwayne’s car up here? Where is he?”

“Somehow they got to him... entered his body.”

Her teary eyes focused on the sky, but her body shook. “This is awful!”

“It’s all right. They’re gone. They’re gone I tell you.”

“Where did they go? Are they coming back? Andy!”

His voice shook as he steered her back to the trail. “Let’s get out of here.”

## 15

The muddied hogs produced a grunting chorus and a deepening stench percolated into the early morning air as Andy scattered the ripe garbage into the pen. With a magazine tucked under her arm, but her usual vibrancy turned abnormally somber, Lucy crossed the yard and the chickens scattered. Andy vaulted the wood plank fence. “Lucy...”

“I didn’t sleep. I’m scared, Andy.”

“It seems like a dream.”

“I feel like I have to tell somebody, but... I don’t even really believe it. I just pray to God they’re gone.”

“I think they were scared off or they would have attacked.”

“*They?* We have to report this.”

“To whom?” Andy looked into her dark eyes and did not know how to explain what he really knew.

“Andy, we’re talking about beings not of this world.”

“We’d have a *War of the Worlds* thing if we report it and we end up looking like fools. They’re gone.”

She thought for another moment, glanced at the blue sky and raised her brows. “Okay, I’m going to assume what you say is true. They are gone. Whatever they were, they’re gone.”

She walked along the fence for several minutes, occasionally staring at the creek hills. When she finally returned, Andy met her halfway.

“What’s under your arm?”

“Life magazine. My mother got this from Mrs. Higgins last night.” She unfolded a glossy black and white cover with red header marked **LIFE**. A young woman was dressed as if she were a flight attendant, in a uniform jacket with embroidered lines at the shoulders and upper lapels. Below her right lapel was a simple identification badge. Her scarf was furrowed to the base of her neck and a wisp of dark hair flowed out from a rounded flat cap. A subtle lipstick perfectly traced her wide white smile and her hopeful eyes gazed skyward. Another red banner at the bottom dated the magazine in white letters as May 22, 1939. It only cost a dime.

Andy ran his finger over the little black letters above the banner in the lower left corner: **GIRL GUIDE-WORLD’S FAIR**. “Look at it this way: We leave tomorrow morning. Then you can be sure we will have left the Moloch behind.”

“The Moloch. Why did you call them that?” asked Lucy.

“Because... they seem like Moloch... beings.” He faced her directly.

“I want you to forget what happened last night.”

“How can I?”

“Because there’s nothing we can do about it. Let’s just concentrate on going to the fair, meeting Geiger, and having a good time.”

Her eyes softened. “I suppose you’re right, but you know more, I know you do... Mr. Whalen-”

“The fair’s president?”

“ Yes, he told our coordinator, Mr. Davenport, they were sending us a guide book to the fair, a game and some incidentals, but we never got any of it.” Her face still lacked the bubbly innocence. “ You called them Moloch like you knew that was their name.”

“ I’m always spouting off words,” he answered, but he knew she sensed something.

“ Like automatic transmission?”

“ Lucy.”

“ And JFK? Spin and hype. How about awesome?” Andy pressed his lips as she slowly nodded. “ Promise me one thing, Andrew Reese.”

“ What’s that?”

“ Honor my father’s wish: Keep me safe.”

She now seemed vulnerable. “ That’s my job.”

In the yard behind him a pail crashed against the barn. Porky yanked a fence post, lost his footing and fell back. He landed in the mud around the pump and his gray work jersey was splattered with splotches. Lucy’s laughter sputtered as Porky rolled over like a prehistoric behemoth in the slosh.

“ Washtub’s in the side house, Pork.”

“ Stupid pail. I gotta lose some weight.”

Andy grinned, glanced at the magazine again and walked forward.

“ You need help, Pork?”

“ I am capable of standing on my own two feet!” He placed his hand in the mud, but his leg gave way, and his bulky form dropped. Exploding mud sprayed his shirt and his pants were fully now immersed in the mush.

Andy grinned, covered his eyes, and laughed. Then he moved with Lucy toward the pump. Porky sat up and Andy extended his hand, but his

enormous weight pulled Andy forward. Andy quickly planted his feet in the mud. Lucy took Porky's other hand and as they hoisted him up. Mud and water dripped off his shirt and pants.

“ Stupid, dumb-ass bucket.” He shook his head and mumbled all the way to the side house.

Andy and Lucy smiled at each other and spoke in unison.

“ Stupid, dumb-ass bucket.”

\* \* \*

During the day Andy helped load the truck for the journey east. On the trip he and Lucy would sit between suitcases and wood crates in the small truck bed. Several times during the day Lucy urged him to check the caves. She feared the Moloch and compared them to birds returning home, but Andy finally convinced her leaving Iowa early tomorrow morning would keep the incredible events of last night behind them. Lucy sounded more upbeat at lunch, laughing and talking about the fair.

Around four, Andy was helping Porky lift some machinery in the barn when a battered black and white sedan move ahead of a spreading dust trail down the cornfield road. He set the metal on the crate, wiped his brow and wandered to the barn opening. The sedan skidded in the dirt and Hobart, wearing a khaki uniform, holster and gun, stepped into the yard. Andy shook his head, looked toward the farmhouse and squinted. When Hobart marched to the kitchen screen door Andy drifted across the dirt and waited under the trees. Porky yelled something from the barn as Lucy briefly appeared between the open kitchen window curtains.

Andy's eyes darted between the window and the screen door. How would Hobart bout the spheres? Or had they affected him? When John opened the screen door and spotted Andy, he thought Lucy had broken under the pressure. "Can we talk to you a minute, Andy?"

"Sure."

John's eyes hardened as Andy advanced below the tree branches. He feared Hobart had found out about the caves last night. John gazed toward the hills beyond the river and then turned to Andy. "Andy, Dwayne Piltz's car was found in the hills across the river."

"Foul play?" asked Andy on the screen door steps.

"Hobart's not sure. Dwayne just left his car near the caves and hasn't reported to the rail yards for three days."

Andy nodded and stepped into the kitchen. Mrs. Apel brought him a tall glass of freshly squeezed lemonade. Hobart sat at the kitchen table, held a tall, water-beaded glass of lemonade and spoke from the side of his mouth. "So, who the hell are you anyway? And don't give me that gobble-dygook you gave me in the barber shop."

Lucy stared at him. "Andy Reese, I live in Tobin Springs, Colorado. I went to school Southern California Poly Tech. I'm an astrophysicist"

"Cut the big words, college boy!" He grabbed the table, struggled to his feet and stomped across the linoleum floor. "Listen, there's a man who's lived here all his life missing. Why are you here?"

"My sister just died. I'm interested in the fair in New York. I read Lucy's essay."

"You'd better be telling the truth, Reese or"

"Or what?"

“ Hold it,” said John, stepping between the two men. “ Hobart, what’s the point of this?”

Lucy’s brow furrowed.

“ He’s a stranger in town,” yelled Hobart and he slammed the glass against the wood table.

“ He’s told you why he’s here. So why don’t you just run along?”

Hobart looked at Andy and then back at John. “ Would you ask your house guest here whether he’s ever been out to the caves?”

Andy sipped the lemonade and set the glass on the table. “ I know where the caves are and I was up there last night.”

“ What?” shouted Hobart. “ What? Are you kidding me?”

“ We all saw Dwayne’s Piltz’s car head up in that direction when we were coming back to the farm last night,” said John.

“ Dwayne has been missing for three days!” whined Hobart.

“ Does that make us all responsible for Dwayne disappearing?” asked John.

“ I saw the car, but Dwayne wasn’t in it,” said Andy.

“ Was he inside the caves?”

“ No. What are you accusing me of?”

“ Well, I...”

“ Listen, I’ve been through enough losing my sister. I don’t need anything else right now.”

Hobart jabbed his finger into the air. “ You be available for questioning.”

Andy shook his head at John. “ Sure.”

Hobart nodded to Mrs. Apel and kicked the screen door as he left.

“ I can’t stand that man,” said John and he stepped closer to Andy.  
“ You were up at the caves last night?”

“ I couldn’t sleep. I had to figure out why Dwayne Piltz went up there.  
Natural curiosity. Is he really going to question me?”

“ Oh, Hobart has to justify his position now and then.”

The sedan started outside and the engine noise slowly faded. Andy  
pressed his lips. “ If you want me to stay behind I will.”

“ Andy, by the time Hobart calls you in, we’ll be halfway to New Jersey.”

# 16

“ We have to check the caves again,” Lucy said after supper as they walked along the weathered gray barn boards.

“ They’re gone. And we can’t let Hobart see us up there. I say we just get in that truck tomorrow morning and leave.”

“ What if they come back before then?” Her words were caught between her quick, short breaths. “ Something from space has landed here in Iowa and we’re helpless to stop it.”

“ No, no, it’s okay,” he said, holding her shoulders.

“ How do you know that? Maybe you should start telling me who you really are.”

He stared at her and pursed his lips. “ Look, Lucy...”

“ Who are you, Andy?”

“ Someone who believes in a young lady who wrote a brilliant essay about the future. Someone who knows the future can be more than just new inventions... Some one who cares that you’re all right.”

She stepped back, but her eyes moved past Andy, to the forested hill beyond the river bridge’s rusted girders. “ Geiger... this has to do with Geiger.”

“ Geiger, why would you say that?”

“ I feel it. I can’t explain it, but Professor Geiger’s theories are very important to the future.”

“ How so?” asked Andy as they started back along the barn.

“ Social technocracy dictates a human response to technological achievement. Not to eliminate great progress, but to think about what we are doing. It’s a very simple process.”

“ Promise me something, Lucy.”

“ What’s that?”

“ Somehow get to college... go as far as you can.”

With a short puff Lucy exhaled quickly, coming just short of a laugh.  
“ Poor girls on the farm are supposed to stay on the farm.”

“ Not you. You’re different. You’re capable of great things. God has given you the means and the passion to turn your dreams into reality.”

“ And just find the way to Emerald City?” She smiled and creased her brow in the drenching, orange sunlight. “ You promised me you’d go with us to The Wizard of Oz when it opens later this summer.”

“ Let’s get to the fair first, meet Geiger and maybe enjoy ourselves.”

She fully smiled as they reached John’s packed truck. Her teeth were white and young, like a new product off the assembly line. “ Thanks.”

“ For what?” He rested his elbow on the edge of the truck bed.

Her eyes intensified. “ For reassuring me.”

“ I just want you to know everything *will* be all right.”

“ Somehow you’ve convinced me Andy Reese. I don’t know how, but you’ve convinced me.”

\* \* \*

In the light from three oil lamps the Monopoly board was dotted with red hotels and smaller green houses. John Apel stretched back in his chair and laughed. An unlit cigar lay on the red and white tablecloth. Andy leaned against the kitchen counter and looked over at Ned as he rolled the dice.

“ This isn’t another Porky story, is it?”

Lucy laughed hard enough to wipe her eyes. “ It is.”

“ Okay, you said Porky was in town.”

Ned rolled six and landed on the luxury tax between Lucy’s hotels on Boardwalk and Park Place. “ No, he was at the county fair,” said Ned.

“ Andy, you never should have sold her Park Place.”

“ After the horse pull,” said Lucy. “ And no, they didn’t pull him. Men see how much *they* can lift.”

“ Lucy, the man isn’t even here,” said Mrs. Apel as she set a blue and white plate with scenes of old France, stacked with chocolate chip cookies, on the table. “ I need some of these for the trip.”

John set the chair upright. “ Every year the men in the county compete in lifting machinery.” Lucy closed her eyes and laughed as she rolled the dice..

“ With his bad back?” asked Andy.

“ Well, Porky is getting ready to lift,” said John as Lucy moved her token to St. Charles Place.

“ You owe me five hundred,” said Andy.

Lucy hit her forehead. “ Oh, no. I’ll have to mortgage.”

“ So, like I said Porky is ready,” added John. “ I forget just how much actual poundage he was lifting.”

“ His own poundage,” added Ned.

Mrs. Apel shook her finger.

“ Mind you, everyone is crammed into the stands. There must have been two or three hundred people there,” said Lucy, handing Andy the money.

“ Your roll... Paul Garby grabs the microphone. I can see it if it were yesterday.”

John smiled and raised his voice. “ And now for the final lift. Three hundred and fifty pounds... Porky waddles across the dirt and everyone stands and applauds. I think he was even heavier than then. He steps up to the tractor motor. He grabs the side of his trousers, green work trousers, and pulls them up higher, over his belly.”

Andy rolled and landed Park Place. “ Oh, no. I’m all done.”

“ Yes, you are.” Lucy covered her mouth laughing. “ Porky is ready to lift.”

“ And? ”

“ He put one hand on the left, one on the right, and he lifts so hard his face turns red. But he, he, he pulled in his belly when he strained to lift the engine. He has a forty-eight waist, but when he inhales his waist goes in, his pants, they, they just drop to the dirt.” Andy hit his knee as the room erupted with laughter. “ And Porky just stands there in his blue boxer shorts. He doesn’t do anything. The crowd goes wild. Finally he scrambles for his pants. But, he has trouble pulling them up.”

“ Did he finally get them back on?” asked Andy.

“ Eventually, but not until he trips across the arena. He pulled and pawed until he got them up over his belly. I never laughed so hard in my life,” said John as he grabbed the cigar. He focused on Andy as he stood.

“ Come on outside, Andy. Let Neddie and Lucy battle it out.”

John scooped up his matches and headed for the screen door. Lucy shrugged her shoulders and Andy followed him onto the porch. John slid a match against the clapboard and a yellow blue flame flared into the night. He quickly touched and cigar and puffed it red.

“ I know what you’re going to say.”

“ Oh, you do, do you?”

“ I’m a stranger and you don’t really know who I am.”

John talked with the cigar between his teeth. “ Well, that’s true. But I was going to tell you shouldn’t have sold Lucy Park Place.”

“ You’re right.”

“You were up at the caves last night.”

“ Listen, John I-”

“ You told Hobart right away. Good man. I was curious myself and would have gone up there if I wasn’t so tired and had to drive to New Jersey tomorrow morning. Old Dwayne will come staggering back to town and this will all be over.” He removed the cigar from his mouth. “ I don’t care about the details. You stay square with me and you protect my daughter. Especially when we’re in New York. I was in New York City once after the war was over. New York is a big place, a lot can happen.”

Andy slowly nodded as he thought about Lucy’s magazine pictures of the huge round Perisphere and the adjacent pointed Trylon. “ I think if she

contacts Professor Geiger it should be a private meeting. Those government people at the graduation, they were looking for irregularities.”

“ I’m just not sure if it was the government people on my property. Or watching Lucy in town. Could be Nazis. You see what’s happening to Austria and Czechoslovakia. I thought we fought the Great War, the war to end all wars... Now this Hitler he wants the world.”

“ Maybe.”

“ What are you one of those Joe Kennedy people?”

“ American boys will go off to war.”

“ FDR says they won’t,” said John, puffing again. He looked in at Ned inside the kitchen.. “ I know war. I know death...” Lucy pushed open the screen door. “ There she is, Andy. She’s a real pusher.”

“ I’m aware of that,” said Andy.

“ Dad, Mom wants to know is you want to pack your rain gear.”

“ No, we’re on a vacation not working in the fields. I’ll tell her.” John put his hand on Andy’s shoulder. “ Remember what I told you.”

“ I will, sir.” Lucy opened the door and John headed back inside.

“ You win?”

“ I did. Neddie isn’t very happy right now.” She raised her index finger in the dim light. “ You know, you’re right, Andy. We leave in the morning and get away from *them*.”

He moved with Lucy down to the porch swing. The wood creaked when they sat and the upper chains stretched tight to the slatted white ceiling. Andy inhaled the warm air and gazed across the stars. “ Tell me, what do you want to see at the fair first?”

She paused for an unusually long period of time and was probably still thinking about the Moloch. “The Perisphere. Mr. Davenport sent us some information. They bring you right inside to a city of the future... But I want to see the amusement area, too. Like I told you they have an actual parachute ride and an area with swimming shows... I just can't believe we're actually going.”

Like a noisy pendulum the swing slowly swayed on the rigid chains. “How far have you been away from home?”

“I was in Des Moines once and I almost went on a church trip to Chicago.”

“All the way to Des Moines, eh?”

She grinned. “Stop it... I know I've lived a sheltered life out here on the farm, but maybe that isn't bad either.”

“How so?”

“Some people think you have to see and experience everything. That's not necessary.”

“Do your own thing,” said Andy.

She stared at him and stop the swing with her feet. “See, there you go again.”

Car lights appeared above the corn on the main road. “Now who is this?”

“He's turning in here.”

They both stood. “I don't need Hobart back here. We'll be on the road in eight hours.”

They shuffled across the porch boards to the top of the stairs. The car speeded quickly, forming a dusty mass. “That's too fast for Hobart.”

“ Unless he’s back for more questions,” said Andy.

“ No, that’s Harley..”

The loud hot rod downshifted. Harley looped around the yard and parked next to the truck. He leaped out of the car, left the door open and sprinted toward the porch. “ Get Dad!”

“ What’s the matter?” asked Lucy.

“ Hobart.”

“ I knew it,” said Andy as Lucy rushed for the screen door. “ What’s the problem now?”

“ He just talked with Mrs. Piltz. Witnesses in Cedar Rapids identify Dwayne Piltz’s car and pictures of him as Jenkins’ murderer.”

A spreading anxiety crept through Andy’s gut. Any doubts about the Moloch infiltrating Dwayne Piltz’s mind vanished. He had killed Jenkins.

The back door snapped open again and John marched out ahead of Lucy. “ Harley, what happened?”

“ I just spoke with Porky at the Blue Bell. One of his buddies said Hobart wants to question Andy in town.”

“ For what?” asked Lucy.

“ Dwayne maybe charged with murder and Hobart wants to talk to Andy about Dwayne now. I think he’s coming out to pick him up. He thinks Andy might be involve in this.”

“ Was Porky drinking?” asked John. “ Well, I guess that’s a dumb question.”

“ Yeah, but he was drinking with Erwin Bates. Erwin is Hobart’s go-pher. The cops in Cedar Rapids have an exact description of Dwayne right down to the railroad overalls.”

“That’s true. Erwin would know.” John tensed his face and exhaled with puffy lips. “Hobart is a dope... Harley, I want you to bring Andy down the state highway.”

“Are you sure, Dad?”

“Absolutely. Travel ten miles south of town where the road dips at the drainage ditch. Pull off. We’ll be by after Hobart leaves.”

“You mean head to New Jersey early?” asked Harley.

“Early? What’s a few hours?”

Ned turned to Andy. “You need anything?”

“I’m packed,” said Andy, but he faced John. “John, I can’t let you put yourself in jeopardy.”

“My jaw still hurts from the graduation,” said John, stroking his jaw. “I owe you, Andy, and more than that, I like you. And you haven’t done anything wrong.”

“Thanks,” said Andy as he glanced at Lucy. Her lips curled up. Then followed Harley back to the car. Harley started the car before closing the door. Andy quickly jumped inside and Harley spun back to the long drive. “You sure Hobart won’t figure out that we left?”

Harley smiled broadly. “By the time he figures this out, you’ll be flying on that parachute ride Lucy talks about at the fair. Relax, Andy,” he said as he shifted and raced up the road, cutting through the corn.

“You’ve got it made.”

\* \* \*

Harley checked his watch and then looked into the rearview mirror. “They're over an hour late.”

“Maybe we should go back,” said Andy. “I should have just stayed there and let Hobart question me.”

“Hobart likes to make telephone calls to people above him. You might find yourself in Des Moines.” Harley started the car, flipped on the headlights and swung back on the isolated state highway. “We're all right if Hobart handled this himself.”

Andy again thought about the two government agents. One call by Hobart would cause trouble and stop his journey to the fair or his saving Geiger's life. As Harley flew back along the highway toward Hancock, Andy once more questioned whether the Moloch had controlled those two agents back at the graduation. Yet, why had these two agents, if they were from the Bureau of Protection, not readily contacted their superiors to report his attack? Nobody else from the government was seen in Hancock. Maybe they or other townspeople were possessed by the Moloch. “Do you know anyone who can get your father out of jail?”

“Dad won't to jail,” said Harley as he chuckled. “Hobart has nothing to hold him on. Or you. Just because Dwayne Piltz gets himself lost up in the hills and may have done something in Cedar Rapids.”

Andy leaned against the open window frame and the cooler air pushed back his hair. The stars hung over the landscape. He knew their positions and had scanned a thousand other imperceptible stars behind the visible ones. Near the polar star he notice an irregularities as a botanist might see changes in foliage. He sat up abruptly. A minute green, hazy tint hovered in the black-

ness and then disappeared. His heart pounded and he thought back to last night when the Moloch shot into the sky above the caves. He looked at Harley.

Harley smiled and gripped the wheel. “ We'll be in town in ten minutes.”

Andy nodded, but his eyes watered in the night air as he searched for the patch of light in the northern sky. He swallowed and feared what he did not know about these beings.

Harley peered into the oncoming headlights. “ Oh, boy. What's this?”

Andy squinted into the glare. “ Hobart?”

“ If it is, he won't catch me.”

Harley's tires tore across the pavement as the headlights neared. John's black Ford truck passed in a blur. “ That was Dad.”

Harley braked and swung back. Andy's head snapped around and his shoulder bounced off the door. The red taillights now glowed on the dark road ahead. Harley's car lights shone over the crates and boxes, covered with the brown canvas tarp. Lucy was seated between her mother and father as John pulled onto the shoulder. Harley edged alongside his father.

“ Fancy meeting you out here.”

“ When I get back,” said John, pointing. “ I'll make sure that Hobart never even directs traffic again!”

“ He give you a hard time?”

“ Dumb questions. He thinks Andy has something to do with Dwayne being up in Cedar Rapids.”

Andy opened the door and stepped out. “ Did they find Dwayne Piltz or anything else anything up in the caves?”

“ Nothing.”

“ How did you get rid of Hobart?” asked Harley.

“ Porky said he was needed back in town. A row in the cafe.”

“ Smart move, Pork,” said Harley.”

“ Porky winked at me as Hobart left.” John turned toward the truck bed. “ Andy, you'd better get in. He wants you to answer questions in town in the morning. I told him you went out.”

Andy climbed over the fender and crawled across the roped crates into the space between the canvas tarps. Lucy's eyes were tense. Maybe she had seen the patch near the North Star. He leaned against the waxy tarp, but quickly scanned the bright stars in the cooler air. Even though he did not spot the patch, he was certain the Moloch were still out there.

“ Good bye, Andy. Good luck,” said Harley as he backed up and started back to town.

“ Thanks, Harley. Say good bye to Ned.”

Harley saluted and moved back to town. Andy watched the taillights, but dared not to look back at the sky. John advised Andy to get some sleep before he took over driving in a few hours. Lucy's serious expression bothered him as he settled between the canvas. He closed his eyes as the truck headed south, but his eyes slowly opened and he panned from the North Star back to the big dipper's pointer stars. Then he closed his eyes, refusing to look or even think about the Moloch presence back in time. The truck rumbled down the highway into the night and he drifted off.

## 17

“ We have every right to leave Hancock for the fair,” said John. He stepped from the blue, gingerbread rooming house somewhere in Indiana. “ We aren’t criminals. Hobart will have to answer to me when we get back.”

Andy squinted in the late afternoon light. His eyes ached from driving through the early morning hours and again in the afternoon. The little patch near the North Star had disappeared since the highway in Iowa, but he never told Lucy about it, and by the morning as she was relaxed and enthusiastic about the trip. He looked north above the trees, but sunset was hours away. The rooming house door opened and Lucy emerged in a pleated, green-checked skirt and light blouse. With her hair pulled back and in her bucks, she looked younger.

John turned from the truck bed. “ Here come the weary travelers.”

“ Speak for yourself, John,” said Mrs. Apel.

“ The lady said there’s a bandstand down the street,” said Lucy, smiling at Andy. “ Harry Coburn and his Orchestra.”

“ It’s been a long day and night and we have to drive all day tomorrow,” said John. In slacks and a light shirt, he looked as if he had entered a different world. “ But we’re fair bound.”

Mrs. Apel held Andy's elbow. "He always does this, Andy, and then he goes and has a great time."

"Well, I'm tired and I'm sure Andy is, too. Right, Andy?"

"I wouldn't want to disappoint the ladies," he said.

"I think I'm outvoted."

\* \* \*

The swing and jazzy arrangements were a solid diversion, but Andy constantly scanned the stars above the trees along the common. He was unclear whether the Moloch presence in the northern sky last night signaled an ability to track the Apels eastward.

"You're distracted," said Lucy.

Andy quickly looked back from the sky. "Who me?"

"They're gone, Andy." Andy nodded and gleaned a phony smile. He then panned the crowd and then entertained the idea the Moloch were here in human form. "You want to take a walk?"

"Sure."

She leaned to her mother and asked if she could stroll with him. Mrs. Apel nodded and John commanded them not to stray too far. Lucy extended her hand and Andy pulled her up. They stepped between the townspeople across the grass and headed down a long white-railed fence under the sidewalk trees. "Okay, tell me, Andy."

"Tell you what?"

"Something is wrong."

He smiled and shook his head. “ This time your imagination is running away from you, Lucy.” The music faded as they moved by small store fronts along the street.

“ Hobart is bothering me. There’s no way he will find out what happened with the Moloch, right?”

“ Not unless Dwayne Piltz reassembles himself,” said Andy.

“ They are gone...”

“ Gone. Listen, this is a balmy summer’s night. When I was a boy my Dad would bring us to ball games on nights like this. Although the Rockies never won.”

“ And Hobart is seven hundred miles behind us and we have the New York World’s Fair ahead of us.”

“ Right. You can bring me through the Perisphere and the into future in that General Motors thing.”

“ Futurama, the world in 1960. I don’t think Mr. Davenport will keep you out,” she said and then held his wrist. “ Who are the Rockies?”

“ Rockies, well,” he said, opening his eyes. “ Triple A team.”

“ Oh, really?” She thought for the longest time, alternating glances between him and the town. “ Why is it I think the real Futurama involves a new major league team in Colorado and maybe a leader called JFK? And cars with automatic transmissions?”

“ Well, you are very-”

“ Don’t tell me I’m precocious or perceptive, Andy Reese. Who is JFK? Really...”

Andy stopped on the corner and looked up at the Elm Street sign. His eyes filled, he opened his mouth several times as his throat tightened.

“ John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.”

“ Oh really? And is that in the Futurama?” she asked, but his torrid expression caused her smile to fall. “ *You’re serious.*”

“ You asked me.”

“ I did... but I don’t think I want to hear any more.” They continued in silence along rows of houses in a residential section. Her pensive attitude dogged him until she finally turned. The band music was barely audible at this distance. “ And the Rockies will be a Major League baseball team.”

Andy nodded. “ Listen, don’t pay attentions to my ramblings. I’m sorry.”

Her eyes revealed a surprising blend of optimism and hope. She slowly shook her head. “ No... don’t be sorry. Somehow I knew this all along. I really have. I wouldn’t have thought it possible if I hadn’t seen the Moloch with my own eyes.”

“ I, I-”

“ Your sister...”

Andy swallowed slowly and his voice was shaky. “ She died seventy-seven years from now.”

“ Wow.”

“ Kate checked into a termination clinic. They injected her and she was gone. And all of it was legal. I know that makes no sense.”

“ No, you don’t know how much I think about things, how I dream of the future... I understand more than you think.”

“ I believe you do.”

Over her shoulder, now south near the blazing red Antares in Scorpius, Andy saw the patch, but did not let on, his face unflinching as he gazed back

into her dark eyes. “ This has to do with Geiger. I don’t want you caught up in details of this, Lucy.”

“ I do believe, Mr. Reese, I am destined to be caught up in this.”

\* \* \*

The fresh air filled his lungs and the rolling green fields across the Ohio border mesmerized him. Lucy had not mentioned his revelations during last night’s concert. He did not regret unveiling himself. Not many people would have believed in the future, but it all made sense in the realm of Lucy’s unusual empathy and perception. The presence and subsequent dissolution of the faint green splotch during the concert shook him. They were hovering in the atmosphere and trailing the truck to New York City.

More than anytime since his contact with the Seraphs, he was determined to save Geiger. Battle lines were drawn back at the caves. The Moloch were back to effect change and that change meant removing Geiger from the timeline. Andy understood the Seraph prediction of Hitler surviving a war not involving the United States, but he also believed Geiger would, after Hitler’s death in 1949, become a force by the 1950’s, and his values would take hold on society.

After lunch Lucy sang songs as the wind whipped by them in the truck. Some of the songs were traditional, but others he didn’t know. She shook her head. “Side by Side. I know the chorus goes like this, Andy:

OH! WE AIN'T GOT A BAR-REL OF MON-EY,  
MAY-BE WE'RE RAG-GED AND FUN-NY,  
BUT WE'LL TRAV-EL A-LONG SING-IN' A SONG,  
SIDE BY SIDE

DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COM-IN' TO-MOR-RROW,  
MAY-BE IT'S TROU-BLE AND SOR-RROW,  
BUT WE'LL TRAV-EL THE ROAD, SHA-RIN' OUR  
LOAD, SIDE BY SIDE.

THRU ALL KINDS OF WEA-THER,  
WHAT IF THE SKY SHOULD FALL  
JUST AS LONG AS WE'RE TO-GE-THER,  
IT DOES-N'T MAT-TER AT ALL

WHEN THEY'VE ALL HAD THEIR QUAR-RELS AND  
PART-ED  
WE'LL BE THE SAME AS WE START-ED  
JUST TRAV-LIN' A-LONG SING-IN' A SONG,  
SIDE BY SIDE

Andy joined her. “ Side by side.”

“ That’s it, you’ve got it.” He sang along with her through the chorus, but just as they finished she squinted in the sun and pointed down the highway to a car advancing in the heat. “ That looks like Porky’s car.”

“ Porky?” asked Andy. “ Porky is probably loafing under one of the trees with your dad gone.”

“ No, that *is* Porky.” Andy laughed shook his head.

Lucy rapped on the cab. John looked back in the side mirror.

“ Porky.”

John's brow furrowed. He pumped the brakes, the truck shimmied to a stop on the gravel laced road shoulder. Andy rolled over the fender onto the embankment.

Porky's car sputtered to a stop behind the truck. He squeezed his fat frame out the driver's side and waddled across the gravel. "They found him."

"Who?" asked Andy.

"Dwayne Piltz, shot through the head inside the caves."

Andy's stomach wrenched as John turned.

Porky opened his eye slits. "Erwin says Dwayne shot his-self."

"That's awful," said Mrs. Apel.

"Yeah, but Hobart's called all sorts of people trying to track down Andy."

"Andy?" asked John.

Andy held John's shoulder. "Look, why don't I go back with Porky?"

"Did you have anything to do with this, son?" asked John.

"No, sir."

John waved his hand. "Then get in back in the truck. We're heading to New Jersey. Let Hobart do his own dirty work."

Andy scaled the fender and sat next to Lucy. She leaned over and whispered in his ear as John talked with Porky. "Maybe I should tell them I was there, too." Andy nibbled on the inside of his mouth. "But I don't want to jeopardize whatever it is you're trying to accomplish, Andy."

"And what do you think I'm trying to accomplish?"

"I have some theories and will eventually come up with the right one."

“ I don't doubt that for a minute.”

## 18

Andy stepped out of the little cottage. Porky would leave for Hancock in the morning, but enduring the rip cutting snoring originating in the adjacent cottage proved untenable. The stars filled the void between the tree branches, but the Moloch were not visible. Andy jaunted across the grove, into the adjacent field. Sector by sector he methodically checked the sky for the fuzzy patch. Knee deep in the tall grass he thought about Kate, but he also contemplated meeting Geiger. What would he say to him? Was it necessary to explain anything at all? As he studied each star along the Scorpion's tail as someone called from the grove.

Lucy wore her white sweater and crossed easily through the high grass. "I can't sleep."

"One more night of the buzz saw."

She looked up with a sense of wonderment. "Andy, will man travel to the stars?"

"I don't have that answer."

"What about the moon?" she asked, looking west.

"Do you really want to know?"

"I supposed not and I suppose it doesn't matter what I know." Then she smiled with bright eyes. "But I can tell by your expression it will happen."

The patch appeared near the Big Dipper's pointer stars. He quickly swung back to Lucy. "Since I was a little boy, I'd come out to fields and look at the sky. The stars are the one thing that doesn't change very much in your whole lifetime."

"You have a favorite star?"

Andy chuckled. "I never really thought about it. The stars with planetary systems are interesting, but, yeah, I guess I have a favorite star," he said as he pointed past Orion. "See that bright star in Lyra?"

"Vega."

"How did you know that?" asked Andy.

"I've been listening," she said with a coy grin. "Why Vega?"

"It's bright, it's bold," he said as she faced him. "It isn't afraid to make its presence known in the sky."

"It shines over everything else, even when the moon is out."

"Tell me why you're here with us in the summer of 1939, heading to the New York World's Fair."

He tried not to stare at the patch as he panned the sky. "I have things I have to accomplish."

"Like what?"

Andy swallowed twice. "I have to prevent Geiger from being killed."

She assumed the look of a quizzical intellectual. "Geiger is a point in time. An important point. Are you saying is supposed to be killed?"

"Yeah."

"My God. By whom? The Moloch? Nazis?"

He slowly shook his head. "I'm not sure."

"Why Geiger?" she asked.

“ A cataclysmic war is about to take place. Millions will die.”

“ Hitler.”

“ Yes... Hitler and Japan. I shouldn't be telling you this, Lucy.”

“ My dad says the Great War was the last war.”

They walked forward through the grass. “ Hitler wins this war if Geiger lives.”

“ Why is that a good thing?”

Andy creased his brow. “ He dies around ten years from now, but the United States never fights the war. In that scenario, eighteen years from now Geiger's influence will be extraordinary. His philosophy will gain wide acceptance.”

“ Your sister was murdered legally. Is that how things evolved?”

“ Among other things... You're right when you quote Geiger about people not thinking about new technologies, not from a moral sense, but common sense.”

She pressed her lips and then smiled. “ What year?”

“ Am I from?”

“ 2016.”

“ Over seventy-five years from now.”

“ Yeah,” said Andy as he stopped. “ Can you handle this, Lucy?”

“ Only one thing is bothering me and I think you know the answer. Number one, seventy-seven years in the future isn't long enough to be traveling back in time and I don't think you invented an H.G. Welles time machine.”

Andy grinned. “ No, I didn't and you're right. I was scanning the skies for signs of extraterrestrial life when I was contacted back through time

by the last vestige of humanity. They found the time capsule originally planted in the Westinghouse Building at the fair.”

“Wow.”

“All other humans were engineered into the Moloch, Lucy. But they’re not really human from my point of view.”

“And all that begins now, here in the summer of 1939...”

“I think it began a long time ago, but is certainly reaching an impetus at this time.”

“Do the Moloch know about Geiger?” she asked.

“I’m not sure. I think they have general ideas, but I just don’t know. Somehow they knew about you and your essay.”

She was silent for the longest time as if she were a computer assimilating information. “They’re vulnerable.”

“How so?” he asked.

“They can’t hurt you if unless they’re inside a human mind.”

“Exactly right.”

“They needed Dwayne Piltz to kill Jenkins. But they had the opportunity to get us when they moved out of the cave, but they didn’t.”

The Moloch were no longer in the sky. Maybe they drifted through levels in the atmosphere. “I have to find Geiger immediately. I’ll have to head upstate if he isn’t at the fair.”

“What are you going to tell him?” She lowered her voice to imitate Andy. “Professor Geiger, I’m Andy Reese. I’m from the future and I’m here to protect you from the Moloch.”

“Yeah, he’ll buy that.”

She paused again. “He’s going to have to buy it... or he’s dead.”

# 19

Lucy leaned over the fender and gawked at the rows of tenements under a mass of telephone and electrical wires tightly strung between rigid poles. She spun and pointed. “Look, look, Andy, a streetcar!”

The open-air car, stuffed with people, rumbled by and the clanging bell dropped in frequency. Andy once saw streetcars in San Francisco.

“Lucy, have you ever seen a streetcar?”

She shook her head as John slowed the truck.. “I want to ride one.”

“I’m sure you’ll be able to.”

She twisted her mouth as she thought. “What if Geiger isn’t at the fair?”

“Then we’ll have your Mr. Davenport help us... I hope he is at the fair because Amesbury Union College is three hundred miles upstate.” Andy thought back to last night outside the cottages. The transient Moloch presence kept him tossing on his pillow all night. Maybe they were already possessing minds here in New Jersey or at the fair itself.

“Andy,” she said, shaking his arm. “When you’re deep in thought, there’s something you don’t want to tell me.”

He smiled as the sun hit his face. “You think you know me so well.”

“You saw them, didn’t you? Last night.” The passing air blew back her dark her hair.

“ I keep wondering... even if I prevent Geiger’s death, what happens to the Moloch afterward? How many are there?”

“ Well, that makes me feel better.”

“ You have his number at the college?” asked Andy.

“ I do.”

John turned off the main boulevard and shifted as he moved up a hill, capped with overhanging tree branches. He checked the map Mrs. Apel was holding across the dash and turned right at the top of the hill. The branch shadows crisscrossed Lucy’s smiling face. Andy tilted his head.

“ Now, why are you smiling?”

Her brow creased slightly. “ I’m going to the New York World’s Fair. The World of Tomorrow and have fun at the amusement park. I’m going to see the future.”

\* \* \*

Aunt Charlotte had John’s blue eyes and long slender nose, but she smoked an assembly line of cigarettes and had an irreverent attitude John did not tolerate well. Her latest husband was not living at the two story yellow New Jersey house and not even mentioned. Not until supper did Andy realized they were either divorced or separated. When she was out of the room John told Mrs. Apel the city had changed her.

Andy sat in the corner and played Monopoly with Lucy. When Aunt Charlotte mentioned someone had broken into the house last night he looked up from the board.

“ Nothing was taken, but I just don’t trust the Kolowski Brothers.”

“ Who are they?” asked John.

Andy rolled two sixes and advanced down the board to the Reading Railroad. “ Twenty-five bucks,” said Lucy. “ Pay up.”

“ I’m not selling you any deeds this time.” He listened closely to Aunt Charlotte.

“ Two brothers. I think they are from one of those Russian countries. They moved in last April, but have been gone for long stretches of time. Very odd people. Keep to themselves.”

“ Park Place, I’ll buy it legitimately,” said Lucy and she fished through her stacked money.

“ I wanted that,” replied Andy, holding up the blue striped Boardwalk.

“ And I’m not selling,” she said, smiling. “ That’s why I like this game. You never know what’s going to happen.”

“ I don’t even know what they do for a living,” said Aunt Charlotte.

“ Point is, those foreigners... I just don’t trust them.”

Lucy leaned toward Andy and whispered before he rolled the dice.

“ Andy, what if those brothers were on my dad’s property?”

“ I hope that’s not true.”

\* \* \*

After the supper dishes were cleared and washed by the women, Aunt Charlotte brought several parcels, wrapped in white paper with blue and orange trim. In the background Lowell Thomas’s smooth professional voice recapped the day’s events from a shiny veneer floor model radio under the tall brass lamp. All the packages in front of the radio were post-

marked from New York City and accompanied by letters personally signed by Grover Whalen. Andy repeatedly pulled back the taffeta curtains at the bay window and in the descending darkness looked across the street to the asphalt shingled Kolowski house. Beyond the spreading tree branches, someone peaked through second floor window's wide Venetian blinds. Andy's heart rate accelerated and tried not to draw the wrong conclusions.

Mrs. Apel pulled out blue china plates with panoramic view of the pointed Trylon and the Perisphere ball etched in white. In the background past a long mall and a lake was the parachute ride's puffy chutes. Lucy was unusually quiet and watched him as he looked outside again.

“Lucy,” said her mother. “I thought you were looking forward to these gifts.”

“You can open them, Mom.”

Mrs. Apel unwrapped the next box. “Bud and Babs, the Middletons go to the fair. Well, here's a another board game, you two.”

“The white, orange, and blue are the fair colors,” said Aunt Charlotte, she inhaled and set her smoldering cigarette on a magenta metal ashtray. Then she blew smoke that drifted in Andy's direction as she handed Lucy the board game. Lucy moved across the room to Andy.

“Well, Bud?” Lucy asked Andy at the window. “What do you see across the street?”

“I'm not sure, *Babs*. I hope it's not our friends working their mysterious ways.”

Thomas signed off the newscast. “So long until tomorrow.”

Some brisk tunes like the music on the movie theater newsreels played loudly as Aunt Charlotte hiked across the room and placed an open box in

Lucy's hands. "Rising Tide, by William Grant Stills. I think it's a theme song of the fair."

Mrs. Apel held a model of the pointed Tyron with thermometer's red mercury tube extended up the obelisk. "This is unique."

"Here," said Aunt Charlotte. She handed Mrs. Apel a small box wrapped in silver paper.

"Charlotte, you didn't have to."

"My Pleasure."

Mrs. Apel unwrapped the silver foil, revealing a yellow, black and red box. "A camera. My goodness."

"Kodak Hawkeye. To remember your time at the fair. It has a side view finder, too."

"That's going overboard," said John. "Thank you."

"Well, you'll have to show me how to operate it," said Mrs. Apel, adjusting her glasses as she studied the box.

"Sure... sure..."

"Charlotte, you shouldn't spend your money on me." Aunt Charlotte gave John a wrapped, bulky box. John's face lit up and he shook the box.

"It's light."

He quickly unwrapped the navy paper. Medgar's Department Store was printed blue on the outside of the box. John pulled out a brown hat with a dark band. "A hat."

"Fedora," said Aunt Charlotte.

"Why, I haven't worn a hat since--"

"Our Wedding," said Mrs. Apel. "Remember, John. You're in the city now, not in the plowing the fields."

John placed the Fedora on his head. “ How do I look?”

“ Handsome,” said Lucy.

John seemed to like his new status as he passed the Official Guide to the fair to Andy. The Trylon and Perisphere were highlighted white against the deep blue background. “ Quite an undertaking. Place used to be an ash dump.”

“ Really?” asked Andy. A man stood in the glow of second floor window, but when Andy turned, he quickly retreated. “ I’m just going to step outside for awhile if you will all excuse me.”

John looked up from his reading glasses. “ Says here we have unlimited passes to the fair, but your actual ceremony is on Tuesday. When you read your essay. Lucy. Practice up.”

“ She’ll be just fine, John,” said Mrs. Apel,

Andy opened the screen door and stepped onto the front porch. The city air was inundated with a variety of unfamiliar odors as he moved down the wood steps and onto the cement walk. The upper light remained blazing behind the blinds on the second floor of the Kolowski house. The blinds bent in the middle again, but he doubted they could see him on the walk. He peered through the tree branches, but his inclination was to cross the street and confront these brothers directly. Maybe they were just nosy neighbors.

\* \* \*

Andy’s bed was downstairs next to the window. Since dusk, when the lights had popped on, the blaze outlined the third floor window blinds. Aunt Charlotte said in passing the two brothers operated a fruit and vegetables

market in the city, but were always away from the house. Andy had a bad feeling. He stared at the ceiling and wondered if they had broken into Aunt Charlotte's house last night. When he heard a noise like a trash can lid scuffing the asphalt, he sat up on the bed and yanked back the curtains. The wind gusted occasionally and rustled the upper leaves and grass clumps in the front yard. He looked down the quiescent street, but was drawn to the ubiquitous glow around the second floor blinds.

Andy rolled out of bed, hoisted up his trousers and nimbly opened the bedroom door. Confronting the two brothers was risky. He tiptoed across the rug, opened the inner wood and glass door and pushed the screen door. After crossing the porch, and constantly scanning the window, he darted onto the street. He stopped when he saw a crushed tin can in the road and the front door of the asphalt shingled house wide open.

“Okay,” he whispered and backed along the sidewalk. He surveyed the parked cars along the trees. His heartbeat pattered at the temples when he left the sidewalk. A dim light inside the doorway created fuzzy shadows in a straight, indefinite, wallpapered hall. He stepped lightly onto the uncut grass, looked directly up at the closed bright bordered, blinds and touched his shoe to the front step. An odd, melted plastic odor leaked outward as he neared the open door.

He reached around the corner and felt his way to a light switch, but the room stayed dark even when his index finger depressed the button. The only light in the house leaked from an indeterminate source up the stairs. He was not sure why he started climbing the stairs. The first wood tread creaked, but someone stomped across the floor behind him and he spun on the step. He was stunned by the dim outline of a man in a sleeveless white undershirt,

lumbering forward with his arms outstretched. The man's high cheek bones surrounded his maniac eyes and he produced a guttural roar as he attacked.

Andy leaped with his legs bent. The he jabbed with his right leg, knocking the man back against the door. To his surprise the guy got up.

“ You have threatened us.”

“ Who are you?”

“ You must be stopped.”

“ Why must I be stopped? Are you Moloch?”

“ We will all disengage one by one until we effect the change.”

“ Disengage?” The guy started forward again. Andy smacked him half a dozen times in the face and then thrust his foot squarely into his gut. As the man bucked at the knees, the stair wall was punctured and the dead air cracked with gunshots. Andy locked his arms around first guy's neck as another man, with brown trimmed hair, wearing a white jersey and brandishing a small caliber handgun, rushed in from the kitchen. His facial contours closely matched the first man. “ Stop this!”

“ You threaten the world. You are the one sent for Geiger.”

The man fired again and air whooshed by Andy's head. Andy shoved the first brother, dove onto the porch and crawled down the steps into the dirt. He scrambled in a crab run and awaited more gunfire. Once upright, he retreated down the sidewalk and pawed his way around a parked sedan.

Calling the police was an option that probably would not work. The Moloch could flee from the two men's bodies or produce suicidal tendencies as they had with Dwayne Piltz. Both men bolted out the front door as he hesitated, but trotted into the driveway shadows. A car along the far side of

the house started. Headlights burst across the dirt drive and tree branches above.

Andy remained behind the sedan fender, thoroughly convinced of the present danger posed by the Moloch. The sand crunched under the tires and an old Chevy rumbled down the sleepy street. The Kolowski brothers were alive, but their minds were captured by evolved human consciousness from the distant future. Andy sidestepped into the street as the car banked the corner. Maybe the Moloch were unsure what he would do next. They possessed no superhuman strength and had to rely on human consciousness. How many people did they now control and how many people they could control?

## 20

Through the crammed subway train's dirt smeared window the pointed Trylon and massive round Perisphere rose white against the blue sky's high, wispy clouds. Andy refused to tell Lucy about the Kolowski brothers' aggressive stunt and wrestled with the anxiety of their whereabouts. The stuffy train slowed near a sunshine drenched silver river, lined with imposing block buildings, verdant garden vistas, and split with bridges leading to a larger azure rippled lake. The ubiquitous Trylon and Perisphere ball at the far end captivated the attention of every window gazing passenger on the train.

Lucy was clad in a new cotton dress, flared at the shoulders, with three buttons to a matching belt at the waist and pleated to the knee. The sea green, fabric contrasted her deep eyes. Her flamboyant reaction to the New York City skyline during the ride from New Jersey negated the creeping Moloch pressure. Now, about to realize her dream, she maintained her exuberance. "Andy, this is it. The New York World's Fair."

"We're here because of you, Lucy," he said with a perfunctory smile.

Mrs. Apel held the folded Official Guide with both hands and the Hawkeye camera dangled around her neck.. "It says here we are arriving at the IRT-BMT Subway Gate. Whatever that means... Building the world of tomorrow with the tools of today. Hum, I want a picture when we get outside."

“ Mr. Davenport and his people are supposed to meet us at nine-fifteen at the Perisphere,” said Lucy. “ And Aunt Charlotte will be here tomorrow for my essay?”

“ She said she would, dear,” said her mother. “ I wish she had been here to operate this camera.”

Andy’s thoughts skipped between the two eras. The alabaster Perisphere and Trylon showboated the churning sense of optimism, not only of the fair structures, but the inspiration of those promoting and attending the fair.

“ I clock twenty-five minutes since we left Times Square,” said John, holding the Fedora in his lap. “ They have a World’s Fair station at Penn Station, too.”

“ Twelve hundred and sixteen acres,” added Mrs. Apel.

Lucy’s face imparted a deep serenity, but Andy ground his teeth. She leaned over and spoke a low voice. “ What the matter, Andy?”

“ The usual.”

“ The Moloch are gone... right?”

“ I haven’t seen them,” he replied.

She shook her head, smiled and tapped his knee. “ We’ll look for Professor Geiger today. He has his place at the USSR Pavilion.”

“ So much uncertainty, Lucy.”

When the train stopped an authoritative voice called out:

“ Bowling Green. Bowling Green.”

The doors rumbled opened and Andy squeezed within the bodies vying for exit to the station. He felt awkward donning a tie and sport coat back in New Jersey, but most people were dressed more formally than in his time.

Some men even wore tailored suits and the women's dresses and skirts echoed the air of regime and social appropriateness. Even the children looked like downsized versions of the grownups.

John, now sporting the Fedora, showed Lucy's pass to an attendant in blue, white and orange garb, and they were waved forward. "This would have cost seventy-five cents each. I'm glad I have a smart daughter."

From the station canopy's shade, the animated faces of men and woman gathered around the plaza's concrete rimmed fountain fueled the sense of boundless optimism. Bronzed statues guarded the fountain's green paneled, chrome surrounded tiers, and in the center a grooved cylinder rocketed water skyward.

"The Fountain of the Atom," said Mrs. Apel. "Everyone line up out there."

"We have our own tour guide, my wife," said John.

The mist swept over Andy's cheeks, but fear crept through his body as he contemplated the Kolowski brothers entering the fair like hunting dogs tracking prey. Back at the entrance a group of school children lingered with adults along one of the two side ramps leading to translucent green panels along deep mustard poles under the canopy. On either side of the enter glass paneled canopy above the ramps were the letters:

**IRT-SUBWAYS-BMT**

Several more men in blue, orange and white uniforms stood under the canopy at the end of the far ramp. Unless the Moloch took aggressive action or appeared suspicious, Andy figured he could temper his trepidation. He inhaled the warming air, swept with dissipating exhaust and drifting bacon and eggs currents. The pressure numbed his mind as he studied the white-faced clock atop the center of the long linear station canopy.

“ You don’t have to stare, Andy. The clock says nine o’ six,” said Lucy, already beaming for the pending photograph.

“ Everybody smile,” said Mrs. Apel. She balanced her glasses and peered through the side, rectangular viewfinder. “ Oh, Charlotte where are you when I need you?”

Andy reluctantly grinned. “ Lucy, you are-”

“ Precocious?”

“ Among other things,”

“ Mavis, just snap the picture,” said John, holding the hat brim and maintaining his fixed smile.

Mrs. Apel looked down into the lens and pushed the shutter. Andy heard the click. “ There, I did it!”

“ I feel like my mouth is stuck open,” said John.

John joined his wife and they walked along a series of oddly shaped wastebaskets, tapered upward like open wire funnels. Lucy’s face reflected the same unabashed astonishment as people buzzed in all directions on the deep yellow roadway.

Mrs. Apel lifted the guidebook with a white silhouette of the Perisphere and Trylon on the cover. “ We have to take the Avenue of the Pioneers to the Perisphere.”

“The yellow brick road,” said Lucy. She looked up at Andy in the balmy air. “You promised you would-

“Go to the Oz movie when it comes out. Yes, yes. I am a man of my word.”

She rolled her brown eyes and Mrs. Apel rattled off the names of the first exhibits on the avenue. The yellow paint lightened as they trekked within the crowd toward the looming Perisphere. “American Radiator.”

“Sounds real exciting,” said Lucy. “I want to see Democracy. And the Futurama. Look, Mom, there’s the RCA Building. Television. They have a television camera in there. It transmits pictures not just sound. I read they broadcast the way to Fifth Ave. in New York City.”

Andy faced the four thin columns of the glass paneled building, rounded above with the RCA logo circle, and antenna rising several hundred feet above the roof. John took his arm and twisted him around. He pointed across the avenue to a sculpted building with a colorful mural within the curve and flags out front. “WPA... Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Andy. WPA kept men in this country employed.”

“It did.”

The flags rippled as they strolled by the building. At the corner of a smaller road, the distant white towering figure of a man hovered over everything ahead. Andy looked down at Mrs. Apel’s guide book map.

“Is that George Washington?”

“If it is, he must be pretty old by now,” said Lucy.

“Very funny, Babs.”

“I thought so, Bud.”

Like bees drawn to the hive as they continued toward the overshadowing Perisphere beyond the American Telegraph and Telephone building on the right. Even more than sharpness of the Trylon obelisk against the sky, the sheer size of the stucco-coated geodesic dome was overwhelming. The surface appeared rougher as they inched closer; probably the steel supports pushing against the facade. People snapped pictures with oversized box cameras from a sweeping spiral ramp, supported by thin pylons anchored into a lower pool. The ramp was lined with a Plexiglas rail leading from a dark opening in the dome into the Trylon base, now in the Perisphere's shadow.

“I've never seen the future,” said Lucy, looking at Andy. “Is this the future, Mr. Reese?”

“It's the dream of the future.”

Wood slatted benches surrounded a ring of squared columns propping up the Perisphere around a lower rippling, blue pool. Magnificent fountains spurted prodigious water jets into the atmosphere and brightly dabbed flowerbeds traced the avenues. A man with short black hair and glasses, wearing a light blue suit coat and orange tie, raised his index finger. He held his notebook, motioned to his small entourage, and like a herd of horses they all cantered toward a compass, divided into rounded white directional sectors within the asphalt.

“You must be Mr. And Mrs. Apel,” he said in a precise and articulate voice. “I am Mr. Davenport, coordinating with President Whalen for your visit.”

“John Apel, and this is my wife Mavis.”

“ Mrs. Apel... Pleased to meet you, Mr. Apel,” said Davenport, turning to Lucy. “ And you must be Miss Apel.”

“ I am,” she said, shaking his hand.

“ Congratulations, Miss Apel on behalf of myself and the committee. I have personally read your essay and find it quite insightful and very well written.”

“ Thank you.”

“ And this is Andy Reese, family friend,” said John.

Davenport squinted behind the thick lenses. “ Not boyfriend or anything of that nature.”

Andy stretched out his hand. “ No, sir. Family friend. A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Davenport.”

“ A pleasure to meet you also, Mr. Reese.” Davenport turned to his left and nodded to a young woman in a light blue uniform and matching hat. “ Miss Haverhill, if you will.”

She moved forward with a tray of blue and white badges. Lucy smiled when she read the bold inscription. “ I have seen the future.”

“ Yes, I believe you have in your essay, Miss Apel. These badges are compliments of the General Motors Futurama.” Davenport removed the first badge, bent back the tab and attached it to Lucy’s dress above the buttons at the neckline fringe. “ There, I do believe that you are all now officially at the New York World’s Fair.”

“ Thank you,” said Lucy, unable to shed her huge smile. “ I guess that grants us certain privileges.”

“ Well,” said Davenport, pinning a button on Mrs. Apel’s yellow dress. “ We have a splendid stay planned here for you and your family. Tomorrow in the Court of Peace if all goes according to Hoyle-”

“ Where FDR opened the fair,” said Lucy.

“ Yes, very good. And fear not, the crowd will not be so all encompassing there.” He attached a badge to John’s suit coat pocket. “ But we do have a few people who may be in attendance. Mayor LaGuardia’s office has promised a presence at the event and of course President Whalen wouldn’t miss it. And we may broadcast your essay presentation via the RCA television camera.”

“ Television?” asked Lucy.

“ This is the World of Tomorrow, Miss Apel.”

“ I’m really honored,” replied Lucy. “And Professor Geiger?”

Davenport stopped as he was about to pin a badge on Andy’s shirt. “ Yes, dear Professor Geiger. I’m sure he will be there and you will have ample opportunity to chat with him. The professor was involved in an incident last week.”

“ Incident?” asked Andy.

“ Ended up in the fountains inside the Lagoon of Nations. Bad form. Bad form. Professor Geiger has, how would you say, set up shop inside the Soviet Pavilion and sometimes he’s out by Big Joe.”

“ Big Joe?” asked Andy as Davenport finally attached the button.

“ Yes, the high statue out front, dubbed, Big Joe, a colloquial reference to the leader of the Soviet Union, Mr. Stalin. Now, Professor Geiger is allowed in there because of political moves involving, if you’ve watched the newsreels, a proposed alliance between Germany and Russia. I am not a po-

litical man, I'm a businessman... Now with your pass you may come and go as you will. But we do have some things planned for you. I would only ask you to clear any contacting the press with my office if you divert from the itinerary." He handed Mrs. Apel a white card with blue and orange letters.

Andy gazed down two predominant, rose painted boulevards, dotted with people constantly moving along puffy trees and solid buildings. A thin, diagonally pointed sculpture, shaped like an icicle, partially obscured the lofty George Washington, cloak draped over his broad shoulders, standing above more distant statues and the blue reflecting pools.

As Davenport prattled about the futuristic theme of the fair, Andy thought he saw the two agents from Lucy's graduation within avenue through only a hundred yards away. He took two steps across the inlaid compass, but the agents blended into the crowd.

"Still fascinated with old George, eh, Andy?" said Lucy.

"James Earl Fraiser is the sculptor," said Davenport. "The figure of Washington stands sixty feet over Constitution Mall."

Andy scanned the mall's long white building at the corner and smiled at Davenport. "Thank you."

"Can I take your picture? All of you," said Mrs. Apel.

"Why, I would be delighted," said Davenport. He positioned himself between Lucy and her father. Andy stood to the right of Lucy as Davenport set his smile. "Everyone say cheddar cheese now."

"Cheddar cheese," said Lucy and Mrs. Apel clicked the shutter quickly this time.

"You've got the hang of it, Mavis," said John.

Davenport adjusted his glasses and stood before them. “ Now, I will meet you later Kodak Building where I have a ceremony at three-thirty. If you would kindly look to your left at the light blue Avenue of Pioneers and as it slowly deepens to a darker blue at Lincoln Square and the Schaefer Center. Kodak is on the far side of the center, bordering World’s Fair Boulevard.”

“ Why do the roads get darker?” asked John.

“ A symbol of distance from the focal theme of your first stop here at the fair, the Perisphere, creating the feeling of the infinite, the Trylon the finite. There are four tons of steel in Perisphere.”

“ You people must have good backing.”

Davenport smiled for the first time. “ Quite... Now, Miss Haverhill if you will bring our welcome guests to Democracy.” Andy, mesmerized by the crowds moving along the corner building, could not see the two men. “ Miss Haverhill has your exact itinerary today. You will be visiting the Transportation Zone, including the Westinghouse Electric Building, where our time capsule has been buried.”

The Seraph reference to finding that time capsule thousands of years from swept Andy’s thoughts.

“ Is this anywhere near Elsie the cow?” asked Mrs. Apel, half gazing at her guidebook.

“ Elsie is at the Borden exhibit, next to where Mr. Reese was admiring General Washington. And I assure you, Mrs. Apel, I am aware your have arrived from an Iowa farm, and we will take special care you see Elsie the cow.”

“ Thank you. Thank you,” she said and looked at John shaking his head. “ Now, what are you looking at, John Apel?”

“ Can’t take em off the farm.”

“ Oh, you... What do you want to see?”

“ The Electrified Farm of course,” answered John. “ Maybe those stunt cars. Death Dodgers.”

“ Oh, dear.”

“ Yes... B.F. Goodrich.” Davenport cleared his throat. “ Enjoy yourselves at the fair. On behalf on President Whalen, I will say we are very pleased to have you all here.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Davenport,” said John.

“ My pleasure. Good day.”

Davenport marched away like a field commander leading his troops through the Perisphere’s shadow. At that moment the two agents appeared at the corner building and were looking toward the Perisphere. Were the Moloch pressing these two individuals or were they really agents of the Bureau of Protection?

“ Andy, what’s the matter?” asked Lucy.

“ Nothing,” he said, shaking his head as if he could get rid of them.

The taller man with gray hair lifted field glasses to his eyes.

Miss Haverhill’s voice was as clear as radio announcer. “ I think you will find this first exhibit unlike anything you have ever seen in your life.”

Lucy stared at Andy, but turned toward the bouncy brunette. “ Democracy, designed by Henry Dreyfuss, will bring you ahead a hundred years.”

“ Back home?” whispered Lucy. “ I’ve almost forgotten in the excitement.”

Andy raised his brows, but the agents’ presence at the fair had rattled him. “ Let’s see what they have in mind for 2039.”

“ We will proceed up escalators upward from the Trylon at ground level to the chromium doors above. Inside you will board the upper balcony and fly over the future. Please,” she said motioning them to the stainless steel escalator.

The two men now walked quickly toward the Perisphere as Lucy hesitated near the escalator’s meshing steel teeth. “ You all right, Lucy?”

She placed her upper teeth on her lip and then smiled as Miss Haverhill circumvented the line. “ I’m sorry, I’ve never been on an escalator.”

The two agents, free of the crowd, entered the plaza only a few hundred feet away. Andy held Lucy’s arm and the rising escalator took them along steel walls behind Miss Haverhill, John, and Mrs. Apel. A tunnel at the top separated the escalators from two circular viewing balconies, slowly moving in opposite directions. Andy was certain as he stepped with Lucy onto the solid surface, the two men, even though not in the group proceeding up the escalators, were now in pursuit.

\* \* \*

Andy leaned forward in the revolving balcony seat and seemingly floated above a skyscraper city swept over a sea bound river, cut with a straight sleek highway bridge into the city. Harbor searchlights shot upward. “ It’s not too different.”

As a flute’s sauntering melody grew louder, he prepared himself for a confrontation outside. Almost indiscernible human forms were projected on the inner Perisphere ceiling and voices announced utopian visions of the future. Andy smiled as he counted ten columns of marching citizens. Busi-

nessmen and farmers moved in a precise cadence with teachers carrying books, engineers and blueprints, miners with lamps. They sang a hymn of tomorrow as light burst down from the top and onto the cloverleaves and airfield.

Geiger's presence on the timeline haunted him. The professor was slated for death and the Moloch were back in time. His heart pounded through the exhibit as he emerged with Lucy through one of the two openings in the Perisphere. Once on the Helicline he leaned over the Plexiglas railing, took in fresh air and panned the base beyond the lower pool. Lucy was whistling the toe tapping piano melody heard inside.

Miss Haverhill turned with the Apels. "You are whistling another winner of sorts. William Grant Stills won the competition with, "Rising Tide," as the official song of the fair. You'll hear it all around here."

"Just like my mother's music box... Catchy tune," said Lucy.

"It is," said Miss Haverhill as she walked ahead to the Apels.

Lucy pulled Andy aside. "What did you think of Democracy and the future?"

"The look of the city is amazingly close, but you don't see the barrios and slums."

Miss Haverhill brought the Apels down the slow winding spiral ramp.

"*Slums* will still exist?"

"Yes." He was relieved he did not see the two agents below.

Lucy looked up as they descended the Helicline. "But there will be progress?"

“ Oh, yes. Great technological progress, biological, genetic... computers. But everyone marching in unison... That won't happen. People drift into doing their own thing.”

“ Their own thing?”

“ Some of the dependency on other people will fall because of advances... Relationships between men and women will change radically. Manners. People, like I said, fall into their own little worlds.” He again checked the avenues leading from the lower area and stopped. “ Lucy, we have to find Geiger... today.”

“ I'm trying to pretend I don't see you looking everywhere.”

He stared into her dark eyes. “ The two guys at the graduation.”

“ Oh, no.”

“ I saw them heading toward the Perisphere from the mall.”

Lucy gripped the railing. She faced a highway separating the Perisphere from the slim Ford Building, with cars moving along another spiraled structure and lines of people backed up to the General Motors Building.

“ What can we do? Are they going to arrest us? Or is it more?”

“ I don't know.”

John Apel's voice shot up the Helicline. “ Lucy, come on, girl”

“ I think we do have to get to Geiger now,” said Andy.

“ Why? Are those agents like Dwayne Piltz?” she asked as they scampered forward. “ You know, influenced by the Moloch?”

“ It's very possible.”

“ How do you know this?”

“ I don't know this for sure.” He stopped again and faced her.

“ I'm reluctant to tell you things that are better left unsaid.”

“ Tell me.”

“ Last night... that light in the upper room across the street. Those brothers... the Moloch have them.” She closed her eyes. “ I didn’t want to worry you about things you couldn’t do anything about.”

“ Are they here?”

“ No, they left last night by car. I haven’t seen them...”

“ How do you know they’re possessed by the Moloch?” asked Lucy.

“ They tried to kill me...”

“ Oh, my God... Moloch... I can’t believe any of this happened. It’s my entire fault. If I hadn’t wrote that essay.”

“ No, it’s not your fault. The Moloch, they want to change time. We have to get to Geiger.”

Mrs. Apel stepped away from Miss Haverhill. “ Now, come on you two, we’re guests here. Miss Haverhill says we’re going to Westinghouse Electric.”

“ Put on a good face,” said Lucy, taking his arm.

“ We will see the time capsule area and Elektro,” said Miss Haverhill as they continued down the ramp.

“ Elektro?” asked Andy.

“ A fully functional robot,” she answered and raised her brows.

“ I see,” said Andy.

“ Ah... Miss Haverhill, would it be possible to meet with Professor Geiger today?” asked Lucy.

“ I don’t have that on the itinerary, but perhaps Mr. Davenport can make arrangements once we meet him at the Kodak Building.”

Lucy's face flattened as she turned to Andy. He needed to at least reach Geiger by phone. They followed Miss Haverhill as she veered left, but he repeatedly checked the Helicline, winding down from the Perisphere. Maybe the two men were still inside or had hidden behind the Tylon. How many more people were controlled by the Moloch?

\* \* \*

Mrs. Apel rested on one of the long slatted benches bordering a colorful array of red and white tulips. Andy gripped a cool bottle of Orange Crush, propped his foot on the bench, and scrutinized the immediate area while he awaited Miss Haverhill's return from inside the Westinghouse Building. He last saw the two agents before he entered the Perisphere, but now he acknowledged the possibility the Kolowski brothers or Moloch infested humans were wandering around the fair.

The Westinghouse tower, a larger version of the inverted, ringed wastebaskets back at the subway entrance, was supported by a center-ribbed pole. Smaller connecting buildings joined Westinghouse's two larger, identical exteriors. The company name was emblazoned in crisp dark letters across the white facade and above the large grid windows.

"We do have a phone line available and we can check the Soviet Pavilion, Mr. Reese," said Miss Haverhill returning from the right.

"Great."

Andy's new optimism was tempered with the responsibility of not only contacting Geiger, but preventing his death. One of the uniformed fair guides met them at the door and Miss Haverhill asked Andy to rendezvous back at

the time capsule area after placing his call. Within the large crowds the Seraphs words about finding the time capsule in the distant future again repeated in his head.

The guide escorted Andy into an open lobby with an orange capped, stainless steel escalator and two huge silver spheres rotating and dodging above a black-railed mezzanine. He handed Andy a phone supposedly connected to the Soviet Pavilion at the far end of the fair. “ Yes, I am trying to contact professor Herman Geiger.”

“ I’m sorry. This Soviet Pavilion.”

“ You don’t understand. Professor Geiger works out of your pavilion.”

“ I have to check. Yes, I check with my people.”

The phone bounced on the other end and Andy pulled the receiver away and covered the mouthpiece as he looked at the guide. “ They’re trying to locate him.”

“ No problem, sir.”

Andy nodded, but was distracted by the continuous revolving spheres above the people riding the escalators. As he checked the mezzanine for the two agents, the phone shook on the other end and an authoritative voice with a slight accent came on the phone. “ This is Anatoly Koeska. To whom am I speaking?”

“ Andrew Reese, I am here with Lucy Apel, winner of a national essay-”

“ Please state your business, Mr. Apel.”

“ Reese.”

“ Yes...”

“ We are supposed to meet with Professor Herman Geiger.”

“ Professor Geiger has not been here in two days. Perhaps you should call his college... upstate.”

“ He just left with no message or-”

“ No, Mr. Reese, he just did not come here.”

“ Can I leave him a message?” asked Andy, watching the people on the escalator.

“ What is your message?”

“ He needs to call Lucy Apel in Credwell, New Jersey.” He removed a crumpled piece of yellow lined paper from his pocket. “ Cedar eight-six-eight-three-eight.”

“ Thank you and goodbye.”

Andy stared at the phone. The man’s abruptness did not alter the fact Geiger had not shown up at the fair for two days. “ Damn...”

“ A problem, sir?” asked the guide.

“ Slight... Can you get me to the time capsule area?”

“ Yes, sir.”

\* \* \*

Lucy waved from an exhibit of materials duplicating the time capsule contents. Below a tapered bronzed or copper cover was inscribed in dark letters:

**The time capsule  
rests here  
in its immortal well  
A.D. 1939-A.D. 6939**

Andy paused and pondered the long path the capsule would travel through time.

Lucy hurried over. “Did you reach Geiger?”

Andy looked up. “Five thousand years.”

“What about Geiger?”

“He hasn’t been seen in two days.” Andy quickly checked the crowd. “He may be back at the college. I left your aunt’s number, but maybe we should call him up there.”

“Lucy and Andy in front of the time capsule,” said Mrs. Apel, gripping the Hawkeye.

“After, you.” He motioned her to the placard.

“Say cheddar cheese,” said Mrs. Apel.

“Cheddar, cheddar, cheddar,” said Andy, quickly forcing his smile.

Miss Haverhill hopped out before them and her perky voice pushed through the crowd noise. “How would you like to see Elektro?”

“I could use his help,” mumbled Andy.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Reese?”

“ Nothing... no, nothing...”

Andy’s eyes ached from constantly following the steady stream of people inside this exhibit. Miss Haverhill marched them into an open area along blue grid windows. A bronzed robot with no neck and an oversized head lumbered awkwardly across an elevated blue platform’s silver floor. A fast talking man in a suit spoke into a microphone with a long cord. Elektro’s chest was large and sloped, with a light vibrating within a center sunken circle, and joint breaks at the elbows, wrist and knees. The robot faced the audience below and spoke in a machine-modulated cadence.

“ Ladies and Gentlemen, I’ll be glad to tell you my story. I am a smart fellow as I have a very fine brain.”

Andy grinned at the primitive use of sound and body coordination. Without the use of computer and miniaturization, the robot was bulky, but the people at the fair were awestruck.

“ My Lord, John, is that what we’ll have in our house when we get old?” asked Mrs. Apel.

“ Don’t worry about that,” said Andy, grinning as he peered out the window grids. Near the benches in front of the tulips the two agents were munching on hot dogs. He looked back slowly and did not want Lucy to know. “ If you’ll excuse me, I’m going to get some air. I’ll be right outside the building.”

“ Of course, Mr. Reese. Is there anything we can get for you? Some more Orange Crush perhaps?” asked Miss Haverhill.

“ No, I’m all right, thank you.”

“ Are you?” asked Lucy.

“ I need a few minutes to mull everything over,” he said in a lower voice. “ Excuse me.”

“ Of course, Andy,” said Mrs. Apel. Her husband gawked as Elektro counted on his fingers.

The men were still at the bench outside the windows, but Andy was stuck within the shoulder to shoulder movement of people inside the exhibit. He finally extricated himself into the blinding sunlight. The two men, casually conversed and nibbled on the hot dogs.

“ You!” Andy shouted with his hands cupped.

The taller guy turned, astonished, and nudged his friend. Andy expected the fight to commence, but both men dropped their hot dogs and drinks and sprinted along the adjacent buildings. Andy chased them around the corner. People spun on the avenue as he whipped by rows of trees, but the two agents gradually distanced themselves.

The Street of Wings connected over the wide spanned highway bridge. He pivoted and moved into the exhaust-laden air settled over the passing highway cars. The agents looked back as they passed the red lettered Firestone Building. He darted between people on the bridge, but his sides ached. The two men maintained a fast pace between a silver building with a concave corner marked, “ **Ford**,” in green letters and the highway fences to his right. The long Futurama lines formed outside the adjacent General Motors Building. One of the men tripped, but the second guy pulled him up, and they both scaled the highway fence.

Andy skidded to a stop and placed his hands above his knees. His overworked lungs sucked in the highway exhaust. Tires screeched beyond the fence and metal crunched. He cut to his right and clawed his way up the

fence. Both lanes of traffic were snarled. A few hundred feet to his left both men were sprawled on the highway pavement and a crowd had gathered around the halted cars. He clung onto the fence, uncertain if the agents were dead.

Two fist sized, green bordered spheres, dimmed by the direct sunlight, floated between the Trillion's apex and a sliver of the Perisphere beyond a heavy governmental building across the highway. The sphere faded into the blue sky as the Moloch fled.

# 21

Andy, hung his sport coat over his arm and peered through the Kodak Pavilion window. Miss Haverhill pointed to a huge silver rimmed camera lens with etched settings and numbers, mounted on the wall inside. John Apel, hat in his left hand, traced his finger around the housing and studied the designation above:

## Supermatic Shutter.

Andy had detailed the highway accident to Lucy, but retained the information about the Moloch rising. He was unsure of his next move as he looked up the tower of mural sized photograph squares jutting at angles to the sky. With Geiger missing and the Moloch lingering, keeping the professor alive seemed futile.

“Cavalcade of Color,” said Lucy from behind and she pointed to the letters above the window and below the larger **KODAK** on the semicircular facade.

Her serious look and somber tone was unsettling. Andy tapped his fingers on his trouser leg. “Where’s Davenport? It’s four o’clock.”

“ He said he was detained but on his way over.” She tightened her brown eyes in the sunlight. “ Why were those agents here and why did they run?”

Andy blinked his moist eyes. “ I think they didn’t want another confrontation.”

“ They were controlled by the Moloch. Which means Geiger must be still alive.”

Andy glanced at the large round building back in the square.  
“ Why is that?”

“ They wouldn’t be here if Geiger was dead,” she said.

“ Very good, very good. Okay, we call Amesbury Union College. Which will cost money.”

Lucy pinched her chin. “ My mother’s guidebook said American Telephone and Telegraph has a long distance demonstration rooms.”

“ That’s right,” he said, snapping his fingers. “ They make the call if we have the number or I’m sure they can get it.” Miss Haverhill and the Apels continued along the wall exhibits inside the building.

“ Now we need to tell the ever helpful Miss Haverhill we’re going to AT and T.”

\* \* \*

Andy held the phone and waited. The man from the college upstate said Geiger was in the building. He and Lucy had convinced the Apels and Miss Haverhill to let them look around the fair until Davenport arrived late at five P.M. They had entered the AT and T Building through an entrance over-

shadowed by a rendition of a telephone worker atop a telephone pole. A wide bell, molded with a switchboard operator of the Bell System was attached above the windows adjacent to the doors.

“ How many pictures had your mother taken? She’s going to run out of film.”

“ I’ve lost track when we were at that Kodak picture stop when I sat on that little Perisphere and you pretended you were hanging from the Trylon.”

“ That will be a funny picture.”

“ Yes, who is this?” asked a man with a pronounced German accent. Andy’s heart jump-started. “ I am here with Lucy Apel.”

“ Andrew Reese, the man who hounds my friends at the Soviet Embassy.”

“ Professor, your life is in danger,” said Andy, looking up at Lucy.

“ You’re telling me something I don’t all ready know?”

“ What do you mean?”

“ And how do you know this? And is Miss Apel linked to this? I need to know what information you or Miss Apel might have.” Geiger paused, but his voice soon cracked back. “ What *do* you know about this? Are Nazis after me?”

“ No.”

“ Such a definitive answer, young man. So definitive. You are so sure of yourself.”

Then he hung up. Andy hit the hook. “ Professor, Professor!”

“ What happened?” asked Lucy.

“ He hung up.”

“ Then get him back!”

“ I don’t think it will do any good. He’s suspicious and wondered if Nazis were trying to kill him... At least he’s alive and away from the fair where he was supposed to die this summer.” Andy smiled and then held her shoulders. “ I think somehow we did it. Maybe we did it. ”

\* \* \*

After dusk Andy and Lucy strolled along the mall’s reflecting pools, lighted brilliantly at night. With Geiger away from the fair, Andy was at ease for the first time since his arrival. Wavy colors rippled across the Lagoon of the Nations to the Court of Peace where Lucy would read her essay tomorrow. Lofty orange tinted statues and trees followed the darkness to the omnipresent Perisphere layered in light like Jupiter’s bands. A center white stripe was bordered by a deep blue base and the upper portion of the dome was highlighted orange as was the Trylon, but each side of the obelisk was punctuated with four slowly flashing red lights. All evening Lucy spoke boldly and precisely about her vision of the future and how people should react to the remarkable changes to come. They returned via Rainbow Ave. to the rounded, columnar Schaefer Center, lighted in Lincoln Square. Several other buildings blazed across the commerce area near the Westinghouse Building.

Colored fountains funneled waters jets toward the fireworks bursting and sparkling over the starry sky, while the Trylon remained doused in orange light and the Perisphere laced in fair colors. Miss Haverhill quickly instructed Lucy and Andy to arrive at eight a.m. tomorrow morning for the Futurama tour. She brought them to Davenport, speaking with the Apels under a

luminescent, furrowed blue facade provided by the petroleum industry. The hat shaped US Steel Building was outlined in heightened blue and yellow bulbs and additional lights blazed from the General Electric exhibit to Andy's right. More gold and red fireworks spread across the black sky and successive booms shook this Plaza of Light. At least the Moloch gone.

“ I wish I hadn't called Geiger.”

“ I thought you were convinced you changed the timeline.”

“ Suppose he comes back here to find out what we know? I may have contributed to his death.”

“ You don't know that,” said Lucy.

Davenport stepped away from the Apels. “ I do apologize for my delay this afternoon. Two men were killed in an unfortunate traffic accident. For some reason they were running across Grand Central Parkway... Now, Miss Apel. I need you to arrive at the tent inside the Court of Peace no later than three p.m. You will read your essay at three-thirty. After which you may all relax in the amusement area.” He checked his notebook.. “ I have made arrangements for a tractor drawn train to bring you and your family, and Mr. Reese, of course, to the Court of Peace. You've probably seen the trains around the fair. I will also call for a train now since I sense your mother and father are both tired from the extensive walking to the Electrified Farm.”

“ Dad insisted,” said Lucy. “ I agreed only if we saw Elsie the cow at the Borden exhibit. And then Andy I walked around the mall.”

“ Mrs. Apel took my picture with Elsie in front of this little pen,” said Andy.

“ Quite. I would ask you to contact my office for any forays around the fair. Twelve hundred and sixteen acres is a big area. We don't want you to get lost.”

“ Yes, sir,” she said.

Davenport pointed his finger. “ No running off without authorization. Something about you two.”

“ Us?” asked Andy.

“ I will tolerate no more deviations.”

“ Yes, sir,” answered Andy.

“ I talked to Mayor LaGuardia this afternoon. He is looking forward to meeting you, Miss Apel, and will do his best to break away from his schedule.”

“ I don't know what to say.”

“ No need to say anything.”

“ My Aunt Charlotte is taking time off from work to be here. Can she get a seat for my reading?” asked Lucy.

“ That will be no problem. Have her mention your name when she arrives and we will notify you.” He extended his hand. “ Now, I will meet you at the far end of the Court of Peace tomorrow at three p.m. At the large tent.”

“ I'll be there.”

He shook Andy's hand and faced both of them. “ Good evening.”

“ Good evening,” they answered in unison.

Andy listened as Davenport pulled Miss Haverhill closer to the lights outlining the rounded US Steel Building. He distinctly heard Davenport refer to government agents missing for weeks. Davenport bid her good night and stepped inside a guide cart.

Lucy faced Andy. “ Did you hear what he said?”

“ I did.”

“ They were government people... but the Moloch took them over, right?”

“ I’m afraid so.”

“ Andy, we have to do something.”

“ What we can do?”

Several fireworks spread streaking colors and flashed, producing rampart booms in quick succession above the Perisphere. The Moloch were not visible across the dim stars beyond the silhouetted fairground buildings, but Andy knew they were out there, waiting for Herman Geiger.

## 22

With no sleep and a night of staring at the darkened Kolowski house beyond the tapering streetlight glow, Andy dozed on the subway. Once inside the fair, Miss Haverhill accompanied them on a red and white covered tractor train from the subway entrance at Bowling Green. A few minutes later, on the far side of the Perisphere and Trylon, they crossed over the Grand Central Parkway. Traffic now flowed freely where the agents were killed yesterday. The little train chugged along the fence and a few minutes later rounded the sloping, angled corner of a massive white building.

His eyes ached in the cloudy morning light. Lines crammed hundreds onto two orange-railed ramps, snaking up chutes over a grassy mound to a towering orange slotted entrance in the upper portion of the building. No one challenged Miss Haverhill escorting them upward and through the entrance shadows. More people, even at this early hour, buzzed in conversation inside. The ramp zig-zagged and dwarfing the passing patrons was a prodigious map of connected highways across the United States.

Up top, at the final entrance to the exhibit an unseen voice erupted. “General Motors invites you on a tour of future America. The moving chairs below the map will transport you to 1960.”

As the blend of the type of organ melodies played at roller rinks filled the air, Andy felt a nudge on his shoulder. He turned, thinking Lucy wanted

his attention, but found instead a wide faced, handsome man with a sloping forehead, thick black hair, and captivating dark eyes. “ I am Herman Geiger.”

“ Professor Geiger,” he said, taking Geiger aside. “ You shouldn’t be here. It’s very dangerous that you’re here at the fair.”

Andy and Geiger shuffled behind Lucy, John, and Mrs. Apel, toward slowly rotating connected alcoves with rounded partitions and they were seated in the cushioned chairs. Geiger grabbed his arm as Andy leaned on the padded side rest and placed his shoes firmly on the floor. The professor’s angry accent was well defined. “ I want to know who the hell you are. I don’t think you are linked to Germany.”

Andy understood his responses to Geiger might change history. He pushed his lips and looked Geiger in the eye. “ I am a man who understands the future.”

“ How so?”

“ You have the ability, Professor Geiger, to be a force the future.”

Geiger raised his dark, trim brows and tilted his head. “ And you have pronounced my notoriety, Mr. Reese?”

“ You are important to the course of history.”

“ And you are a *time traveler*.”

“ How could you know that?” asked Andy. In the low light they revolved along a sloping glass barrier to a brighter spreading panorama.

“ I have seen the skies.”

“ What do you mean?”

“ Rounded glowing clusters, appearing and disappearing. Unworldly... possessing. I won't let them find me. They descended from the sky and tried to enter my thoughts.”

“ Why didn't they?”

“ I was outside the Soviet Pavilion. I had seen them above, in the sky for three nights. But this time they came after me. I felt numb and suicidal as I ran forward toward the fountains. Only when I dove into the lagoon fountains did they depart. I stayed under and when I came to the surface they were gone. I left immediately for Amesbury Union. Your phone call sent me into apoplexy.”

The voice in the chair booth cut the conversation short. “ Directly ahead is a modern experimental farm and dairy. Note the terraced fields and strip planting. The fruit trees bear abundantly under individual glass housings. Here is an aeration plant purifying the lake water and distributing it hundreds of miles throughout the countryside.”

John Apel said something about the farms from the next set of chairs and Lucy called out. “ Are you there, Andy?”

“ Yes, I'm right here.” Andy faced Geiger. “ I am from the future, Professor, almost eighty years hence.”

“ So, we have perfected time travel in just eighty years?”

“ No, I am an astronomer. The last human beings, hiding in the future on Ganymede, a moon of Jupiter, brought me back.” Andy studied the terraced fields below as if he were flying in a hot air balloon.

“ Those clusters you speak of... they are the Moloch, human consciousness evolved by humanity itself.”

Geiger smiled and raised his brows as the organ music persisted.

“ I know Norman Bel Geddes. He designed this Futurama for the year 1960.”

The narrator’s voice interrupted Geiger. “ Now we approach a modern university center...” Streamlined buildings and a taller tower, not too different from the future appeared in the countryside.

“ Here, in buildings of simple but functional architecture, the youth of 1960 study their future in a world of still greater progress and achievement.”

“ Professor I-”

“ Mr. Reese I have been through this exhibit more than fifty times. I have marveled at the progress. Is it what happened?” A multi-lane highway system, complete with cloverleaves and long bridge spans was now visible as they turned.

“ In 1960 and toward the millennium, yes... Some things lagged. Poverty persisted even with money thrown at it, but the technological advance was extraordinary. Yet, the human response-”

“ I have spent my adult life speaking for social technocracy. Are you familiar with this?”

“ Yes.”

“ *Nach Denken*, think, in English. Think as we progress. ”

“ And eliminate those points of view that are narrow minded and not realistic to the world.”

“ No, no. Points are view must be divergent, Mr. Reese. That is essential. Divergent points of view all boil down to a happy medium.” His brow creased as he tilted forward. He propped his elbows on his knees, folded his hands and balanced his chin on his extended index fingers. “ It would appear progress finally overcame reason.”

“ Yes.”

Like an old friend, the narrator continued. “ Looming ahead is a 1960 Motorway intersection. By means of ramped loops, cars can make right and left turns at the rate of speed up to fifty miles an hour. The turning-off lanes are elevated and depressed. There is no interference from the straight ahead traffic in the higher speed lanes.”

“ And how do I fit into this? I am just a social philosopher.”

“ Sir, in less than twenty years you will have begun a movement that changed attitudes. Those changed attitudes altered history.”

“ Good God.” He leaned back and exhaled. “ Me?”

The area darkened with a new description. “ Night falls on the countryside. But, what is this just ahead? An amusement park in full swing. A merry-go-round-a Ferris wheel-boys and girls shrieking with glee on a pretzel-like sky-ride. Here’s fun a merriment in this world of tomorrow.” Geiger’s index fingers remained pressed against his chin as they rotated over rows of buildings near a lake. Smoke billowed upward from stacks.

“ Just as improved highways have benefited the farmer, so have they added to the comforts of living and economic welfare of those in industrial communities. Here is a prosperous and thriving steel town.”

“ I have the ever present notion that...” He moved his clenched fist outward. “ That mankind is a fabric of being with characteristics that will not change with progress.” He slowly lowered his fist and the fingers relaxed outward. “ Are we all to be herded into steel towns?”

“ Lighter manufacturing.... We will be herded voluntarily into suburbia.”

“ Like the town of tomorrow. Yes, that makes sense... yes.”

The planned community merged into highways throughout the rough terrain peaks. “ Now we are traveling high above the mountains and valleys below-a bird’s eye of a paradise for vacationers. With the fast highways of 1960, the slogan, “ See American First has taken on new meaning and importance.”

Lucy peaked around the partition and her face lit up. “ Professor Geiger! You don’t understand what is happening.”

“ Mr. Reese has made it quite clear.” Geiger extended his hand. “ A pleasure to meet you, Miss Apel. I have truly appreciated your letters.”

“ Thank you.” She looked into Andy’s eyes. “ You told him everything?”

“ The Professor has seen the Moloch.”

Lucy’s mouth opened as Geiger moved his index fingers away from his chin. “ I would ask the most simple question? How do I avoid these *Moloch* and how do you stop them?”

“ I don’t know,” said Andy. “ I just don’t have that answer.”

Andy pushed his head against the wall and stared over Lucy’s shoulder. The narrator described more highways through the rural mountain routes. More highways crossed a wonderfully constructed dam and symmetrical countryside. Lucy gestured with her hands between the two men. “ Maybe if they believed the Professor was dead.”

“ Feign death? Interesting,” said Geiger as he peered over the approaching city below, constructed with louvered skyscrapers on the edge of a wide river with a huge suspension bridge.

Andy shook his head as the narrator spoke a city with green parks, fresh air, sunshine and a well-designed city. “ Overly optimistic.”

“Overly optimistic declarations are essential for progress, young man. Human hope is fueled with deception, but belief in the future must be tempered with thoughtful reaction to changes. Oh, I hear what you’re saying. This Futurama isn’t a perfect prediction, but there are elements that will materialize. We must merely think about what we are doing. Miss Apel knows. It’s in her essay she will read this afternoon.”

“You have connections, Professor,” said Andy. He looked down at a sunken highway through sleek city buildings and the GM logo blazing on one of the buildings to the left. The heavy 1930’s cars were out of place compared to the real future smaller vehicles.

“... And now each of the four buildings on this street intersection of the future. General Motors invites you to visit its many interesting and exciting displays and exhibits...”

“We are nearing the end,” said Geiger. “Listen, I will meet you again. This afternoon at the Court of Peace when Miss Apel reads her essay. Perhaps, I will give thought to temporarily staging my own death. And maybe the Moloch will leave us and return to their own time.”

Andy extended his hand. “You are a very perceptive man, Professor.”

“Perhaps too perceptive, my friend.”

Geiger stood as the chair moved toward the intersection light and he mouthed the narrator’s voice. “All eyes to the future...”

“Professor, you shouldn’t stay here,” said Andy. “Get as far away from the fair as you can and then let people think you are dead. That’s the only way they’ll leave.”

“I understand,” said Geiger.

John and Mrs. Apel walked forward onto at 1960's stage filling with glistening new 1939 cars. "Looks like we've seen the future."

"Dad, Mom," said Lucy. "We ran into Professor Geiger."

"Oh, yes. Lucy has written you," said Mrs. Apel.

"John Apel," said John, shaking his hand. "I don't think I've ever met a famous person."

"Much appreciated," said Geiger.

Andy scanned the stage "Professor, do you have transportation?"

"I have a car. I drove from upstate last night after your call."

"Let me accompany you to a tractor train and you can proceed to the parking lot," said Andy.

"Agreed. I would like to speak in depth with you at that time."

Miss Haverhill stepped forward and raised her brows. "You are Professor Geiger."

"I am."

She smiled. "Pleased to meet you."

"My pleasure." Geiger turned and briefly held Lucy's hand. "I am sorry, I cannot see you, Miss Apel presently. I do admire what you've written. But let us solve the immediate problem and I will later set up an appointment with you."

"I thoroughly understand, Professor."

"Where are you going next, Miss Haverhill?" asked Andy. "I would like to escort the Professor to his car."

"Yes, of course. We will be at the building adjacent to the GM Building, the Ford exhibits. We will proceed to the Cycle of production and then

to The Road of Tomorrow where you'll see cars moving continuously down spiral ramps.”

“ Very good.”

“ Nice to meet you, Professor,” said John as he shook Geiger's hand again. Geiger acknowledged the other ladies, filed across the stage and then outside with Andy.

“ Why were you chosen to be brought back in time, Mr. Reese?”

“ I have a more poignant question.”

“ Please.”

“ Why do you believe me?” asked Andy.

Geiger lifted his head and laughed. “ If I hadn't seen the Moloch, as you call them, I never would have come back here nor have talked to you at all.”

“ That makes sense... As for me, I was scanning the sky. I don't know how they got my signal through time, but they did. I wasn't sending it through time.”

Clouds hung thicker outside as they walked briskly toward the Ford Building, a few hundred yards away, but Andy grabbed the professor when he spotted the Kolowski brothers in the crowd. He quickly dragged Geiger onto grass separating the GM and Ford buildings.

“ I don't understand...”

“ Those guys... they're controlled by the Moloch!”

“ How do you know this?”

“ They live down the street from Lucy's aunt in New Jersey.”

Ahead was a multi-storied spiral garage with a continuous parade of Ford cars descending the ramps. Andy and Geiger jaunted along a row of

shrubs and vaulted the lower ramp rail, but the Kolowskis pursued across the grass. The next car hummed down the ramp, shots popped, the concrete chipped near Andy's foot. He scampered with Geiger up the spiraled roadway.

People pointed at Andy and Geiger as another car shifted. The crowd spread as they leaped from the ramp onto the platform. Another long line on the lower stairway parted. Andy led Geiger under a corrugated canopy into the shadows and through a doorway. Fair police yelled from above as they paralleled the back of the building.

“The Corona Gate is beyond the Chrysler Building,” said Geiger in hyperventilated speech.

On a grassy stretch near lollipop trees lining another avenue, Andy looked for the Kolowski brothers along a white building, set back on the grass. Red Chrysler Motors letters lined the upper facade and a flag flapped on a tower to the right. Just as Andy brought Geiger back on the pavement, the Kolowski brothers ran down the adjacent avenue.

“Nix, that gate, Professor,” said Andy, spinning. Ahead was the huge concrete molded aviation hanger within a larger half shell to the rear. He thought about hiding inside, but when a tractor train stopped up ahead, Andy glided left and followed Geiger into the back seat. He breathed rapidly as Geiger leaned back, his dark hair soaked with perspiration. “The amusement area past the US Steel Building, Professor.”

“No... no,” said Geiger, trying to catch his breath. “The Soviet Pavilion. They'll let me in... Then they can get me out of the fair in cognito.”

“The Kolowski brothers knew we were in the Futurama.”

“ Perhaps they followed me or you said they lived near Miss Apel’s aunt.”

“ Lucy... she may not be safe,” he said as he turned in the train.

“ No, they’re after me. That is apparent, Mr. Reese.”

“ I’m not so sure of that. I don’t want Lucy hurt.” The train crossed the Street of Wings over the highway where the two agents were killed. Dated cars zipped down the highway. The train slowed on the far side.

“ Professor, how much further to the Soviet Pavilion?”

“ Ten minutes by train,” said Geiger, wiping his forehead.

“ Listen, I will continue on and stay in the Pavilion. You go back and alert the fair police. And make sure Miss Apel is all right.”

“ And put you at risk?”

“ I would dare say, Mr. Reese, having you seated next to me will not matter if they have guns. Alerting the fair police is the safest thing you can do for me. After the lagoon incident I have little credibility.”

“ I’ll call Davenport.” When the train finally stopped Andy left his sport coat on the seat as he stepped from the train. He looked back across the bridge’s two roadways. “ We will be at Court of Peace for Lucy’s reading at three inside the tent. I will call you at the pavilion.”

“ Get me police protection, Mr. Reese or I assure you I will soon be dead.”

\* \* \*

Andy entered the Ford Cycle of Production. A center exhibit resembling a flying saucer, with raw production materials was layered like a rounded stairway upward to a pedestal capped with new Ford cars. Miss Haverhill lectured to Lucy, John, and Mrs. Apel in front of a hoop display of extracted nickel on the lower layer.

Lucy's brow creased as he approached. "Where's Geiger?"

"I need to speak with Miss Haverhill."

"Where is he, Andy?"

"On the way to the Soviet Pavilion by tractor pulled train."

Miss Haverhill looked toward Andy and then walked forward. "Is everything all right, Mr. Reese?"

He steered her away from the Apels. "No, the Professor and I were attached by two men wielding guns."

"Where is the Professor?"

Andy spoke in a low voice as Lucy opened her dark eyes. "He's headed toward the Soviet Pavilion. We need to assure his safety."

"Yes, I agree." Miss Haverhill looked at her watch. "We will get you to the Court Of Peace, Miss Apel and meet your parents."

"I don't want the Professor injured," said Lucy.

"I will call Mr. Davenport right now. We will make sure the Professor is all right."

She scurried over to one of the side offices and Lucy grabbed his wrist. "What happened?"

"The Kolowski Brothers. But we got on the train and ditched them."

"You should have stayed with Geiger," she said.

“ He needs more than me... And I was afraid the Moloch might come after you.”

Her eyes moistened and she swallowed. “ Geiger is the point in time.”

Andy looked toward Miss Haverhill on the phone. “ The fair police have been alerted and will talk to Mr. Davenport. ”

## 23

Along the mall's gray reflecting pools Andy stuck his head out of the swaying train and searched for the Soviet Pavilion. A slight wind had cooled the air and rain threatened. The tension in his hands and back tightened at the Ford exhibit when Davenport downplayed his report of the gun toting Kowalski brothers and informed Miss Haverhill Geiger had bothered the fair authorities with false reports before. Andy's next move was to telephone the Soviet Pavilion, but Geiger had not yet arrived. He decided to stay with Lucy and call the pavilion again once they reached the Court of Peace.

Beyond the mall, numerous statues lined the taller and more impressive national pavilion buildings. Miss Haverhill spoke with two patrons about the remarkable huge cash register atop the National Cash Register Building across the fair. The many colorful national flags flapped atop the Court of Peace's linear buildings and yet more statues were positioned on jutting blocks supported by the lower columns.

"There's the Soviet Pavilion," said Lucy, pointing across the murky river. Two stone gray blocked sections with a giant statue of a worker holding a star to the gray sky maintained a solid presence. Red flags with the yellow hammer and sickle flapped in the upper breeze.

Cooled by the wind, Andy turned to Lucy as the train rounded the lagoon. "Maybe I should go over there now."

“ Either he’s going to get there or he isn’t.”

“ I know.” Ahead a white, multi-pointed tent was set up in the middle court. “ I should have stayed with him.”

The tractor slowed and the train moved toward the tent. Davenport stood without his notebook outside the flap opening and marched toward the train before it stopped. “ I would ask you all to file into the tent. We want to be on time.”

“ What about Geiger?” asked Andy.

Davenport’s face soured as if he had an upset stomach. “ Mr. Reese, I frankly do not know where Professor Geiger has gone. However, I have checked with all fair police and we have no reports of shooting nor of the two men you describe.”

Andy stepped from the train. “ It happened.”

“ I see.” Davenport watched Lucy and her parents step from the train. “ I will not have panic spread across the park. I won’t stand for it.”

“ But you’d rather have two men on the loose?”

“ I will in deference to Miss Apel, discard your ill timed comments, Mr. Reese.”

Andy had never seen Lucy’s face flush with anger. “ Mr. Davenport I fully agree with Mr. Reese.”

“ Were you witness to this attack, Miss Apel?”

“ No, but Andy-”

“ Well, I suggest you not engage in conjecture about things you have not seen. Now, your parents are already seated, but your aunt has not yet arrived.”

“ You don’t understand what’s going on here.”

“ We will now go inside,” said Davenport.

Andy figured Davenport was lying. No doubt he covered up reports of gunfire just as no articles reached the paper about the two agents dead on the highway. Davenport whisked Lucy and Miss Haverhill through the gathering crowd to a raised platform up front with a blue, orange and white podium. A bulky box camera with two center raised strips and an RCA logo was elevated about thirty feet away in a small press area. Andy noticed John and Mrs. Apel in the front row as he searched for a phone along the side press tables.

Three reporters waited behind a round man with dark suspenders, who yakked on the phone. When somebody said Andy was not privy to the press phone, he stepped forward. “ This is an emergency.”

“ That’s what they all say.”

“ Listen, you let me use that phone and I’ll give you guys a story you won’t hear from the officials.”

“ Oh, yeah, whaddja do, swim in the Aquacade with the bathing beauties?”

The men in line and even the flashbulb photographers at the table laughed. Andy grabbed his arm. “ How about a shooting?”

“ We’d know about it,” said a man with sandy hair and rolled up white sleeves.

“ You *don’t* know about it because it involved a well known person.” The smiles dropped. “ Interested?”

“ Who?” asked the second man back.

Stage hands were showing Lucy where to stand and Davenport placed several pieces of paper in her hands. “ It happened half an hour ago outside

the Ford Building. Actually between the Ford and GM Buildings. On the grassy mound.”

As each one of the reporters jotted slowly in their notebooks, the guy on the phone held his hand over the receiver. “Should I let him on the line?”

“Let him on, Harry. What if he’s telling the truth?”

Harry hung up the phone and handed to Andy. “Go ahead, it’s you’re nickel.”

“Thanks,” said Andy. Harry released the hook. After a few clicks the operator came on the line. “Get me the Soviet Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair.”

“You work for a foreign government, do ya?” asked a large man seated across the table.

“No, sir,” he answered as the operator connected him. “You guys just listen.” Andy was not sure the man with a thick accent was the same man he talked the other day. “Yes, this is Andy Reese, I’m calling for Professor Herman Geiger.”

“Geiger?” asked Harry. “He was thrown out by Hitler.”

“And in the water,” said another guy. “He’s academic chum who fell in the lagoon a few days ago, maybe a week back.”

Andy’s heart pounded when the Russian told him Geiger had not arrived the pavilion. “No, he has to be there. He was heading there on the tractor train. He knows who I am if he is there.”

“Was Geiger shot at?” asked the big guy.

“He was,” said Andy. “And he never made it to the Russian Pavilion...”

“Nazis?” asked Harry.

“ No.”

“ Walter Anson, New York Herald-Tribune. How many men were involved in the shooting, Mr. Reese?”

“ Two brothers named Kolowski from Credwell, New Jersey,” said Andy as he looked down outside buildings. He set down the phone. Flags whipped in a stiffer breeze and low hanging, dark clouds had moved in from the west.

“ Where we they last seen?” asked the big guy as Andy sidestepped toward the open flap. He glanced at Lucy up front before heading outside. “ And what do they have against Geiger?”

A few stray raindrops hit his face as he ran. “ He thinks too much.” He paralleled the building shadows along the statue pedestals. Instead of tracing the lagoon, he posted left toward the Soviet Pavilion’s gray block facade. He gazed up at the lofty worker’s statue and rushed to the brown uniformed soldier up front. “ I’m looking for Professor Geiger.”

“ Geiger... No, he hasn’t been here for at last two days. Who are you?”

“ Tell him Andy Reese is in the Court of Peace.”

“ He’s not here.”

“ Tell him if he does get here.”

“ Court of Peace... sure. Court of Peace.”

Andy scanned the spires from the adjacent Court of the States and questioned whether Geiger was alive at all. He returned to the lagoon and peered down the extended mall to the Perisphere and Trylon, white against the gray-layered skies. Umbrellas had popped up like mushrooms along the tree-lined spans. The Kolowski brothers, controlled by Moloch conscious-

ness, were somewhere within the avenue crowds. Maybe Geiger was hiding. Andy quickly traced the lagoon shore and set a course back to the tent inside the Court of Peace.

\* \* \*

Reporters and the gathered guests faced Davenport at the podium. The erudite fair official alluded to Lucy's essay and squinted awkwardly into the large RCA camera several rows back. Lucy and the dignitaries appeared as a sharpened black and white image within the small television screen, nestled between technicians and equipment in the back row. Two fair policemen and several fully uniformed cops stopped Andy at the flap.

“ My name is Andy Reese. I'm with Lucy Apel.”

“ What?” asked the red-faced cop. “ I'll have to check this.”

Andy shook his head, spun around and looked for Geiger among the tall buildings. The enormity of Geiger's role in changing history again descended upon him as he slid out the rear tent flap.

“ Excuse me,” said a little man with dark hair that flipped onto his forehead. He finished a hot dog and wiped his mouth with a paper napkin.

Andy thought he had seen the guy before.. “ Yes.”

He wore a light suit and his thick New York accent contrasted the clear enunciation Andy heard in Iowa. “ I went to get a hot dog and now everybody's gone. I'm trying to find this Apel girl.” He bit into the hot dog again. “ You know there's nothing like a good dog.”

“ The tent entrance is back there. I'm a personal friend of Lucy, but I can't get in.”

“ Oh, come on, they won't let you in? This girl is very bright and the contest was excellent publicity for the fair... and the city.”

Andy thought this guy might get him inside as he headed to the tent opening “ She wrote the essay herself.”

“ I heard that.” They neared the open flap. “ And television is broadcasting it back to the city. Just like the newsreels but it happens as you speak.”

The cops stood upright and the fair police parted as they entered. “ What about him?” asked the cop who had kept Andy out.

“ He's with me.”

“ Thanks.”

He winked his eye. “ You got it.”

The cop shrugged his shoulders and Andy strolled inside. He stepped left near the little television and stood with several people watching a debonair, chiseled faced man with a trimmed mustache smoothly pitch Lucy's essay and the futuristic theme of the fair. Andy crossed his arms and scrutinized the assemblage. The man finished speaking and Davenport shook his hand within the applause as he returned to the microphone.

“ Thank you, President Whalen.”

Andy raised his brows and gazed back at the picture tube. The little man in the light suit was on the platform, shook hands with Whalen and others before he sat down. “ I would now at this time like to have Miss Apel read her essay and I understand we will later be honored by a few remarks from Mayor LaGuardia. Now, Miss Apel if you would.”

Lucy smiled and looked across the crowd as she stood. Maybe the Moloch as well as Geiger's whereabouts weighed on her mind. She said

something to Davenport. He directed her to the podium and pointed at the camera. She looked into the camera with ease as she gripped her essay papers.

Andy glanced up front but looked at the black and white picture on the crude little screen. Her voice was softer, her words quickly delivered, and she did not seem as sure of herself. “ My name is Lucy Apel and I’ve lived seventeen years on this planet. Many of you have been here a little longer. Some a lot longer.”

The crowd laughed just as the people at the Hancock graduation. “ I have been most fortunate to win a writing contest offered by the President’s Committee of the New York World’s Fair. I think what the committee and the fair itself is trying to accomplish is to bring this country forward from the depths of depression. President Grover Whalen,” she said, turning to the beaming Whalen, seated next to Davenport. “ President Whalen. Mayor LaGuardia, and others have done this by the construction here 1216 acres of a former Corona ash dump, a marvelous exhibition that looks to the world of tomorrow.

I have seen newsreels of the fair. President Roosevelt realized the importance of the fair by traveling to New York and officially opening the fair to the nation and the world behind the tent here in the Court of Peace. He said and I quote: ‘... the eyes of the United States are fixed on the future.’ The world of tomorrow beckons for us all. New innovations will dazzle us and the convenience of innovation will provide us with outstanding leisure hours, easing the drudge of the past. I have seen many of those conveniences and advances as I have been fortunate to travel around the fair. But with that convenience and added time will come the greatest challenge of all.”

Her tone rose into the same self-assured cadence from Iowa and her presence on the television set was striking, but she choked on her next words. “ *Herman Geiger...* Herman Geiger asks us to use prudence within the new social technocracy. Professor Geiger believes unlike the past, where boundaries were duly set for us all, the future will require us to be, and I quote: ‘ the guardians of practicality and morality.’”

Tears were visible in her eyes.

“ What does this mean? Don’t we all make our own moral and practical decisions now? Well, yes, we do. Let me give you an example.” She looked at Mrs. Apel and John in the front row. “ When my mother and father were born there was no radio. No Jack Benny program or Burns and Allen. And especially no Martians landing in New Jersey. Thank you, Mr. Orson Wells.” A wave of laughter again rolled across the tent. “ I believed for a few minutes last October that Martians were landing in New Jersey because I wanted to believe. What a powerful force radio is. We have to decide what we believe just as we used to judge a man’s word, but I guess drama is more alluring. In the world of tomorrow it will become increasing difficult to challenge what is handed to us. Not only on radio, but in an increased ability to travel from place to place on super highways I saw in the Futurama this morning, as some of us leave the roots of our small towns and... yes our cities like New York.”

The camera began a slow pan along the crowd as Lucy’s words reverberated throughout the tent.

“ People will have more time, yes. Newer and quicker appliances will accomplish that. But what do we do with all that extra time? Will we become like self-indulgent spoiled rich kids and never have enough and expect things

will be given to us? These are serious questions and like Professor Geiger has said, we had better think about them or be sucked into the future without questioning the ramifications of our great technology. And that's all we have to do. Just think. We don't need new rules and regulations. We just need to think."

As she paused Andy spotted the Kolowski brothers on TV inside the tent, seated several rows from the front flap. Lucy advised the crowd she was now going to read her original essay. Andy shuffled to his right, without attracting attention. He was not sure whether they were looking for Geiger or might harm Lucy.

"How wonderful it is to live in our time. Surviving hard times not only allows us to see where we have been, but now we can image the hope of tomorrow. We are alive at the cusp of great innovations and inventions destined to ease the burdens of mankind. In New York City men have provided us a glimpse into the future.

Andy slid back to the rouge cheek cop watching from the flap.

"Did you know great concrete highways will extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Thirty years from now you will step inside your streamlined car in Boston and drive at high speeds along roadways to Los Angeles, California. You need not stop at traffic lights or wait for pedestrians to cross the street. You can see this at the General Motors Futurama at the New York World's Fair. Our lives will be streamlined.

"Sir." The cop turned from up front as Lucy continued.

"You."

Andy spoke out of the corner of his mouth. "There are two men in the first row who fired at me and Professor Herman Geiger this afternoon.

The two guys in the suspenders... with the brown and sandy hair and straight noses. Blue eyes.”

“ I see them, but I didn’t hear about any shooting.”

“ I fear they may hurt Miss Apel. Please.”

The cop’s forehead was dissected by thick ridges. “ I can’t just...”

“ They may have guns. You have the mayor here.”

“ Okay, okay,” he said, holding Andy’s shoulder.

“ And at night we will no longer listen to radio. Strange as it seems, something called television, which I am on right now, will show us movies on a small screen in our living rooms. Such a demonstration is already in place at the RCA exhibit at the fair. I will sit with my husband and children and be brought to faraway places.

Maybe we will live a place called Democracy...”

“ Okay, but you stay right here. Boggs,” he said to the young cop.

“ Watch him.”

He moved slowly along the tent wall as Andy, ready to rush up front, readied his fists.

“... I always remember what my father has told me since I was a little girl: “ If it sounds too good to be true it probably isn’t.” My father can be cynical and I am wide eyed. I say let us dream about the future and explore the innovations at the fair, but let us always use what my mother calls, ‘ common sense.’

In closing let me use one more quote. The German philosopher, Herman Geiger, captured the essence of what is to come when he said ten years before he fled Nazism’s unfulfilled promises. ‘ My eyes marvel at the future, but my feet are firmly planted in the past.’

Lucy Apel, April 19, 1939, Hancock, Iowa.”

Everyone in the tent stood. On his tiptoes Andy observed the cop approach the Kolowski brothers. Lucy smiled at the applause. Davenport, Whalen, and the mayor converged and all shook her hand. Davenport returned to the podium as she left the stage. The cop spoke to the two brothers. They got out of the chairs and were motioned toward the front flap.

Davenport’s voice bristled from the public address system and he complimented Lucy’s essay just as Andy saw Geiger walking briskly near the corner buildings. As the cop and the Kolowski brothers neared the front flap Andy bolted out the rear opening. More raindrops hit his face as he raced across the moist pavement toward the disheveled Geiger. “ Professor Geiger!”

Geiger backed against the concrete building and focused on Andy dodging the umbrellas. His eyes were glazed when Andy caught him.

“ I’ve been bouncing from pavilion to pavilion. The two men-”

“ They’re in the tent.”

Geiger looked ahead. “ Dear God.”

“ Listen, we need to head out of here now. To your car.”

“ I fully understand.”

Andy placed his hand on Geiger’s back and motioned him toward the lagoon. They had only taken a few steps when two quick shots echoed against the tall buildings. Amidst the confusion, cops scattered outside the tent as Kolowski brothers darted by the people spread across the pavement.

“ The Moloch!” yelled Geiger. “ Hurry, along the lagoon.”

“Lucy.” Andy glanced over his shoulder. The brothers advanced along the buildings and more shots reverberated against the concrete facades.

“We need to find a train to that gate!”

“What about the Soviet Pavilion?” asked Andy.

“No time.”

A tractor train chugged between the lagoon and the Soviet Pavilion. They ran along the water and caught the train as it slowed neared the river bridge. Andy propped his elbow on the back panel. The Kolowskis had disabled another tractor driver in the plaza and unloaded the passengers. But they had just pushed someone in back of the train.

“What the hell is going on back there?”

“Madmen!” yelled Geiger.

The train circled the lagoon and started along the lofty statues up the mall toward the distant Perisphere and Trylon. Andy again looked back. The commandeered train rounded the opposite side of the lagoon. “I know they saw us.”

The rain drummed harder on the orange striped canopy and the towering Washington statue was brilliant white in the occasional lightening flashes. The droplets bounced and splattered on the maroon pavement as the tractor engine whined. Across the gray reflecting pool the puncturing raindrops reminded him of bullets on the water.

Half a football field away, one of the Kolowskis steered the other tractor onto the same mall avenue. Geiger turned toward the Perisphere and Trylon, stark alabaster against the dark low clouds. “We have to make that gate.”

“ Or get inside one of the pavilions,” said Andy as they swung around the Washington statue and the rain now drained over the canopy edge.

“ Look, Mr. Reese, if I don't make it.”

“ You'll make it, Professor. You'll make it.”

“ No... I have grave doubts... even if we escape these men. The Moloch will persist until they kill me... if I truly am so important to history. I don't see how I as one man could change so much. But you, you know the future. You have to be the one to affect the change.”

“ Me?”

“ If I die... you must effect a movement to keep technology in check.”

“ I hear you, Professor, but I'm going to get you out that Corona Gate and to your car.”

Geiger nodded, but his eyes were as wet as the pavement outside. Steam rose upward from the paint and the skies again brightened and cracked thunder over the fairgrounds. The train sprayed water up from the puddles along the pavilions and the two brothers were less than a hundred yards away.

Andy leaned toward Geiger. “ We're going to have to leap off this train when it rounds the Perisphere!”

“ Okay.”

“ We'll run in reverse up the Helicline and back into the Perisphere.”

“ It may buy us time,” said Geiger.

“ Time for the cops and fair police to close in, Professor.” He slid to the left and motioned the professor over. The train veered as he had hoped, and was now fully circling the rain pierced pool below the Helicline's pylons. Andy nodded his head and jumped off as brilliant lightening scratched the

dark sky. Geiger rolled onto the pavement beside him and Andy quickly helped him up. Rain soaked his clothes as he steered Geiger up the spiraling Helicline.

They ascended against the crowd, but half a minute later Andy stopped in the rain. From a height of thirty feet he saw Lucy inside the other train. One of the brothers had his arm wrapped around her neck and a gun pointed at her head. His accent overrode the booming thunder.

“ Give me Geiger or I kill her!”

“ Almighty God help us!” said Geiger, moving forward.

“ Get back, Professor,” said Andy and he leaned over the water beaded Plexiglas rail. “ Wait, take me!”

“ Geiger is the juncture in time!” said the other brother.

“ And Lucy has done nothing!” cried Andy.

“ Five seconds!” he replied with the gun still aimed at Lucy’s head.

“ You can’t let her die!” shouted Geiger as he rushed by Andy.

A shot, more distinct than the thunder punctured the Plexiglas. Another shot sounded below. One brother fell into the water puddle and three cops pulled his brother’s gun hand away from Lucy’s head. Instantaneously, a rounded green sphere rose from the first brother’s fallen form and drifted toward the thundering clouds.

“ It’s over, Professor,” said Andy. Geiger slowly closed his eyes briefly. “ You’re still alive. I stopped them. I did it.”

“ You are very lucky, Mr. Reese.”

Andy smiled and saw Lucy’s Aunt Charlotte emerge from the Trylon opening. She had an odd smile on her face as she slowly descended the long ramp. Cops scrambled up the Helicline from the base of the Perisphere.

Andy looked at the confused Geiger and then took a few steps forward. Aunt Charlotte removed a small black revolver from her purse. She fired once. Andy grabbed the sharp pain his stomach and in hit the concrete hard. He tumbled over, half conscious as Geiger turned to run. Aunt Charlotte fired several more times. The Professor was hit in the back near the Plexiglas and flipped over the rail. Bullets blazed above him and Aunt Charlotte was hammered dead on the ramp. As blood meandered from her head down the incline, Andy's body numbed and another green shaded sphere ascended into the rainy haze. Lucy's voice grew louder and people sprinted up the wet surface. She bent over him as blood oozed into his throat and rain hit his cheeks. "Lucy..."

"Oh, God, Andy don't die. No... no. Don't die. Please don't die."

The two spheres joined with the mass within the lower haze. A powerful and bright lightening bolt instantaneously crossed the clouds and slammed into the Moloch spheres. Thunder followed a deep gray puff and the Moloch dissipated like a night mist over the ocean.

Andy tried to smile as the blood spilled over the corner of his mouth.

"You're the one, Lucy. You're the one. You carry on."

"Andy, we'll get you to a hospital. Hold on. Hold on."

Andy tasted the blood in his throat. "Never give up. Always go on. Know you're right. *Nach Denken.*"

## 24

Lucy held the edge of the wheelchair and looked over her shoulder at her grand nephew. “ Andrew, you know I hate television interviews.”

“ You have made an art out of television interviews for the last sixty years, Aunt Lucy.”

She checked the huge auditorium and the wide teal banner over the wide screen marking the sixtieth anniversary of The Wizard of Oz. “ I never thought I’d see this movie.”

“ I think you’re the only person in America who hasn’t seen it.”

“ No, not the only one.” She half smiled. Her hip still hurt from the bathtub fall. “ Falling in the tub, how stupid can you get?”

“ Honestly, Aunt Lucy, you’re so hard on yourself.”

“ We come from hard working farm people.”

“ Grandpa Harley has given me full details of your farm in Iowa,” said Andrew.

“ Interstate 80 cuts right through the barn yard now. Dad wouldn’t believe it was just like the Futurama said it would be. But nobody even knows about the fair now.”

“ Maybe they’ll ask you that on the interview.”

“ I’m kind of nervous about this anniversary of the fair and seeing that movie. Did your office make contact, are you sure?”

“ My secretary made the arrangements. She said he will be here as per your request,” said Andrew.

“ And you have my mother’s old photographs?”

“ Yes, Aunt Lucy. Especially the one of you sitting on that little Perisphere at the Kodak Pavilion.”

She pictured Andy hanging from the Trylon model. Andrew smiled. “ I will be out of this wheelchair in two weeks. I feel like such an invalid and so old.”

“ Aunt Lucy, you’re only seventy-eight.”

Andrew brought her down the aisle. She spotted the makeshift TV studio away from the large screen. In three hours the auditorium would be full and she would see The Wizard of Oz for the first time. A woman with a headset and connected microphone waved at Lucy. “ That’s Wendy Miller, the producer. Hello, Wendy.”

“ Good afternoon, Miss Apel.”

“ This is my grandnephew, Andrew.”

“ Hello, Andrew, we talked on the phone.”

“ Aunt Lucy is looking forward to the interview, right, Aunt Lucy?”

Lucy raised her brows. “ What a prankster.”

“ I was on one of the first television broadcasts, you know.”

Wendy furrowed her brow. “ I didn’t know that. Jim Willis will be interested to know that? When...”

“ Ah,” said Lucy, raising her bony finger. “ Sometimes you have to keep them in suspense.”

\* \* \*

Jim Willis held her wrist and laughed. “I’ve always loved your sense of humor, Lucy.”

Lucy gazed around the auditorium as the lights brightened. Many people were already inside with their kids. She brushed the makeup on her cheek. Even in the early days of television with Jack Parr she never liked having them dab makeup over her face. Wendy Miller’s voice echoed from the back. “One minute.”

“What about you, Jim? You mind being on a select channel?”

“You wrote the article in The Times advocating select channels. Should I really voice an opinion on that?”

“That was twenty-five years ago, Jim, and they still didn’t enact every provision in the article.”

“Thirty-seconds.”

“I’m sure you’ll have a few words to say to the committee. When did we first speak on TV?” asked Jim.

“You were in San Francisco, covering my Individual Initiative and Responsibility drive. I frankly wondered whether that drive would take off.”

“I and R changed this country.”

“Ten seconds.”

“Smile, Jimmy.”

“I’m smiling...” Jim looked into the camera and held his notes. He cleared his throat and smiled. “Good evening, this is Jim Willis speaking to you from the Lucy Apel Auditorium in Des Moines, Iowa. It is my pleasure to introduce the woman for whom this auditorium is named, a woman re-

cently voted in Time Magazine as one of the top ten American Women of this century, Miss Lucy Apel.”

“ Thank you, Jim. It’s a pleasure to be here in Iowa on this special night. I wonder if we should really be in Kansas though. I am pleased, of course, to talk with you for a few minutes as I have so many times in the past.”

Jim smiled and still had not checked his notes. “ For many years it was well known you had never seen The Wizard of Oz. Yet, tonight, on the sixtieth anniversary of that motion picture, you are here to view that film for the first time.”

Lucy fought the tears forming in her eyes. “ Yes, that is true.”

“ If I’m out of line asking this, please tell me.”

“ I will.”

Jim laughed. “ Why have you chosen not to watch The Wizard of Oz until now?”

Lucy swallowed and her first words were garbled. “ I, I lost a very good friend just before the movie was to come out that summer of 1939. A friend who had promised to escort me to that premier.” She smiled and looked away from Jim and into the distant past. “ You know this just isn’t the anniversary of The Wizard of Oz.”

“ Oh? Is there another... anniversary?” asked Jim in a somber tone.

“ Yes, the New York World’s Fair of 1939.” She reached down into her purse and pulled out a wrinkled and frayed badge.

“ I have seen the future,” said Jim. “Can we get a close up of that?”

The monitor displayed an enhanced version of the badge and Lucy then repined it on her dress. “ I received this on the day I entered the fair. I

had won an essay contest and my parents and... well, we drove all the way to New Jersey and then went to the New York World's Fair. The theme was geared toward tomorrow."

"I've heard of that fair. Did tomorrow come true as described at that fair?"

Lucy thought for a few seconds. "I know pausing can be seen as either a sign of senility or indecision, but what you ask, Jim, is not an easy thing to answer. Many things that were predicted did come true. World War Two wasn't predicted at the fair, but ask both my brothers if it wasn't real. Modern skyscrapers, super highways and television, but people were more individualistic than some parts of the fair suggested. People, I think, inwardly, want to chart their own course, but they want responsible leaders to guide them."

"You told that to President Kennedy."

She smiled broadly. "I did. He asked me if I had ever been out on the sea and I said no, I was from Iowa. And he told me that was true of sailing and being at sea. The ultimate responsibility rested with the person, he said man, captaining the boat. That meeting inspired me years later when I was asked to form my opinions on education."

"The Chart Model is standard in every school in this country."

"Well, we are not here to trumpet my accomplishments. We are here to celebrate a movie anniversary."

"And the fair?" asked Jim.

Lucy thought again. "The ideals of the fair were a basis and a hope coming out of the depression. The responsibility for the future, then and now, lies with us." Lucy removed at the pristine glass music box Aunt Char-

lotte had given her mother so many years ago. The tiny metal cylinder clicked against the thin tabs. “ You are listening to William Grant Stills’, Rising Tide, the theme song of the fair.”

“ A wonderful way to end our talk. Thank you, Lucy... for sharing your thoughts and for your contribution to this country. Let’s listen to the melody.”

“ Sometimes the future can be changed, Jim, and we don't even know it.”

“ That it can. I’ve been speaking with Lucy Apel this evening as we await the big screen version of the sixtieth anniversary of The Wizard of Oz. I’m Jim Willis.” The lights dimmed and Jim leaned over she closed the music box. “ Thank you, Lucy. I truly hope you enjoy the show.”

“ Maybe if you the lower the price of popcorn. When I was young you could get a hot dog for a dime.”

“ That essay of yours, would you get it to me sometime?”

“ I’ll e-mail it.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Willis,” said Andrew.

“ My pleasure.”

Andrew wheeled Lucy around and she faced a few dozen people in the auditorium who applauded when they saw her. She waved and smiled and then looked up at Andrew. “ What do you have to report?”

“ He’s here. Up in the lobby.”

“ Lord have mercy on us all.”

Jim kissed her cheek as Andrew wheeled her back to the aisle. She stopped twice to sign programs. The late afternoon sunlight cut across the city skyline filling the long glass span in the lobby outside the aisle doors.

Andrew pushed the chair a little harder and onto the flowery carpet under unlit chandeliers.

A man with sandy hair and a brunette stood next to a teenage girl in a jeans and a blue jersey. Lucy's eyes stopped on a blonde, scruffy kid whom she knew was ten years old and wore a black Colorado Rockies cap, baseball jersey, and jeans. He tilted his head, almost with a look of recognition as he walked ahead of his family. "You must be Lucy," he said. His voice had not yet changed.

Lucy thought she would cry when she saw him. She extended her hand and felt the warmth of his little hand. "You look just like your pictures, Andy. I have enjoyed your correspondence on the computer. And what you had to say about the stars. But it's a long way to Tobin Springs, Colorado."

"How often do you meet a famous person in a chat room?" asked the girl. "And then get her e-mail address."

"Lucy likes baseball, Kate." Andy turned slightly and hugged Lucy. "She e-mailed me some pictures of her family from that fair when she was a kid. And she's my friend."

"Yes, I'll always be your friend, Andy. And I can't believe you've never seen The Wizard of Oz."

"What about you?"

"Me? I vowed long ago, Andy that I would never see The Wizard of Oz unless accompanied by my special friend. I've waited along time to find you, my little friend. And now, you, have your whole life ahead of you."

*Side by Side: Words and Lyrics by Harry Woods*