

KING
OF THE
WORLD

RANDALL COLEMAN

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the human ability to choose.

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BACKSTORY

The land was purchased nearly three decades earlier, and the New World city of Augusta was nearing completion. Privately funded and referred to as the *Ninth Wonder of the World*, Augusta truly was *the* city of the future. After all, how could the King of the World reign from anywhere else, even if the world didn't know it...yet?

Augusta was not a short term dream; it was twenty years in the making, the size of greater New York, the "smartest" city ever conceived, nuclear-powered, with gleaming skyscrapers, underground and aboveground transportation so that no two points in the city were more than twenty minutes apart, three airports for easy arrivals and departures, the greenest buildings, parks, rooftop gardens, and water system in the world. It also had the most advanced telecommunications infrastructure on the planet and a private rocket launching facility. Augusta was the most advanced metropolis ever conceived. But while the focus was on the somewhat maverick group of entrepreneurs who were building it, the world's media never uncovered the link to the city's *real* power.

For twelve years, from 2009 to 2021 the founders of Augusta, known as *The Group of*

Five, had been experimenting with travel to the Moon. Their plans called for the development and construction of a very sophisticated base on the Moon, primarily for space travel. The launch of the Moon Base would coincide with the official opening of Augusta. During the eight-year construction period, ninety-eight flights had been made under the guise of “experimentation, testing and space tourism.” The world was convinced the gleaming, white subterranean “Moon Hotel” would be an escape for earthlings beckoned by the call of space. Little did anyone know the Moon Base contained not only a hotel, but also a nuclear missile launching pad, capable of taking out any target in space or on Earth. To the insiders, the founders of Augusta, it was given the nickname, ‘*TTC*,’ which stood for *The Trump Card*.

The Group of Five, four men and a woman, met over a seven-year period in the 1990’s. Their enormous private wealth gave them the power to bury any stock market in the world with the simple touch of a keypad triggering a global, computerized “sell” or “buy” program, annihilating any combination of national stock exchanges. Combined, their wealth was in the trillions, not billions. Not a government in the world dared cross them.

On the contrary, most nations of the world openly courted them. Of course, it was really their money that the governments were after; they could care less about the individuals. *The Group of Five* weren’t fooled. They knew where they stood in the world hierarchy -nowhere. Without their financial resources, they would be no more than a fleeting blip on the radar of every government, because each government had long ago become the center of their

own universe. Even the democracies of the world had become some sort of perverse machination of the concept, often and deliberately creating blindingly complicated legislation, which tied up lives in virtual policies and tax knots. By greed of money, power, and by design, the democracies of the world distanced themselves from the principles of their founders, principles that however idealistic and altruistic the free leaders of the world decried them to be, would, under enlightened inspection, give birth to the universal realization they were flawed, deeply flawed...not because they were bad ideals, but because they were reinterpreted by politicians without character.

The Group of Five did have money, serious money, which translated into power, allowing them to command an audience with any person of standing on the planet. It was *The Group of Five* who underwrote Africa's sudden thrust of development between 2012 and 2018. It was *The Group of Five's* money that finally led to the breakthrough vaccines for AIDS and the common cold. It was *The Group of Five's* money that secretly funded the comeback from the global depression in 2014 caused by the debt implosion of the US Treasury. It was *The Group of Five's* money that had guaranteed a college education for nearly one million students from all over the world for the past three decades. And it was *The Group of Five's* money that had funded the world's first and only private army to go after terrorists; an army that was constantly harassed by the world's governments and eventually "wiped out" not by terrorists, but by alleged "friendly fire" in Afghanistan.

Try as they may to convince governments to make the planet a

more peaceful, happy place, to tackle diseases, poverty, education for all, universal healthcare, self-sustainability, and especially to stop wars and regional conflicts and end terrorism, their money was meaningless; for on these matters, matters every seat of power held sovereign claim to, their pleas fell on deaf ears. So, they came up with a better idea, in fact, a much better idea. And this time, the governments of the world would not have a choice in the matter.

None of *The Group of Five* fit any known definition of Ultra-High-Net-Worth-Individuals. Despite the fact their wealth required personal and professional security measures the average man or woman didn't even know existed, they were in the public spotlight frequently, typically for donating millions of dollars to good causes around the world. To the world at large, they were viewed as well-balanced, extremely well-heeled, powerful, yet benevolent private citizens, who were occasionally characterized as eccentric, oddball mavericks.

What the world didn't know was the vision that bound them together. It was a secret that was about to become known. It was the reason behind Augusta and *The Trump Card*. Their mission for the last twenty years was to build all the resources necessary, to put all the safeguards in place, to create the required infrastructure, and to pave the way for their crowning glory, to elect the first King of the World.

It started with Frances Clarke, nicknamed "Miss Crumpet" because of her love of crumpets with Devonshire cream. She was a

feisty, wealthy, and famous English media heiress. She'd inherited the five-generation media empire from her father when he and her brothers were killed in a terrorist attack in Monte Carlo in 1993. The incident dramatically altered her outlook on, not only her personal world, but also her view on the world as a whole. The helplessness she felt after that incident moved her to vow to change the world for the better in whatever way she could. At their funeral, she met Henry Wong, the China-born Singapore-based, business tycoon whose family had built a financial empire out of bottled water and coffee in China.

Frances and Henry hit it off. They had known of each other for many years. Being among the world's richest private citizens, they both dealt with similar financial matters, and the paths of their philanthropic activities had crossed many times, but until the funeral of her father and brothers, they had not met in person. After the funeral, Henry's limo broke down and Frances offered him a ride. It was on the one-hour drive back to London that their bond was formed. As Henry offered Frances his condolences, he told her how he had lost his son to terrorists years earlier.

It had happened while he was at his office. The terrorists had overpowered the security staff at his home in Singapore and kidnapped his son. They had demanded US twenty million dollars within twenty-four hours, which Henry immediately arranged. He was told he would find his son on the Indonesian island of Batam, in an abandoned storage shed two hundred meters from the ferryboat terminal. He was to come without bodyguards. He was told to wire the funds electronically to an account in Afghanistan,

which he did. He flew to Batam in his private helicopter. The shed was exactly where the terrorists had said it was. The helicopter landed, he ran to the shack and found his son's hand, nothing more. That incident changed his life forever, and he knew then, somehow, somehow, he had to do his part to make the world a safer place.

The ride in the back of Frances's limo was a very teary-eyed affair. After losing her father and brothers, and after feeling Henry's pain, she shared her vision of somehow, somehow, making the world a safer place. Over the next year, the two of them became close friends, and the seeds of the planet's political future were sown.

The vision reached the first step towards crystallization when they decided to form an alliance with three mutual acquaintances who had also been personally subjected to the insanity and cruelty of terrorism: John Vedananda, a naturalized US citizen, philanthropist and adventurer of Indian decent; Vladimir Kopinski, Russia's greatest oil baron; and Paul Phillips, at fifty-three, the youngest of the group, who had made his fortune in the global travel industry. John, Vladimir and Paul all personally experienced terrorism first-hand: Vladimir was nearly killed when terrorists blew up his headquarters in Moscow; John had been taken hostage in Mumbai, then known as Bombay; and Paul's wife and children were killed on a cruise ship attacked by Somali pirates.

John was tall, thin, with a full head of salt and pepper hair, light brown skin, and an infectious smile. He was a former banker in India. His family had made their money in the textile industry.

After John graduated from Yale, he returned to India to take over the family business, but he was far more ambitious than simply wanting to end up a “loomer,” the term used to refer to those in the textile business. So, with the family’s money, he founded the Royal Bank of India, and over the next twenty-five years, he opened many more banks and invested in many more industries, amassing wealth in the billions.

During this time, he made frequent trips to America and fell in love with California, where he bankrolled a few movies and became well-known in the Hollywood community. Eventually, he retired from the family business and moved to the US full-time and became an American citizen.

A year later, in the fall of 1996 he travelled back to Mumbai to meet with potential business partners who wanted to invest in a new cable TV channel he had in mind. The India Channel. It seemed there were channels being developed for every niche imaginable, so why couldn’t a channel be created for a country? As much as he loved his new country, he still loved India and wanted to find a way to show it to the world.

He thought Bollywood, given its vast production facilities, was the logical place to base the channel. And though the channel was eventually launched, unfortunately, that first Bollywood meeting never took place because terrorists attacked the hotel where the meeting was scheduled. Over sixty people were killed, tourists and Indians alike. He was blindfolded, beaten and held hostage for twelve hours before the Indian Special Forces finally subdued

the terrorists. When he recovered from the trauma, an absolute repulsion of terrorism was born.

John and Henry had mutual business acquaintances. They met at a business reception held by HSBC Private Banking shortly after Henry had lost his son. John remembered vividly Henry's passion to change the world, to rid it of the evils of bad people in power and terrorism. Shortly after Henry learned John had been held hostage in Mumbai, he sent him a note of condolence including a statement that people like themselves were in a position to do something to make the world a better place. That was the beginning of their friendship. Soon after, Henry introduced John to Frances.

Vladimir was Russia's answer to Boone Pickens, the US oil magnate. A living lava lamp, Vladimir was hard on the outside but soft, warm, and glowing on the inside. His business sense was developed during his university studies in London. He always knew he would be an ambitious businessman, and chose the oil business more or less on a whim when he fell in love with the image of a giant oil derrick at sea. To him, it was the perfect combination of adventure and business.

After graduating at the top of his class, he lucked out by making the right connections and built Russia's first oil rig in the Black Sea. He loved being a young oil buccaneer, pumping oil by day, and pumping beautiful Russian women by night. He had incubated himself from the volatility of Russian politics with money. That's simply the way it was done. The more they left him alone, the

more wells he drilled, the more money he made, and the more money he slipped under the table.

But while he played the political game, he never lost his compassion for the common man. Growing up poor had left its mark on Vladimir. He created numerous charities for the underprivileged and happily gave away millions of dollars every year. His gregarious nature endeared him not only to the *politicos*, but to the average Russian as well. But his world came crashing down in the winter of 1997 when he, his corporate staff, and his headquarters in Moscow were taken hostage by terrorists. They demanded money and the release of two prisoners being held in a Siberian prison, two Russians who participated in the bombing of the Kremlin a year earlier.

The terrorists got both of their demands, but still burned down Vladimir's corporate headquarters and killed his top staff. They fled in his helicopter keeping him hostage. When they landed forty minutes outside Moscow, a small army of men on snowmobiles met them. The terrorists cut off his left hand as a reminder of whom he was dealing with and as a warning. He swore that one day, by whatever means possible, he would get even.

From that day forward, realizing that life really is too short, he began devoting more time to his philanthropy, and it was through these efforts that he met Frances. She read of his story and sent him a handwritten letter of condolence. Moved by her letter, and his experience with terrorists, he suggested they meet the next time he was in England. That spring, they met at her estate outside

London. They talked about many things, but mostly about how to make the world a better place.

Frances introduced Paul Phillips to the group. After his wife and children were killed by Somali pirates, Paul, perhaps the most well-known business person in the global travel industry, organized a symposium on “Travel and Terrorism” in London. Unbeknownst to him, Frances attended the symposium with the express purpose of drafting Paul into her inner circle, the future *Group of Five*. They knew of each other, but had not met until, at the conclusion of the symposium, Frances sent a handwritten invitation to meet her later that day. Their meeting took place at high tea in a private room in the lobby of The Langham London.

Paul was the last piece of *The Group of Five* puzzle. Frances wanted a younger face in the group and Paul brought a well-developed global perspective with him. As with the others, he shared the deep pain of losing loved ones at the hands of terrorists. Over tea, Paul poured his heart out to Frances, the first time he confided in someone since losing his family. The hand Frances extended to him was warmly received. He did not hesitate to embrace her vision with his entire being, and the final bond was formed.



Several months later, on the auspicious occasion of the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, 1998, *The Group of Five* met in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia. Frances and Henry invited John, Vladimir, and Paul to view the beginnings of Augusta, a giant site

on a giant tract of land an hour from the city. As they sat in a sixteenth-century stateroom at the Genghis Khan Hotel, Frances laid out the plan she and Henry had been working on for several years. It wasn't the first exposure for John, Vladimir, and Paul. Both Frances and Henry had previous conversations with each of them; this meeting was to seal the deal.

Frances and Henry were well along in both the planning and execution: sourcing and recruiting the planet's best project managers with the resources to build Augusta; hiring extremely competent and discreet admin staff; finding scientific staff to build the space program; bringing the best nuclear scientists together to construct the reactor while quietly enriching enough plutonium to create a nuclear arsenal large enough to, not only deter an attack on Augusta, but if necessary, to use as the negotiating tool of last resort to end global conflicts. Last but not least, building local alliances with the heavyweights in Mongolia. Without local cooperation, the task of building Augusta would be near impossible. With all major components in place, the physical foundation of Augusta was set to begin.

And so they sat, eating and drinking local fare as Frances and Henry described the final vision of Augusta, the seat of the first and only King of the World. John, Vladimir, and Paul had already bought into the idea, each expressing great enthusiasm, but with two shared reservations – the vision and its execution had to be impenetrable, and the King of the World candidates had to be above reproach. After having those two concerns addressed, they were one hundred percent onboard.

As they ate, final plans were laid out in simple fashion. John, Vladimir, and Paul were impressed. No stone had been left unturned, and the plan for the election process, the one logistical hitch that had bothered all of them, was made easier with the invention of the Internet. They now had an instant verifiable voting mechanism. With everything in place, they signed an internal document that would never see the light of day in the outside world, but that would bind them together as *The Group of Five*, the founders of Augusta.

That meeting launched the “official” beginning of Augusta. Within six weeks, ten-plus years of preparation, press releases, public relations events, and major announcements would begin to unfold with military-like precision. The countryside outside Ulaan Baatar began an enormous and wonderful transformation and the world watched the vision unfold, minus the precious secret *The Group of Five* held between themselves. But when the time was right, and it was fast approaching, the world would indeed be told.

To the outside world, Augusta was to be the planet’s next great city, a city that would symbolize man’s greatest achievements in urban planning and modern, peaceful, green, balanced, cosmopolitan living; a city so green it produced more energy than it consumed. Augusta was a household word. There was virtually no one who didn’t know of it or want to live there. But the screening procedure for its residents and employees was incredibly stringent. Only “the lucky ones” made it through the two-year process. But the lengthy construction process and magnifying glass scrutiny of residents and employees paid off.

The construction of Augusta started with great fanfare. The groundbreaking ceremony was as cool as it was official. Riding on yaks, *The Group of Five* and the *crème de la crème* of Mongolian society and politics upturned the first fifty yards of earth. Although the event received worldwide coverage, it was a “here today, gone tomorrow” story. But as time passed and the city began to take shape, the world began to take notice again. Since the ten-year construction of Augusta was the largest single urban construction process ever undertaken, it wasn’t long before updates and news announcements filled the world’s media. For years, it seemed every announcement simply superseded the last with another high-tech twist to the birth and growth of the amazing metropolis. As the city neared completion, and residents and employees embarked on the journey to move to Augusta, the city began to develop an inner glow like no other place on the planet. Indeed, Augusta was incredibly special.





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Little Dix Bay, St. John's, US
Virgin Islands

CHAPTER ONE

With the completion of the Moon Hotel, Augusta, and the laying of the time capsule in sight, *The Group of Five* convened at Little Dix Bay, St. John's, US Virgin Islands, for the most important piece of business they had to conduct. Potential candidates for King of the World needed to be narrowed from a field of ten to three. Each of *The Group of Five* spent two years using every resource available searching the ends of the earth for the best possible candidates. Every three months, the group converged on Little Dix Bay to review the list of candidates, debate their qualifications, pour over personal histories, measure strengths and weaknesses, assess special talents, analyze character traits, intelligence and wisdom, evaluate personal situations, and last, and perhaps most importantly, appraise their worldly views.

The final meeting began at the crack of dawn. *The Group of Five* set aside an entire week to review the final list. It was an arduous, mind-bending exercise to select the final candidates for the first King of the World election. But there was a catch. Even though they had built the city the King would reign from, and created a department of defense with formidable, well-qualified personnel, and held *The Trump Card* as the ultimate arbiter of international disputes, the King of the World would not be forced upon the human race.

The King of the World would be a thumbs-up or thumbs-down vote on the Internet. It would be up to the people of the planet to decide if a king was the future they wanted. *The Group of Five* was confident in their vision and mission, and certain they could lay out a convincing rationale for a king, but the proof would be in the pudding - the vote.

Even if the world's populace agreed and elected a king, the biggest hurdle would be the world's governments accepting the will of the people. They'd created a checklist years earlier; it was hardly rocket science. How would the United States, Russia, China, India, Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, England, Australia, Egypt, Israel and the rest of the nations on earth accept a "boss?" What purpose would the United Nations serve? How would nations that disagreed with the vote accept a "forced solution" in seventy-two hours or less?

How would the world's superpowers accept a nuclear facility on the Moon, one they couldn't touch, but one that could send nuclear warheads of any size to Earth knocking out anything from

a single building, to a city block, to a small village, to a small town, or any urban area on the planet? How would they accept a missile shield in space protecting Augusta? Would they accept the dismantling of every nuclear warhead on the planet and every military nuclear facility, not to mention shutting down the vile cyberspace spy programs of the NSA, the Chinese Cyber Center, the Syrian Army and all the rest of the demonically paranoid cyber nutcases ?

The Group of Five realized there wasn't a lot of time. With the Earth heating up at a rate so fast the point of no return was not far away, and with more nations at war or on the brink of war than at any other time in history, the establishment of a worldly, fair, strong, and compassionate king was long overdue, and the immediate impact would be enormous. *The Group of Five* knew it was now or never. Someone had to act. Someone had to step in and say to the world, "Time Out. It's over. Your sovereignty is now conditional; no more war, no more slavery, no more dictatorships, no more terrorism, no more corruption, no more flagrant abuses of power, no more unfair taxes, no more insidious politics, no more spending, and no more harmful nationalism. It is time for a new way of thinking and living, to bring about a true peace, on planet Earth."

But there was one catch, one final piece of business to take care of – getting the King of the World elected. The plan was thought through down to the tiniest detail; the election campaign was ready to roll, and even though they did not know their real purpose, all the best candidates for leadership positions in the King's

Administration had been identified and hired, and the strategy to bring every employee Augusta would need had unfolded over the past two years in every major market in the world. Augusta, *The Ninth Wonder of the World* was “alive and breathing”, and the first reservations for the Moon Hotel were about to be taken.

The purchase orders for every vehicle, computer, train, plane, nut and bolt, pen and pencil, and piece of original art had already been signed, and vendors had delivered massive orders. After years of meticulous planning, the last twelve months saw Augusta miraculously spring to life. She awaited only the unveiling of her real reason for existence, the announcement, the election, and the results. If the world’s people gave the King a thumbs-down, Plan B was to turn Augusta into the world’s model city. Either way, Augusta would flourish.

The meeting at Little Dix Bay began with of *The Group of Five* presenting their final list of candidates, ranging from CEO’s of giant, global corporations, to former diplomats, former heads of state, religious leaders, university presidents, and private citizens. The mix was evenly split between male and female candidates of all races. The selection process was grueling; candidate after candidate was dissected inside and out. Not a detail was left uncovered. How big did they think? How open was their mind? How much value did they put on heart? How much had they travelled the world? Did they or did they not have political experience? Did it matter? What were their views on the world’s religions? What did they know about macroeconomics? What was their sense of fairness? How did friends and associates view them? If they had enemies,

how were the enemies acquired? How did their enemies view them? How had they handled pressure? Did they have a family? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, would their character suit being King or Queen of the World?

After extremely diligent examinations of every qualification of each candidate, it was time to fly in the top five finalists for a final interview and narrow the field to three. So it went; the final five were brought to St. John's under the guise of meeting with *The Group of Five* to discuss, for the last time, a unique personal, global opportunity. One by one, each candidate was presented by the member of the group who had "discovered" the candidate, and treated as king or queen with ultimate power to rule the world, and one by one, each of the candidates responded.

During those six days, with one exception, a distinct pattern arose; each of the candidates, when presented with the possibility of absolute rule of the planet, responded with a nearly identical set of governing criteria, all of which were rooted in establishing one bureaucracy upon another. Even when pressed to create an *avant-garde* approach to solving the world's problems, virtually every candidate simply drew upon past approaches even though such approaches had brought the world to its current state.

Surprisingly the two candidates with global corporate backgrounds didn't come up with any fresh approaches for managing the planet. They broke down countries like corporate divisions, headed by people like themselves so "the world would be in tune." It was hardly the strategy *The Group of Five* had envisioned. While the

finances of the world were of utmost importance, including the elimination of poverty, running the world as a giant Proctor and Gamble was not what they were looking for. The entire human race as “shareholders” had an appeal, but it simply wasn’t the kind of empowerment factor they felt the citizens of the world would aspire to.

And while the final, lone female candidate was very impressive, her goal to put gender equality at the head of the list of priorities was too much of a personal, feminist agenda for a world in turmoil to swallow. Try as the group did to persuade her otherwise, she would not relinquish the importance she put on upgrading the status of oppressed women worldwide. At the end of the day, the group concluded she would make an outstanding leader for the eventual King to include in his administration, so she could undertake her desire to “liberate” the women in the world, but she would not be their choice for Queen of the World.

The fourth candidate, a former diplomat, head of the United Nations, and successful arbiter of several peace negotiations, was so entrenched in the art of negotiation, it caused the group to doubt his ability to make a sweeping, forceful decision. Despite the fact he was known and respected globally and had a Rolodex that included the heads of state of at least half of the world’s countries, the group concluded his character was forty-nine percent leader and fifty-one percent bull-shitter.

While their intention had been to field three final candidates, there was only one candidate that had high marks in every single criteria

of critical importance: creativity, honesty, integrity, a worldly vision, fairness, open mindedness, common sense, inner strength, intelligence, wisdom, business acumen, and last but not least, no family ties...because the King of the World could not afford to be vulnerable to attacks on his or her family.

The Group of Five realized the selection of a single candidate to put in front of the world was a huge risk. They had, for years, been of the mind the world needed at least three choices, that had always been the plan, but, in the end, it was crystal clear, after years of searching, there was only one viable candidate. Paul Phillips brought him to the group's attention just a month earlier. Try as they did to elevate several of the candidates to the top, no one compared to Paul's candidate. They didn't want to put two obviously weaker candidates on the ballot because it would not only create suspicion that the election results were fixed, but the whole concept would lose credibility. In the end, they decided to roll the dice with one candidate, one very strong candidate, with a worldview broader and more enlightened than any they'd ever encountered, including their own.

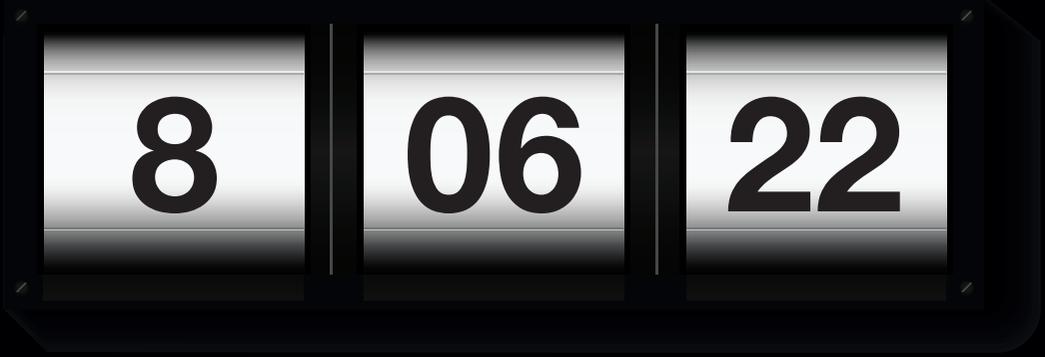
Thus, that fateful day at Little Dix Bay, the plan to implement an unprecedented political campaign on a global scale was officially launched. From that day forward, the sole mission of *The Group of Five* was to get their man elected, to change the way the world order functioned, to establish a final, decisive arbiter of all global matters, and to save the world from itself. They had the money and resources to pull it off. They would do their best to persuade the people of the world, but in the end it would be decided by an

election.

The Internet would be the voting mechanism; one valid, personal Internet account per person aged of fifteen and above would be allowed one vote. Eligible account holders and the world's ISPs would be screened and validated thirty days prior to the election. Voting would take place over a single twenty-four hour period. A King of the World Internet website and mobile website would be launched to facilitate pre-election voter feedback in written and video form. Anyone who wanted to express his or her opinion would be free to do so.

The governments of the world would be monitored by the Augusta Department of Intelligence and Defense. Any attempt to undermine the election would be verified and published so the world's voters could see the real intentions of any government trying to disrupt or discredit the concept or the process out of their own self-interest. *The Group of Five* was hell-bent on transparency and would reveal any verified, whether covert or not, ill-intentioned actions of any government, political party, corporation, organization, or individual trying to take away the right of the world's people to elect or not elect a king.

Above all, they would accept the will of the people as the final word. Even though they were convinced that only a single, global authority, backed up with money and unstoppable weaponry, could put the world back on track, end all wars and poverty, create equality among races and gender, and put an immediate stop to regional quarrels. They would, in the end, trust the people of Earth to make the final call.



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Changi Spaceport, Singapore

CHAPTER TWO

By seemingly some quirk of fate, the impossible became the possible when Emmett Taylor, the international development director for the Clarkston Lifestyle conglomerate, sat down in seat 12 K on Air Rocket Flight 27 from Singapore to New York. He pointed his air pen to the *Wall Street Journal* icon on the seat-back screen in front of him and stared at the headline, “Israel in Final Preparation for War on Iran -World Markets Plunge.”

“Holy shit,” he thought to himself as he read the first paragraph. Twenty-four hours earlier, Israel had told the world it had irrevocable proof that Iranian radicals had provided the small nuclear device (SND) that was detonated in the town of Asbah by the radical group, Jihad Ali, which killed nearly one thousand Jews,

two hundred Christians and a handful of Muslims. An entire city block had been evaporated. Not a single structure or living thing remained where the bomb had gone off. And although a small radioactive cloud was created, most of the radiation had diffused into the atmosphere.

He read the second headline, “China Threatens War with Japan,” and the third headline, “Rebels Kill Thousands in Darfur,” and the fourth, “Russia and Canada Exchange Gunfire at the North Pole,” and the fifth, “South America Ponders Military Action Against the United States,” and the sixth, “Terrorist Cells Uncovered in Seventeen US Cities.”

As an old, leather briefcase interrupted his vision, he looked down at a pair of old, beat-up canvas shoes with thick soles, then up at an old, Hopi Indian beaded belt, an old, worn, white shirt with a clipper ship in full sail for a logo, and up to a ruggedly handsome face and a full head of thick, layered, sun-bleached hair. The guy sat down and closed his eyes. He sat, motionless, for several seconds, and then opened his eyes as the flight attendant came by, gathered sport coats and took drink orders.

Emmett could sense the guy was tuning into him and the news headlines. He knew the guy was about to say something, he could feel it. The guy pointed his air pen at the seat-back screen in front of him and clicked on the *Wall Street Journal* icon.

“You gotta be kidding. Another war in the Middle East? China and Japan, war in Africa, about to start at the North Pole, and

North and South America ready to fight? Terrorists everywhere. Nuts. The world is nuts.”

Emmett quickly glanced away as the guy stuck out his hand. “Paul Phillips. Nice to meet you.”

“Shit,” Emmett thought to himself, as he saw the protruding hand in his peripheral vision. A forced smile on his face, he stuck out his hand. “Emmett Taylor, nice to meet you.”

“What do you do?”

“Lifestyle business. Basically, travel the world observing people.”

A slight smile creased Paul’s lips. “Me too.”

Emmett hoped for a one or two question exchange and the flight pleasantries would be over with. “Who you with?”

“I guess you could call it a private placement group.” Paul paused a second. “Clarkston, right? I’ve heard of it. You manage to stay clear of the politics and the terrorists?” He was half kidding but half serious as well.

“The terrorists, yes, so far at least. Impossible to avoid the politics. How did you know I was with Clarkston?”

“I have a sense for things.”

Emmett pondered the comment momentarily then nodded towards the *Wall Street Journal* headlines. “What’s your sense of that?”

“It’s over the top at this point, out of control, has been forever. Other than Singapore, I don’t think there’s a country left that isn’t politically corrupt, totally. These idiots have so much money and power they are accountable to no one. Money and power, power and money. That’s all they understand. What about the people? What about the planet? You know what this world needs?”

Emmett raised his eyebrows anticipating the answer. No answer came.

“That was a question.” Paul was serious.

Emmett suddenly felt put on the spot, not to mention the fact, despite having the same concerns everyone else on the planet had, he felt powerless and knew his opinion was worthless. The flight attendant appeared. “Saved by the drinks,” he responded, as the flight attendant handed them their drinks. “Cheers,” and he toasted Paul’s glass. “Here’s to finding the answer,” and that’s when it suddenly hit him. “Yes, actually. I do know. It just dawned on me.”

Paul couldn’t tell if he was serious or not. He slowly cocked his head as he awaited the answer.

“A king.” The look on Emmett’s face was like a little kid who had

just learned to multiply. “A benevolent...,” he searched for words, thinking out loud, “fair, but tough,” he added quickly, “strong, honest, wise...king.” Emmett half-smiled as he began to think through his realization and awaited Paul’s response. He looked at the screen. “A king could put an end to all of it.”

Paul just sat there, stone-faced. He turned his face back towards the screen and stared. He didn’t utter a word.

Emmett slowly sat back in his seat as the flight instructions came on. He tuned the sound out and continued to ponder his realization. “A king,” he thought to himself. “A king, with a sovereign territory, an army, a nuclear arsenal, the latest technology and enough money really could rule the world.” Then it also dawned on him, “What if the king is a bad guy?”

“One shot,” said Paul, turning to Emmett, picking up his briefcase and opening it. He pressed a button on an inside panel and a screen appeared. A music video popped on. It was a clip from an old Eminem song, “*Lose Yourself*”. The music came on... “My theme song.”

“You get one shot, do not miss this chance to blow, this opportunity comes once in a lifetime. You better lose yourself in the music the moment you own it.”

Paul mouthed the words, and suddenly cut the sound and video. The video changed to a picture of the Augusta capitol building. Paul turned to Emmett. “We’re going to do this. You are brilliant,

absolutely brilliant. That is the single most brilliant stroke of political genius I've ever heard."

Of course, Paul was way ahead of him having been on a search for years for the best candidates he could find and present to *The Group of Five*. And this was his best tactic: to find potential candidates, arrange 'accidental' meetings with them and somehow get them to the "King of the World" equation, to pretend it was a doable scenario and watch the reactions; probe and watch, probe and watch. But Emmett was the first potential candidate that ever came up with the idea on his own. In the years of searching, not one of *The Group of Five* had ever encountered a potential candidate who offered the King idea without hours of prodding. Paul was blown away. In his gut, he'd always felt "the King" would find them, *The Group of Five*, but as the search wore on, he began to have his doubts about the manifest destiny of the idea...until he met Emmett.

Emmett was thinking he was now going to spend the next four hours sitting next to a nut case. He smiled and nodded as he watched Paul attempt to contain his obvious excitement.

"They are going to think we are crazy, absolutely nuts. But nuts we are, good nuts, clever nuts. Nuts who aren't really nuts at all; the best nuts. They're the nuts. The whole frickin' place is nuts; that's what's nuts." He looked at Emmett for confirmation.

Emmett tried to lay down a path to withdrawal, first by not speaking and making a bit of a face, then by shrugging his

shoulders and gesturing with his hands.

Paul smiled. He could barely contain himself. He knew what Emmett was thinking. “Look, I’m not a fifty-three-year-old nutcase. I just come off like one. I get excited. Always have. That’s what life does to me. When I feel it like this.”

Emmett nodded.

“Trust me. We *can* do this. We can do this. I know how. Well, I mean I know how to, how to get parts of it started; my group and me that is. You know what I mean?”

Emmett realized that unless he physically got up and moved his seat, one, he would not only be spending the next four hours with this guy, but two, he would have to talk crazy talk. “Look, I just thought of this. It’s just a crazy idea. Impossible. They’d, they’d...” He searched for extremes. “They’d kill anyone who tried it...” He became a little serious. “For starters.”

“This is too big. Life is too big. They are not bigger than life. Even if they all ganged up, which they very well might do, in secret or otherwise, they are still not bigger than life.”

“I can’t believe you’re serious. Tell me you’re not serious.”

“I get like this when life, big life, is running through me. And it is. This is big life, really big life. Right up there with life on another planet big. This can be done. It’s the only way to fix the world.”

Emmett looked at him like he was from Mars. He was almost afraid to ask. “Yes...but how? It’s impossible.”

Paul’s presence almost seemed to bubble as he talked. “Let’s pretend for a minute. Say, say we find suitable candidates. We find land for a new sovereign country, a small one is fine, enough for a nice little defense team, a nuclear arsenal, high-tech infrastructure, paid professionals to run everything.” He snapped his head for emphasis. “NO, and I mean NO civil servants, bureaucrats or politicians, just the King and his team. Then, one by one, by whatever means necessary, he puts the world in line...whether they like it or not. You’ve heard of Augusta, right?”

Emmett, with a puzzled look on his face, nodded. “Sure. And just how does this king get elected?”

Paul looked at him like he was crazy, grabbed his latest gizmo from Apple and held it up. “The Internet.” Then he smiled ear to ear. “This will work. You are absolutely brilliant. We are going to make an incredible team. Your smarts, my contacts.” He looked around and scanned the business class section. “This is where it starts, the Singapore Air Rocket. Maybe we should set up shop here initially. Savvy as it gets.”

“Wow.” Suddenly, Emmett began to sense change was in the air, that, at a minimum, he would be dealing with this character for not only the next four hours, but at least the next week by being hounded with e-mail, text messages and video messages. “Maybe we should give it a month or two. You know, let it sink in. It’s not

exactly the real world.”

“That’s why it’s so brilliant. It’s so out of the box, it’s on the next planet. You don’t know who I know. Look, I’m plugged into more money than you can count, more powerful people than you know, not politicians I might add. We can convince them your idea can literally save the world. These people have made their fortunes. They’ve blown millions and millions on good things and wasted things. They want to do something, but they don’t like Save the World, or all those rock star, do-good concerts or fantasyland, naïve ideas. They will love this.”

“Why?”

“Look at the headlines,” and Paul nodded to the back-seat screens in front of them. “You want the world in their hands? You trust these people to take care of their own people, let alone the rest of the people on this planet? You think their power has not corrupted them, that is, of course, only if they were not corrupt already, which would apply to none of them, as they are all ignorant, power hungry, self-serving, greed driven men and women.”

“First woman president of the US, my ass; first egomaniac female is all that was. Doesn’t matter the party, they’re all the same. They are killing the world, the people, the climate, and the planet. My God, they are killing life! Look at Israel and Palestine, been going on for over seventy years, centuries actually. They pass on hatred like heirlooms. Darfur is a killing field and no one stops it. CO2 emissions are out of control. China *will* cripple Japan. They’ve

been waiting for that payback since World War II. Israel and Iran will retaliate with nuclear bombs. The US goes to war every twenty years. It's just a giant mess killing mankind. ”

Emmett's intuition was talking to him. Change was coming. Change was here. He recognized it in all its forms. It was staring him in the face. “Yes, they are killing life. But it's gone on for centuries. You can't stop it... Can you?” He gave Paul a long stare. “Who are you, and who do you know?”

“I know the right people to make this happen. Who are you? Give me the highlights, uh hum, and the low lights. We need to know if you can do it.”

A flash of fear ran through Emmett. “Holy shit,” he thought to himself. “This guy really is serious.” He suddenly had the urge to escape. He began to perspire. He looked at Paul and felt panicky. He wanted to hit the rewind button and change flights.

Paul could sense Emmett becoming unnerved. “You don't have to do anything alone. This will be a team effort. These are all good people, really good people. But they are strong, and they want to change the world, just like you and me.” And he nodded for Emmett to speak.

Emmett swallowed, wiped his brow and began. “I just met you. I didn't say I wanted to change the world. You don't even know me. I could be a total...,” he searched for the word, “nut case.”

Paul smiled slightly. “Of course. That’s why, for the moment, this is just jet-talk. Really, who are you?” Paul already knew everything he could find out about Emmett; every public record of meaning, every elementary, high school and college report card, grade record and awards received. He knew every address Emmett had lived at, every credit card transaction he’d ever made, the description and character of every important person in Emmett’s life, his interests outside work and everything about the Clarkston Lifestyle Company and Emmett’s rise within it. That’s why he was sitting next to him. The time had come to meet him.

Emmett paused, tilted his head slightly and spoke. “Emmett Comanche Constitution Madison Taylor. *Madison* for James Madison. My father loved the guys who wrote the constitution, but he hated what they did to the Indians. And he hated what politicians did to the country...and the intent of the constitution.”

“Thus the *Comanche*,” interjected Paul.

Emmett nodded. “*Comanche* first, civilized men second because they had civilized principles and knew the world would always change, thus the *Constitution* and the *Madison*. My father made me memorize the whole thing. And I had to learn at least one language every year from the age of eighteen until I graduated from college, which I did. But I also had spent two summers with Hopi Indians in Arizona when I was nine and ten. From eighteen until graduation I learned Latin, German, Thai, Mandarin, Spanish, Tamil and Russian in college.”

Emmett paused. The jet was being drawn back on the propulsion track and rotated into the near-vertical position. The countdown began; “30, 29, 28...” As the pilot gave the last instruction, the automatic seat belts were pressurized against them, insuring they were sitting flush against their seats.

“I love this part,” said Paul, in Thai.

Emmett answered him, in Thai and Hopi.

“3, 2, 1...ignition...propulsion...”

The rocket’s jet engine began to shudder and vibrate slightly as the spring and ignition systems kicked in and, in ten seconds, the space ship went from a two-second crawl to one-thousand-sixty miles per hour and shot up from the launching pad just like the rockets of old, only faster. The G-force was enormous. In five-minute intervals, they leveled off until they reached 100,000 feet. The all-clear light came on and normal in-flight activity resumed.

“What a rush,” said Paul. “God, I love these flights.”

“Me too. A lot more fun than the regular jets.”

Paul noticed one of the flight attendants, an attractive Asian. “More beautiful women per square meter in Asia than any part of the world.”

Emmett nodded. “I prefer Asia actually.”

“Thailand?”

“No, not necessarily. Most any country will do.”

Paul was visually awaiting an explanation.

“I like the vibes, still some excitement left, and they will never get into suing everyone for everything. Not their style.”

Paul nodded. “And what’s the rest of the story?”

“Mine?”

Paul nodded.

“Single. Travel too much to even think about a family. Forty-three. Six-foot-four, eighty kilos, walk as much as possible through neighborhoods, shopping centers, yacht clubs, polo grounds, private compounds, office buildings, night life destinations, ski resorts, beach communities, golf communities and any place else I can observe people living lifestyles, including low income neighborhoods and shanty towns. I need to see what everyone’s dreams are, know what they are thinking and what they want. That’s my job. Observing people and their lifestyle and turning the observations into products and services.”

“How long have you been at this?”

RANDALL COLEMAN

“Basically, my whole life. Stumbled into it and never left. Climbed the ladder from the bottom. I love this business.”

“I can see why. If you are a people person, you couldn’t ask for a better job; go mingle with everyone from all walks of life and see how they live, what they want and what they do with it when they get it. Is that about it?”

Emmett nodded. “That enough?”

Paul shook his head. “We’ve only just started. Carry on. Then I will tell you my side.”

Emmett continued. “Grew up in Michigan, college in California, started with Clarkston one summer later in their Long Beach office. Basically, a southern California floor-walker, every mall from San Diego to San Francisco and every beachfront community. Watching people, interviewing people, making videos, creating new products and services non-stop. And that’s basically what I’ve been doing for the past nineteen years, all over the world.”

“Family?”

Paul could see the question hit home.

“Single child. Parents died last year. Mother had cancer. Died within two weeks of finding out. My dad followed her in twenty-four hours. Absolutely nothing was wrong with him.”

Paul tilted his head.

“Broken heart. He couldn’t bare life without her. The true definition of marriage.”

“Were they a great influence on you?”

“I’ll say. Hippies till the day they died. But real hippies; life was a spiritual journey to them. Their high was a spiritual one, not a ‘let’s get ripped’ one. Peace and love meant something to them. That was the real essence of the whole hippy thing. But long ago forgotten.”

Paul nodded. “I know what you mean. Spirituality seems to have taken flight, as in away from the planet.” The first round of in-flight drinks was delivered. “Women?”

“That’s another reason I love travel. I have some special friends in special places. Bhutan, Bahrain, Quatar, Singapore, Beijing, Kyoto, Seoul, Ho Chi Minh, St. Petersburg, Scotland, Argentina.” Emmett held up his Apple unit. “Has all my buddies. It’s great.”

“Kids?”

Emmett shook his head. “When the travelling stops.”

“A special someone?”

Emmett shook his head and held up his Apple unit.

RANDALL COLEMAN

“Religion?”

“No favorites. I’d rather have imaginary walks with them.”

“Them who?”

“Buddha, Muhammad, Jesus, Hopi medicine men.”

“Never heard it put that way before. What do they say?”

“It’s kinda weird. They talk, but their lips don’t move. They don’t even walk, they kinda float. They say the same things in their books, and when they speak, only those who are listening hear them.”

“And their lips don’t move.”

Emmett shook his head.

“If we get a King of the World, what would you do?”

Emmett looked confused.

“Just for the heck of it. If you were King, what would you do?”

Emmett made an expression like , “you’re nuts, but okay...” “First of all, you’ll need more than one candidate to pick from. No one will buy just one. How much choice is that?”

Paul thought for a minute. “You’re absolutely right. We need to find a few others, from all over the world. The best and the brightest we can find. Preferably no family..”

Emmett looked confused.

“Risk factor, for both. And targets. And heart strings. They’d have no life. But we definitely need several qualified candidates. Then we alert the world. And in between, we quietly secure a few hundred square miles of land, create a sovereign nation, acquire a shit load of WMD’s, either hire an army along with quality volunteers, construct the infrastructure, the schools, the water system, hire the professionals to run the country and off we go. Global election on the Internet, throw out ten percent of the votes from every country as fraudulent and bingo, we have a King. So, what will you do?”

“Back out of the running.”

Paul smirked. “Nice try.”

“For starters, I can’t believe we are having this conversation, let alone you might be even semi-serious, let alone what would I do? Kind of like drunk talk, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it does sound crazy. But let’s pretend this group of people is extremely passionate about the state of the world. They don’t like it...at all. But they will not put their money into any candidate or

political party on the planet.

“Why?”

“They’d be throwing money away. But someone like you, we could put our money on that.”

“I would never argue the former, but the latter? For nineteen years I have observed nearly every corner of the planet, but that hardly qualifies me as...” Emmett was still trying to get his head around Paul’s premise. “Anything even resembling a world leader. Tell me you are kidding?”

“I have a confession to make.”

Emmett was expecting Paul to finally offer proof he actually was a nut case.

“I’ve been following you for several years.”

Emmett looked at Paul like he was a pathological fruitcake.

Paul held up his hand. “Not like some whacko stalker. I mean I have followed your career. I have done a lot of research on you. I have read your contributing papers to the UN Committee on World Preservation, your guest editorials to IHT, and of course, your years of articles on the observation of life and lifestyles all over the world.”

The look on Emmett's face was asking the obvious. "Why?"

"You see me and my group really are in search of candidates for a king...for the entire world. We have all had the responsibility to identify candidates over the last several years. And we have quite a few, from corporate CEO's, to former heads of state, to international diplomats, to academics to global religious figures."

"You really are serious, aren't you?"

Paul nodded. "And against all the rules, I have let the cat out of the bag with you, but only you."

Emmett, perplexed, offered no response.

"I am aware of every candidate the group has investigated, and talked extensively to most, and not one candidate thinks the way you do. Not just based on our little jet excursion, but also on everything I've learned about you. I didn't...um, arrange a meeting with you earlier because you just didn't fit what we thought we were looking for, but..." He raised his eyebrows, "You *are* your own mold."

"Your group is *The Group of Five*, isn't it?"

Paul smiled. "See what I mean?"

Emmett shook his head.

“You’ve already figured out what’s going on.”

“No one else on the planet has their kind of financial resources, or connections, or power.” Emmett shook his head and smiled as the truth sunk in

“Then you believe me?”

“I believe the premise, that is,” he looked at his watch. “All twenty minutes of it.”

“Well, you can believe it all the way to the bank. We will pull this off. It’s been in the planning for twenty years. The only major hurdles left are nailing down the best three candidates, officially christening Augusta, the Moon Base and holding the election.”

Emmett shook his head firmly. “They are not going to roll over.”

Paul looked puzzled.

“The governments of the world, the mafias of the world, the multinational corporations of the world, the United Nations, nor the democracies and the non-democracies of the world.”

Paul smiled. “No one thinks like you...only us.” Paul pursed his lips. “We know they won’t roll over, but...” He smiled. “It’s kind of a shared mutual destiny equation, isn’t it? Yours, the world’s, and ours. The alternative is the status quo, a world of imbalance, greed and misery.”

“Unfairness,” interrupted Emmett. “When the balance of life is out of whack, when unfairness is tipped too far, life will correct it. It always does. It’s Mother Nature...and it’s human nature.”

“Then we need a King of Fairness, a King of Balance, perhaps even a King of Life.”

Emmett pondered Paul’s comment. He thought he had discovered the Achilles heel, Paul’s fatal flaw. “You can’t force a king on the world; it’s way too unfair.”

“We know that, and we won’t. But we are confident we can pull this off based upon merit...and no doubt, a little...persuasion, shall we say?” Paul held up his hand. “Fair persuasion.” He looked Emmett squarely in the eye. “I want you to meet the rest of them.”

Before he responded, Emmett pondered the entire conversation, his career, his life and where he saw the world heading. “You really are serious, aren’t you? “

“You’ve got thirty, maybe forty-five days. We will select the final candidates then.”

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07

22

Little Dix Bay, St. John's

CHAPTER THREE

Emmett was the last candidate to be interviewed by *The Group of Five*. And although he didn't know it, given the prior six days of interviews, and the multiple candidates which preceded him, the meeting was very likely to be a mere formality. Based upon Paul's exhaustive reports on Emmett and the failure of other candidates to impress, they made up their minds that, if only half of what Paul reported was accurate, Emmett would be head and shoulders above the rest.

Before Emmett arrived, *The Group of Five* discussed the previous six days.

"I must confess, I thought after years of searching, we'd come up

with a dozen geniuses,” said Frances. “Combing the world for a would-be king is not as easy as I thought it would be. Regardless of our prior disposition, and despite our rolodexes, it is apparent that selecting a known world luminary would be just the worst thing we could do. They would polarize a huge portion of the world instantly, not to mention, none of them bellied up to the task.”

John nodded. “It is perplexing, isn’t it? I thought for sure one or more of them would have blown us away. Have our expectations been too high?” He paused for a moment. “But, then again, they *must* be high, but, with the exception of the only candidate we have not interviewed, no one moved the bar any higher, not an inch.” He looked at Paul. “On paper alone, Emmett is in a league all his own.”

Paul smiled. “Everything we have done up until this moment is dependent upon the person we select as our candidate. I know we all wanted at least three candidates, and I would still prefer three candidates, but given what we’ve seen, and what you are about to see, it’s time to shift our thinking on that as well. Emmett will blow you away, as I have stated repeatedly. Putting up two, ten, or one hundred candidates next to him is a waste of time, and we don’t have time to mess around, and neither does the world.”

“Presuming you are right,” said Vladimir, “once he walks into this room, he can never be left out of our sight.”

“Or left alone,” added Henry. “There will be an enormous effort

to track him down.” He looked at Zachary Wong, a big, rugged, yet sophisticated bear of a man dressed in a black suit. Zachary was Henry’s nephew, born, along with his twin brother, in China, and a graduate of their elite military command. Unlike his twin brother, who had remained in China, faithful to the Communist Reform Party of China, Zachary followed his uncle, took up Singapore citizenship, and was Henry’s personal bodyguard until being brought in as head of *The Group of Five’s* personal security team. “Sorry, but I have to ask one more time. Are you ready? Is everyone ready?”

Zachary nodded. “We are ready. He will be better protected than the Second Coming the minute he walks through the door. We’ve been shadowing him since the order was given. No one has so much as sneezed in his face.”

“That will change in a matter of hours,” said Vladimir.

Zachary nodded, slowly and confidently.

“Well, we will certainly have their attention,” said Frances, changing the subject. “Once the disbelief wears off, we all know what we are in for, so, let’s make sure Emmett is comfortable with this. There’s not a doubt in my mind he seems to have the credentials, but we need to be certain he is as convinced as we are...or we start over.” The others let her last words hang in the air; no way in hell did they want to start over.

“I’m sure he is, or will be, and that, in short order, he will surprise

us all,” said Paul.

Frances, looking at the photo of Emmett in the thick folder in front of her, pursed her lips, looked up and spoke. “My gut tells me he is a thoroughbred through and through, but...”

Paul glanced at the door at the end of the room, through the glass panel. He saw Emmett approaching and smiled. “He’s here.”

Zachary opened the door for Emmett and left, leaving *The Group of Five* and Emmett alone.

Emmett Taylor, his longish, curlyish light brown hair slightly disheveled, dressed casually in worn, khaki, cotton pants, a light cotton shirt, sleeves rolled up, canvas shoes and toting a dark blue well-worn Land’s End attaché, walked into the plush executive conference room at Little Dix Bay and was immediately welcomed by Paul Phillips. The room was very comfortable with its high ceiling, tropical theme, dark wicker chairs, large bamboo and glass conference table, Japanese paper shade lamps, and polished mahogany floor. The fragrance of freshly cut Jasmine permeated the air. He knew whom he would be meeting, he knew why, but in his mind, he was there as much to get a take on them as he was to be interviewed. After the introductions and exchanging pleasantries, in Mandarin with Henry, in Tamil with John, and Russian with Vladimir, the interview began.

Frances spoke first. “Mr. Taylor,” she began, opening the two-inch thick dossier in front of her and looking at it. “Mr. Emmett

Comanche Constitution Madison Taylor. Madison for James Madison. Your father loved the guys who wrote the Constitution, but he hated what they did to the Indians, the African slaves... and he hated what politicians had done to the country...and every other country.”

“Thus the *Comanche*,” interjected Paul, as he looked at Emmett and smiled.

Emmett nodded. “Comanche’ first, White men second, but the White men had civilized principles and knew the world would always change, thus the *Constitution*. My father made me memorize the whole thing, and I had to learn at least one language every year from the age of eighteen until I graduated from college, which I did. I also spent two summers with Hopi Indians in Arizona when I was younger.”

“And from eighteen until you graduated, you learned Latin, German, Thai, Mandarin, Spanish, Tamil and Russian, correct?” asked Frances, a slight smile on her face.

Emmett nodded and again looked at Paul. “I suspect you also have my first grade report card.”

Frances, looking over the top of her gold frame half-glasses and twiddling with the gold chain affixed to them, nodded. “And every other grade, every credit card charge you have ever made, every property transaction record, every public speech, every internal memo from Clarkston, every driving record, college applications,

thesis research papers, fishing license, Internet account, phone numbers, golf handicaps, and phone records. I assume you are alright with this?”

“Not at first, not at all. Incredibly invasive, but I understand why... even though it still strikes me as outrageous.”

Henry spoke next. “Your credentials are not like any of our other candidates. We thought we knew exactly what we were looking for...for a long time, and I must confess, we only started listening to Paul’s over-the-top reports on you a month or so ago. Open-minded as we thought we were, you have, on paper alone, turned our thought processes around completely. With this shift in our own minds, you and your credentials are a perfect match for the job we have in mind. I trust Paul has filled you in on the details over the past month?”

Emmett looked at Paul. “Indeed he has, but I still find the idea preposterous and I don’t know if I am flattered or not that I influenced your thinking as such, but I take it as a compliment.”

Frances smiled. “You seem to be a new ideological light bulb in the making, young man, and yes, it is quite a compliment. But I notice you do not find the idea so preposterous that you wouldn’t come here today?”

Emmett tilted his head slightly, nodded and smiled. “You got me there.”

“And how do you feel about this...other than it may be a bit preposterous?” asked Vladimir.

“That’s a loaded question. Given everything associated with this is unprecedented, I was initially floored at the idea, then excited, then scared as hell.”

John spoke. “Paul tells us you came up with the idea of your own volition, no prodding, no prompting. You are the only candidate to do so. Personally, I find that alone compelling and an indication of destiny. I feel like you found us as much as we found you. Can you tell us your thoughts over the last month?”

Emmett took a deep breath, looked at Paul and spoke. “I thought he was a nutcase.” Everyone laughed out loud. The comment broke what ice was in the air and relaxed everyone. “I’m not kidding; I thought he was totally nuts. I mean King of the World nuts, if you will? C’mon. He was jabbering away like there was a plan in place already, which I found out was true. But that took a lot of convincing. I didn’t believe him for weeks.”

“So, here’s where I’m at.” Everyone inched forward in their seats as Emmett continued. “We all know the world is a mess. I’ve been observing it for years. The only people on the planet who have consistently tried to improve things, in a really big way, are you guys. Politicians cannot solve the world’s problems, ever.”

“Why is that?” interrupted Henry.

“Conflicts of interest; their job is public relations. They need to get reelected. Political parties and politicians are intoxicated by power. If they wanted to solve the world’s problems, even the basic ones like food, water, health and shelter, they would have done so long ago. Solving the world’s most basic problems is not rocket science. The problem is there is no single power or unified entity with the resources to make it happen.”

Vladimir visually urged more on the topic.

“There’s been enough intelligence, food, water, medicine and money to take care of the most basic problems for decades. But there was no collective will or global cooperation. Even relief organizations have their politics, so they aren’t as effective or quite as altruistic as they appear. These basic problems are more an exercise in logistics than anything else, that and the collective will to make it happen. For them, compassion doesn’t run deeper than politics, or sovereign agendas or the government coffers. That’s why they haven’t and never will solve them, and why you guys can.”

“Anyone with common sense and some knowledge of how to plan on a small and large scale can handle the job, breaking it down into parts and ‘knocking off,’ so to speak, each starved, uneducated, oppressed group one at a time. Add some infrastructure, some storage, some education and teach some skills, and you keep the problem from returning.”

Paul, like a proud father, spoke. “I told you he was born for this job. Tell them your ideas...the Middle East, China and Japan,

world education, world standards, disaster relief and...,” he paused for personal effect, “the idea about terrorists; all of it.”

“All of it? You know there’s a lot more since our little rocket ride.”

Paul nodded confidently. “We’ll be here as long as need be.”

“Look, I’ve never envisioned myself as a world leader and never had the desire to enter politics, but I have always had a gut feeling there must be a better way. I have been observing how people behave for my entire adult life. It’s my job, and when the idea of a world king came to me, it spurred a flow of ideas based upon my observations that...that...are still flowing a mile a minute. I almost can’t seem to stop them.” Emmett opened his faded, blue, canvas briefcase, pulled out a manila folder and took out a yellow legal pad, looked at the first item on the first page of many lengthy, handwritten lists, “Fairness,” and looked at them.

Frances nodded for Emmett to proceed.

“Every problem has a root cause, and the root cause, nine times out of ten, is unfairness or perceived unfairness. It’s just human nature to react when you’ve been treated unfairly and your back is up against a wall. It starts, always, with someone treating another, or a race, or a country unfairly. Unless the unfairness is stopped, the resentment begins, the hatred begins, the fighting begins, and the hatred is passed from generation to generation. Before you know it, entire regions, races, religions, or individuals start hating and fighting each other, as we have seen for centuries. The Middle East

is one example of many. There, because of conflicting interests by outside parties who've tried to resolve differences, more unfairness is usually created and exposed. It's an endless cycle. What is needed is a force powerful enough to do something like the following."

He paused and looked at Vladimir who nodded for him to continue.

"Say this King of the World says to a representative body of both Palestinian and Israeli citizens, 'We are going to offer both of you enough nuclear bombs to totally wipe each other out. You get to vote on two things. The first vote is on whether to annihilate each other, and the second vote is the option to create a joint body with total power to do whatever it takes to rebuild Palestine and work together in peace and prosperity and build a safe, mutually beneficial future with each dependent upon the other economically, but Palestine, you vote for Israel, and Israel, you vote for Palestine.'"

Vladimir was eager to speak. "We have all watched the Middle East for years. We have been involved in businesses there for years. Your solution is simplistic. The problems there are rooted in centuries of hatred, far too complicated for a simple solution."

Emmett smiled. "There are a lot of complicated things on this planet: nuclear physics, a zillion science projects, the workings of complicated technology or a host of other man-made theories and 'stuff', but two countries or two peoples living side by side peacefully is not one of them. We are all basically the same with the same needs and desires. We come from nothing, we end up in

nothing; the complications are our own creations.”

Vladimir pondered Emmett’s words carefully. “That is a very interesting approach. Sort of a mutual choice on each other’s future.”

“Exactly.”

“Mutual destiny,” inserted Paul, proudly. “As in mutual life, mutual death.”

“I’ll leave the detail for further discussion, but that is the basic premise for imposing a solution on the Middle East, along with another twist, which I will get into later. But either way, a solution won’t work unless imposed by your king.”

“Why not?” asked John.

“Too many conflicts of interest for the current powers that be.”

“You are correct on that one,” stated Vladimir, emphatically.

“As far as imposing a resolution to the world’s terrorist problem, I ask you a question. What would happen if every news organization in the world did a ‘Find and Replace?’ Finding the word *terrorist* and replacing it with *cowardly murderer*?” Emmett paused for effect.

“They couldn’t stand it,” stated Paul. “Since you mentioned this on

the jet, I've thought about it. You are absolutely right. They simply couldn't stand being called cowardly murderers, a million times a day, everyday...for years."

"That is brilliant," said Frances.

"Here, here," added Henry. "Indeed, it would be like making a child stand in the corner, stuck with himself, which children can't handle. Imagine world opinion moving from the concept of terrorist to cowardly murderer. Every friend they had, even their relatives would eventually start to see the truth. My God, that is brilliant." He motioned to Emmett to continue.

"The media reinforces them every time the word 'terrorist' is used. They are feeding the fire. Stupid."

"We've got it," said Frances, looking over at Emmett's list. "I wish we would have thought of that *twenty* years ago. I can personally start on that one tomorrow. What's next?"

"The idea of who we are is a paradox which causes so much conflict. I mean in the nature of citizenship and sovereignty. This is not terror related, but it is very much related to many conflicts throughout history. Take World War II as an example. The Germans thought they were better than anyone else, superior, special, so did the Japanese, so have the Jews, so have Americans, so have the Chinese, and so have many other nationalities and races, and many still do. The solution is to let citizens of the world choose their nationality on their eighteenth birthday. This would

be ‘the great equalizer. Imagine if every person could have the opportunity to qualify to become a citizen of any country in the world. But, of course, any country could set a quota to protect a safe, economical flow of new and current citizens so as not to overburden resources.”

“This would mean countries would have to compete for and work harder to retain citizens; just like a corporation or a sports team recruit talent, so would countries have to in order to remain competitive. Because people will want to live in the best place, the most stable place, the most enjoyable place, the best place to raise a family, to worship, to play, to work, the happiest place. All countries would have to raise the bar on quality of life, education, recreation, compensation, creativity, innovation, housing, and so on and so on.”

“At eighteen years of age, any citizen in the world can set their sites on living, working, and contributing to and becoming a citizen of the country of their choice. This would bring enormous accountability, not to mention competitiveness to every country on the planet. So what if you were born in one country, that wouldn’t mean you would have to stay there. If a country didn’t treat its citizens well, if it overtaxed them, if it didn’t nurture them and make them as competitive as possible, they would see a dramatic outflow of talent; exactly what they deserved. The power goes back to the people and perhaps a new citizenship category needs to be created, the global citizen. This is earned based upon personal contributions or personal achievements. These people would earn the right to be a citizen of the world, with the privilege of living

anywhere they wish, without the hassle of applying for citizenship in any one country. They would be the best of the best, those who contribute the most to the betterment of the world.”

Frances nearly did a double take as she looked at Paul as if to say, “Where did you find this guy?”

John shook his head. “This is the sort of thing we envisioned, turning the world upside down, but I have to confess, I did not expect this...this...such an avant-garde approach. Yes, this is brilliant. Please, please continue.”

An energy filled the room as *The Group of Five* remained riveted to Emmett.

“As far as the world’s economy, there would be one currency, one central bank, the Central World Bank, and one branch of the Central World Bank in each country. The branch is the financial mothership of each country’s current banking system. The world economy would be totally free, but the Central World Bank, and I do not mean a world bank resembling the one in existence today, would have a cash reserve so great that the world economy could never implode, nor would any one or combination of national economies be able to bring it down.” He scanned the room. “Likely with one exception, of course.” They knew what he meant. He was referring to the financial resources of *The Group of Five*.

“This Central World Bank would be in direct competition with the existing BIS, the current clearing house for the world’s international

transactions, and the existing national banks of virtually every country in the world. The biggest difference between the existing central banks and the new Central World Bank branches would be in ownership. Whereas today, existing central banks, including the US Federal Reserve, are privately owned or owned by existing banks, the Central World Bank branches would be owned fifty-one percent by the citizens of each country. The shareholders, not the board of directors, of each branch would approve major financial policies proposed by the Central World Bank, and each board would be at least fifty-one percent private citizens, qualified private citizens elected by popular vote. And the voters do not know who they are, they only know their qualifications.”

“This ownership structure will create direct competition to the financial status quo, now controlled exclusively by central banks. For example, no longer will the US Federal Reserve be the only entity with a tap to regulate the flow of money or the ability to set interest rates in the US. Competition in central banking will mean fair interest rates, always. And it will mean cozy relationships with politicians will be a negative. And it will mean greater accountability; thus continually printing money out of thin air will likely end up in bankruptcy. That means the days of easy money will be gone and governments will have to manage money properly, not politically.”

“Currencies would be pegged at a point in time to the newly established world standard, which would be based upon a basket of, say, half dozen of the world’s top currencies. The Central World Bank branch of each country that cannot meet the standard would

be loaned enough funding to create parity with the world currency and that debt, interest free I might add, would be paid off over, say, ten to twenty years. Each country would be given a reasonable amount of time to balance their budget.”

“They, the current central bankers and governments, will have to get creative if they want to compete, likely meaning a new kind of central banker and a new kind of politician, more an entrepreneur than a controlling bureaucrat.”

“As far as national, regional, state and city governments, a true alternative governing option will be introduced, voted up or down by the people, with administrative bodies of brilliance and zero politicians, something I will explain in a bit.”

“A world financial risk body would oversee all banking and financial institution products. This will mean major investment vehicles will meet reasonable financial risk and return standards *before* they are implemented, not after. Just as new medical treatments and devices are scrutinized before they go to market, so will financial instruments. Neither banks nor any other financial institution will be able to create questionable financial instruments, period, preventing economic calamities such as what the world experienced in 2008 and four years ago. There is nothing wrong with profit, but obscene profits or profits at the expense of human suffering will be ferreted out before they take place, not after. Fairness applies to the financial world as well.”

“The world’s economy will truly be free. It will not be hindered by

national, regional, political and corporate agendas as it is now. The playing field for anyone doing business anywhere on the planet will be leveled. No inside dealing, no under the table payoffs, no favoritism, and no looking the other way. Deals around the world will be subject to unannounced audits by the Central World Bank at any time, and, of course, very large deals will be not only scrutinized, but encouraged...encouraged when they truly benefit the markets at large and outlawed when they are clearly attempts to monopolize any product category or market sector.”

“Governments will be expected to privatize virtually anything that can be privatized. Public sector bureaucrats will be few and far between. Virtually the entire global purchasing and licensing process will be via the Internet. The number one rule will be simplicity. Those who make business the simplest will be the most successful.”

“Personal income taxes will be phased out. Instead, sales taxes on goods and services will be implemented. Corporate taxes will be streamlined and straight-lined. Loopholes will be eliminated. Simply put, you buy something, you pay a ten percent sales tax and a one percent global relief tax, end of your tax story. Of course, things like toll ways, license fees, and so on will continue as is. But no more income tax, globally. Corporations will pay ten percent on gross revenues plus the one percent global relief tax, period, whether they do business in China, India or Timbuktu, and funky accounting will not be tolerated, period.”

As Emmett glanced his way, Henry raised his eyebrows. “The

central banks control the world's finances. They aren't going to take this lightly. Instituting competition will blow their control to pieces."

"They don't mess with us anymore," chimed in Frances. "We drew a line in the sand and they don't cross it."

"But neither do we," added Vladimir. "That is one entity that, at least collectively, has deeper pockets than us."

"Not to mention being in bed with every government in the world," added Paul.

"Their stranglehold needed to be broken years ago," said John. "The world has been at their mercy for far too long. But implementing a global tax..." He pursed his lips as he thought about it.

Emmett knew what he was thinking. "It works like this; with total disarmament, which must be done, military budgets are at zero, trillions of tax dollars are freed globally. With governments streamlined, government budgets are reduced dramatically and pressure on taxes is lowered. With a safe world, spending will rise. With lower taxes, spending will rise. I don't think the world will see paying eleven percent tax as unfair, especially when they see how their money benefits their well being as well as the world's."

John nodded as Henry lowered his eyebrows.

“Healthcare and education would be globalized. A global medical data center with the latest medical findings, procedures, equipment specifications, advice, breakthroughs and expertise will be available to every doctor and hospital on the planet. Salaries of the medical profession will be benchmarked globally at levels high enough to incentivize the best minds to practice medicine and conduct research. Every citizen of the world will have access to the best medical care available, no matter where they are on the planet. More importantly, well-being awareness will be taught throughout elementary and high school levels. The idea is to ingrain a healthy lifestyle as a preventive tool, thus reducing health care needs and costs later in life.”

“For large natural disasters, global relief centers will be established, several in every hemisphere, enough so that within an hour of any large natural disaster, enormous resources can be airlifted to each location. Each relief center will be manned with staff, likely former military personnel, that have the expertise to fly to the disaster location, immediately set up a command post, and start the relief process within a matter of hours, if not minutes. Resources will be enormous. This will be paid for by the one percent, global emergency relief tax, which I don’t think the majority of the world’s population will object to, especially once the global sales tax is put in place.”

“Education will be globalized. English, which has, by de facto, become the world’s second language, will be taught to every citizen who wishes to learn the language. Free universities will be established all across the world, whether with existing educational

institutions or new ones. Every citizen who wishes a university education will be granted one. Of course, private education will continue as it is.”

“The *University of Life* will be introduced, starting with one on every continent and growing from there. These will offer an alternative method of obtaining a university degree, a degree in life. There will be no professors per se; the *professors*, those doing the teaching, will be renowned celebrity caliber people in all of life’s fields or endeavors. You want to major in music, no problem. You learn the basics in high school and enter the nearest University of Life, majoring in music. There, you are taught by past and present figures in the music industry. Three years later, you graduate with a master’s degree, a Master’s of Life, rather a Master’s of Musical Life. You have options, a traditional education or a University of Life education, your choice. The same applies to all mainstream fields, medicine, education, finance, aerospace, etc.”

Paul smiled widely; Emmett had not told him that one. He nodded, “I like it.”

“Every citizen on the planet, at the age of thirteen, and again at eighteen, will be required to take a parenting class. No person will be allowed to procreate without having been through this course. The right to have children will not be free. It will be contingent upon passing the course. This will not be a difficult course; it will simply be a common sense test to insure every parent knows, accepts and agrees to be held accountable to the demands of parenthood, and they cannot, without regard for the rest of the

world, simply have children at will who would become an instant burden on their fellow man.”

Frances gave the time-out sign. “I almost don’t know what to say.” She looked at Paul. “He’s more than you described.” She looked at Emmett. “Where does this stuff come from? No one, not even us, have come up with any of these concepts. They are brilliant.” She cocked her head. “But will also rub a lot of people the wrong way.”

Emmett, feeling self-conscious, shifted in his seat. “Is it too far out?” he asked, thinking he was a bit over the top.

“I say they are brilliant. You take my breath away. This stuff is so out of the box our job of getting you elected just got a lot easier... and a lot more difficult at the same time...I think.”

“Creative change,” said John.

“The pitch needs to be on a world awakening,” added Henry.

“Awakening, indeed,” said Vladimir. “This is going to take some work. What about regional conflicts? The China and Japan situation, the North Pole, Russia and Canada, the Middle East, South America thinking they want to go to war with North America, and a nuclear-armed world?”

“Well, if what Paul tells me is accurate, and I presume it is, you will have enough military might to persuade every nuclear-capable

nation to dismantle their weapons, presuming the people of the world want a world free of nuclear arms, bombs, tanks and high-powered guns. Once those weapons are gone, what do they have left to fight with except economic power, which if used to destroy will cause the Central World Bank to retaliate? Conventional weapons will be taken away as well, including law enforcement's, but that will be a very gradual change and dependent upon local voting by local residents. When all that is done, the Moon Base and Augusta will be disarmed as well. What will we need them for?"

"Law enforcement?" Frances was puzzled. "How will that work? There are a lot of criminals stalking the planet." She looked at the others. "Not to mention also cowardly murderers."

"Dismantling Augusta," exclaimed Vladimir. "Wow..."

Despite the others suddenly being taken aback at these two ideas, Emmett's logic was spot-on. No one spoke as they thought it over.

"You are right," said Vladimir. "They would serve no purpose except to question our own credibility; why is Augusta armed when the rest of the world isn't?"

"I agree, but with law enforcement, it should be gradual," said Frances. "There's going to be a lot of gun hiding going on."

Emmett nodded. "Of course. And it should be up to each

municipality whether they want guns, what kind of guns and for what purpose. But until the guns are out of the hands of criminals, cowardly murderers, gangs, and anyone else with ill intent, you are right. Someone has to be armed until that happens, and we surely cannot do it alone.”

“All the money spent on weapons and armies can be redirected to more constructive aims,” added Paul, smiling at Emmett’s wisdom. “That’s trillions of dollars globally that can go back to citizens’ pockets and towards improving government efficiency, infrastructure, medical care, alternative energy, education, and more.”

Emmett nodded and continued. “World leaders today meet to resolve problems which can’t be resolved due to conflicts of interest or conflicts of culture. Bring in a king and resolving problems becomes pro-forma. There is an equally fair or unfair solution to any man-made dilemma on the planet. No nation or race is better than another; they are only different in cultures, religious practices, climates, education levels of the masses, resources, and personal spiritual awareness. That’s about it. Only ignorance is in the way of every arrogant nation and individual on earth from realizing this most basic truth.”

“Everything you say is music to our ears,” said Henry. “But once the major powers of this planet hear of our plans, I can tell you they are not going to roll over. You, we, are going to have some serious battles before we even get to the election.”

“Russia even more so,” added Vladimir. “This process is going to have some serious opposition. “My friends in the Kremlin will resist...in no uncertain terms.”

“The only ally we may have, as far as superpowers go, is India,” inserted John. “There is nothing more important in India than a higher spiritual plane, and they will see the spirituality of our plans.” He shook his head. “But even they will shake their heads at the magnitude of the task.”

“There won’t be a lot of time to convince them,” said Frances. “But we don’t dare let this process take long. If we do, they will stop at nothing to end it, or turn it so upside down that the people of the world will end up confused and angry.” She looked at John. “Thank God for India. We will meet with the big ones beginning tomorrow. We do not anticipate a warm reception to our plans, especially from the Yanks, Russians, Chinese, Brits, Germans, Venezuelans and the French. But so be it. It comes with the turf.”

“The only travelling after that will be campaigning, once we roll this out to the world,” inserted Paul. “And those will be heavily secured trips and venues. After we get you elected, Augusta will be home, the safest place on the planet.”

Suddenly, Emmett began to sweat and turn pale. The realization of his situation and the prospect of one or more serious confrontations hit home. The others took notice.

“I don’t know exactly what you are experiencing,” said John. “Given

we've been at this for years, I think I have a good idea. You sure you want to do this?"

The room fell silent. No one spoke for several seconds, each of *The Group of Five* looking at each other and at Emmett awaiting his response.

With focus, determination and compassion that were palpable, Emmett responded. "I've walked through neighborhoods, rich and poor, in every country in the world. I've watched the same 'build and destroy' mentality you have for over four decades. We've all wanted the world to be our paradise, not our prison. We have watched the suffering brought on by power, greed and lack of self-awareness until we can't stand it any longer."

He looked at each of them. "While, on one hand, the idea of a King of the World strikes me as totally and utterly preposterous, leaving the future of the world in the hands of incompetent, greedy, power-hungry politicians is revolting... So I guess that is what we are banking on...a critical mass of world citizens who feel the same. I guess this is the ultimate revolt."

A slight smile came across his face. "I'm sure." He became quite serious as the expression on his face changed. "I would rather die for this and try to make it a reality than just make a list of big ideas...but I won't do it for me...and I don't mean to sound trite or pompous, I will do it for the future of mankind. My desire to see this vision through is greater than my fear of death. But when the job is done, I want out."

The room fell silent again. Frances looked at Henry and spoke first. “Everyone at this table feels exactly as you. We entered that realm largely because we have experienced terrorism first hand. That was the trigger. The rest flowed from that defining experience. We never dreamed we would finally undertake such a far-fetched idea until the five of us met for the first time. It was an offhand, far-fetched remark made by Henry to me years ago. But it resonated so strongly that here we sit today, about to reveal it to mankind.” She looked at Emmett squarely in the eyes. “Of all the people on this planet, you are the one.”

Emmett didn’t alter his posture or expression one iota.

“Indeed,” said Henry. “This is no short-term project, and you think longer term than we do. I like that. I do not think we are delusional at all, nor will the world, once they understand us, you, and the process and plans we will lay out before them, but it will be the citizens of the world who make the final call. I agree wholeheartedly with Frances, and I thank our lucky stars Paul found you...indeed, that you found us.”

“You don’t have to be liked, but it helps that you are so likeable,” said John. “Whether the world is ready for a king, we will find out soon enough. I know they will like you in India, so that’s one less battle to fight, and you will get a lot of votes from the female half of the population. They love handsome kings, especially handsome kings with substance. Be that as it may, I can see with the right support, which you will have, you will be a fair, compassionate, creative, and strong king.”

Vladimir was next to speak. “You are in for the ride of your life. A lot, and I mean *a lot*, of people will want to kill you...and us. You will represent everything they do not. You will be the single biggest threat to their way of life they will ever encounter. Terrorists, uhm, *cowardly murderers*, will want to kill you, arms dealers will want to kill you, politicians will want to kill you, mafias will want to kill you, bad people will want to kill you, clan leaders will want to kill you, multi-national corporations will want to kill you, and central bankers will wish you were never born. For some, you will be the most hated, despised man the earth has ever seen, but I can see you know something perhaps we don’t. I can see something inside you which shields you from fear. This is what we need. This is what the King of the World must possess.”

Paul looked at each of *The Group of Five* and spoke. “You were the paradigm shift in personalities.” He shook his head. “You are light years away from the rest. You are more travelled, more creative, more observant, cleverer, stronger, more compassionate, more understanding, and far more visionary than any candidate we have seen. It would be impossible to field any other candidates and put them up against you. They pale in comparison, and, I believe, this is your destiny. After all,” Paul paused and smiled, “this was your idea. *Khun chalad mak.*”

Emmett smiled slightly. “*Khap khun mak Khrub.*”

He looked around the room. “When I met Paul I was sure he was out to lunch. But he was so effervescent. I am not sure why I thought there should be a King of the World, but I guess, after

wandering the world with open eyes, it is not such a far-fetched solution. Your endorsements are flattery beyond compare. But rest assured, to me it will be a job, and when the job is finished, I would humbly suggest an end to the King's reign. I do not foresee the world needing a king forever. I am still quite skeptical they will buy into the idea at all."

The door to the conference room burst open and Zachary bolted into the room. "You must leave immediately."

They all knew exactly what that meant. They all knew the drill. They were prepared for it, actually, they expected it. Frances nodded towards Emmett and two security personnel literally lifted him out of his chair as he grabbed his papers and briefcase and carried him out very quickly. Within seconds, they were in an armored, converted Blackhawk helicopter with two more on each side and two in front heading for the airport at St. Thomas. As they flew away from the resort, the villa they were in and the hotel's private yacht next to it exploded, as did the source of the arms fire, a large sailboat five hundred yards offshore.

"Jesus," said Emmett. "It's a little different when it really happens."

"This brings back one memory," said Paul. They all knew what he was referring to, the same personal, terrorist reference points that triggered the creation of *The Group of Five*.

"By the grace of God," said Frances."

Within minutes, they landed on St. Thomas, transferred to Augusta One, a private, converted A390 and headed to Washington, D.C. The Augusta One was even more advanced than Air Force One, the jet the President of the United States flew in. They gathered in a large, high-tech room. Emmett looked around.

“About two hundred people,” said Frances, as she watched Emmett scope out the room. “As the observer, tell me what you see.”

Emmett immediately went into his “observer” mode. “Converted A390, largest Airbus to date. My guess is you spent as much on the conversion as the purchase price... Fully high-tech construction. All the latest technology. Probably close to two hundred personnel. All highly trained...in finance, medical emergencies, plus engineers, mechanics, dieticians, purchasers, an entire flight crew, former highly ranked air force officers and pilots in the cockpit, full defensive and offensive weaponry, laser guidance systems, refueling capability in the air, full redundancy in all electronics and for the air supply, an impenetrable interior room for safety, a cargo bay large enough to hold equipment and supplies for at least a month, and, I am sure, several *maitre d's*. Plus your own security team. And this room, your communications center.” The room was executive-looking but comfortable. At one end, a dozen seats lined a thick, black table. At the other, a control panel spanning several meters and a half dozen large screen TV's attached to the dark wall. “This is where you spend most of your time. I could go on, but...”

“Not bad,” responded Vladimir, overhearing Emmett's narrative.

He turned and looked at Zachary as he printed several pages from his laptop. It was the report from the assassination attempt. Vladimir nodded for him to brief everyone.

Zachary read the pages. “RPG’s fired from a chartered yacht five-hundred yards out, registered in the Bahamas. Three men, identifying themselves as Russian nationals hired the boat. They killed the captain and crew. We do not know for sure if they were Russian.” He showed them a photo of the yacht and Russian passport pages of each man.

“Why not?” asked Vladimir, looking at the photos of three gruff-looking men.

“Their English was very good.”

“How do you know?” asked Paul, nervously.

“Our man in Nassau intercepted them last night at a casino. They were gambling like crazy, like they’d just hit the lottery, drinking the best vodka in the casino.

“I would suggest they are likely Russians,” said Vladimir. “They wouldn’t get drunk on anything else.

“Whoever they are, this is not a very sophisticated attempt,” said Zachary. “We’ve had a tail on them for a few days. We didn’t know exactly what they were up to until the yacht made it to St.

John's. We sent a boat out, but they fired just seconds before we could take them out. But they are gone now."

"Gone?" asked Emmett.

"As in dead," said Frances, looking at Zachary for confirmation. He nodded.

"Jesus..."

The others looked at each other then at Emmett. He knew what they were thinking. He nodded quickly. "I'm okay. I've just never been a target."

"We know how you feel," said Frances. "We've all been exposed. The fear will pass. Just keep focused on your job. We have a long, long way to go."

Emmett nodded and thought for a moment. "I guess this is how it begins." He looked at each of them. They were expressionless, their vibes confirming his conclusion.

"Contact Augusta," commanded Frances, as two nearby staffers fired up a control panel and screens lit up. Within seconds, a half-dozen screens popped on with images from Augusta. "I want to talk to Karen, Intelligence, Security, and David."

The staffers talked into their headsets as Augusta personnel

appeared on the screens: Karen Christopher was the Augusta equivalent to Secretary of State; David Shapiro, the Press Secretary; Chapel Young, the Director of Security; and Tuen Anzaki, the Director of Intelligence and Defense. Upon seeing Karen's image, Frances spoke.

"Karen, we're on our way. We have a slight change of plans. Schedule our envoys to meet with the heads of state at the same time as our meetings tomorrow, in their counterparts' office, that's important. We have to get through these protocol calls immediately."

Karen confirmed the instruction. "And your meetings tomorrow are reconfirmed. You and Paul with the US President, Vladimir with the Russian President, Henry with the Chinese President and John with the Indian Prime Minister. They have all reconfirmed, but their aides are not pleased we won't tell them the meetings are anything more than courtesy calls. Vladimir, Henry and John, you will be met upon arrival in DC. Your jets will be ready to go."

"Good. David, we have another slight change of plans." Frances looked at Emmett as she spoke, "We will be presenting a single candidate to the world, not three. We will arrive in Augusta in approximately eighteen hours. Is everything ready to make the announcement?" She motioned Paul over to add more to the conversation.

"Yes, all we need is you and...*the* candidate."

Paul patted Emmett on the back and spoke under his breath.

“David is brilliant. He’s got all the scripts ready to go.” He looked at David. “We will begin by shooting photos and video at Augusta Square, in front of the capitol building.” He looked at Frances. “I think we should launch the website at the press announcement. It’s ready to go, as is the mobile site. There’s not a moment to lose. We have to be first with this.”

Frances thought for a moment then nodded approval and held up her hand for Paul to pause. “Karen, David, Chapel, Tuen, I want to introduce you to Emmett Taylor, our sole candidate for King.” She looked at Emmett. “Meet your Secretary of State, Press Secretary, Director of Security and Director of Intelligence and Defense.”

“Pleasure to meet you,” said Emmett, nodding to each of them.

Frances could see the faces on the screen all looked a bit confused. “There’s only one, because...there *is* only one; only one who can handle it, one who is so far above the other candidates, we don’t dare put anyone next to him.”

“You will see when you meet him,” added Paul. “He is the best shot we’ve got. David, you can now open folder sixty-two. You will find all the information needed for the press kits, the announcement, everything.”

“I’ve been dying to open it for a month,” said David, excitedly.

Frances looked at Paul, smiled ever so slightly, and cocked her head. She knew what Paul had given David a month earlier, the complete dossier on Emmett. She looked around the interior of the jet, at her compatriots and the people on the screens at Augusta and felt a wave of pride and love. She wanted to stop time, if only for a moment, it was such a momentous occasion. “I was a spoiled brat for so many years,” she thought to herself. “Selfish, greedy, self-centered, power-hungry and stubborn. How did I ever get this lucky? What a humbling experience. May God be with us!”

“I’ll send all of you more info shortly.” The others nodded somewhat cautiously as Paul continued with the orders. “Get ready to launch the website and mobile site in conjunction with the press announcement. It’s time,” as he looked at Frances and the others. They all nodded in agreement.

Karen was excited and visibly restrained herself. “This is exciting. But...”

Paul knew what she was thinking. “Don’t worry, he is the strongest candidate on the planet. No one else compares. You will see shortly, trust me.”

David Shapiro spoke. “We will be ready with the announcement, the website, and mobile site. We’re ready to go. Just awaiting your orders.”

“Chapel,” said Frances, nodding to Vladimir. “Vladimir will address our security needs.”

“Tuen, give us an update first,” commanded Vladimir.

“We have discovered two moles, one on the Moon Base and one in Augusta. Both are being interrogated as we speak. One tracks upstream to the Kremlin, the other to Beijing. I don’t think they penetrated too deeply, but we shall see shortly.”

“It’s not going to make a lot of difference in the very near future,” inserted Vladimir. “Soon we will *want* them see our full capability.”

“Brilliant,” said Frances. “Let them see the extent of our full resources.”

Vladimir nodded and winked at Frances and the others. “Full transparency,” he said with a smile. “A little spilled info to Moscow and Beijing...given the grand scope of things...harmless.”

Chapel and Tuen nodded in agreement.

Vladimir continued. “But now that we have our candidate, and an announcement in two days, we need to step up security. Make sure each of our envoys has a military contingent accompanying them. We don’t want them to end up hostages. Got it?”

“Got it,” responded Tuen. “And, as you have instructed, we have advanced intelligence gathering to pre-election status, basically full alert 24/7. The chatter will no doubt begin in earnest the moment your pending meetings conclude.”

“Chapel, we will be most vulnerable between now and the election. You must stay on top of it. Once the campaign stops are announced, you know the plan. The selection of Emmett is the trigger, so push that button now.”

“Yes, sir,” said Chapel. “We are one hundred percent ready, down to the last detail.”

“Once our trips over the next two days are completed, we will stay in Augusta for the initial rollout. Then we will hit the road with Emmett. You know what to do, so get that ball rolling as well.”

“Yes, sir.”

Vladimir indicated he was finished and looked at Frances. She spoke, “Everyone, the day has finally arrived. I don’t know what the future holds, but I know what I want it to hold, we all do. This has been a long time coming.” She looked at the others. “Let’s pray the world is ready for something big...” She looked at Emmett. “Big life. God speed to all.”

Karen, David, Chapel and Tuen said goodbye as the screens went blank.

Frances turned to Emmett, awaiting his reaction.

“You’ve been planning this for a while,” stating the obvious. “And the whole world, myself included, always thought of Augusta as

the ultimate city. You kept the secret well.” He looked at Paul. “Big life, indeed.” Emmett tilted his head and raised his eyebrows, shifting nervously.

Frances nodded towards Emmett’s briefcase. “We didn’t make it through the rest of your list.”

Emmett, not knowing what to expect next, looked a bit surprised. “I should continue?”

“And not stop until you retire,” smiled Frances.

“Where should I start?”

“Where you left off,” said John. “What’s next?”

“North Korea.”

The others nodded for him to begin.

Despite feeling like the gears were suddenly switched back to an all too pro-forma-like or matter of fact-like atmosphere, it dawned on him, “This is how it is. This is how it starts. This is how it must be. They want to know everything in my head...now. They have been at this for years, it is their life. They want to get down to business and stay there.”

He accepted everyone’s attention turning back to the would-be-

King's agenda and began. "Having been there many times, I know firsthand that people have wonderful spirits. What they don't have is accurate information about the rest of the world. They never have. The disparity between fairness and unfairness and between the government and the people is monumental. What is needed is to provide them a means of information and let them decide for themselves what to do next. It will be a relatively slow process while they assimilate information and the regime attempts to disrupt the flow, but it's my guess the pendulum of fairness will swing violently to the people. When it does, they will be asking for help, which I am certain the rest of the world will provide."

"But an information war doesn't cost zillions of lives and is a lot cheaper. How would you suggest informing them?" asked John. "The security is extremely tight."

"Depends upon how much you want to spend and how much of a confrontation you can bear. There will be an enormous shock factor revealing the truth."

"No limits on either," said Frances.

"How about air dropping a few million iPhones?" asked Emmett.

The others smiled simultaneously.

"How simple is that?" said Paul, smiling the widest.

“We beam whatever we want to them, on frequencies that change so often the regime can’t handle it,” added John, as Emmett nodded. “That is brilliant.”

“Those old cronies will shit their pants,” said Vladimir, almost laughing. “And iPhones are easy to hide.”

Frances nodded to the cabin crew to serve food and then sat back and smiled. “Apple will surely love you,” and she laughed. “How much Apple stock do we own?”

Henry held up his hand and created a space between his thumb and forefinger, slowly stretching the space between them. “Just a little bit. They can cry conflict of interest all they want,” and he smiled.

Emmett continued. “A little more on the Middle East, presuming they opt for living as opposed to killing each other. The fairness issue there screams at intolerable decibels and has for centuries. They weren’t born that way. They inject a hate virus at birth. Their problems are man-made, by choice. With the bombing in Israel, and Iran not denying it, and Israel’s threat to use nuclear force, if necessary, on Iran, and the peace process tied up in knots for decades, things are not looking good. With Palestine consistently the trigger, it desperately needs to be a fully recognized state, but the place is in shambles. They need everything, especially an economy. Water is now the most precious commodity in the Middle East. Water covers seventy-five percent of the planet. Desalination technology has been perfected. We build a large

desalination plant in the Gaza strip and a pipeline distribution network to Israel, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain and the UEA. Water becomes Palestine's core business. They make a lot of money, build their state and rebuild their economy. Most of the pipelines will run through Israel, so they charge a fee. The fees will be big money. That's their payout. If they throttle the distribution network, their fees and their own water will be cut off. That's their payback. ”

The others smiled and nodded. “Without an imposed solution, peace will never come to Palestine or Israel,” said Vladimir. “Israel will get in your face big time, and I mean big time.”

Emmett shrugged his shoulders. “It is what it is. Eventually they will come around; the younger generations are more open-minded...on both sides.”

Frances nodded for Emmett to continue with his list.

“The Taliban and Southeast Asian Muslim hardliners? Give them their own nation. If that is what they want, fine. Carve out a section of Afghanistan and tell them, ‘Here, here's your sovereign Taliban nation. Do as you please, but do it there.’ For the Muslim hardliners in Southeast Asia, find an island, give it to them and say the same thing. But...” He looked at the others for effect. “When anyone wants to leave, of their own volition, they can leave. They can apply to live anywhere on the planet just like the rest of us, subjected to whatever scrutiny the hardline state has dictated by its behavior and place in the rest of the world, but you, the

Muslim hardliners, you have your place in the world, and anyone who wants to abide by your rules of life is free to do so, there, with you...end of story. You are not allowed to force yourself or your beliefs on anyone.”

“I like our King,” said Henry. “These are solutions, not more international, world community bullshit. Please, please continue.”

“I think some of the solutions may appear more harsh. Darfur and Zimbabwe, for example. Those people simply have to go, period. They get removed from office and interim governments are set up. We spend a small fortune building their economies and infrastructures, the people are given a choice to either vote for putting up the best and brightest minds their country has to offer, non-politicians, or nominate and select their own leaders, politicians or otherwise, in free and fair elections. The new Central World Bank branch underwrites a market economy and the loans to do so paid off over fifty years. The populace is educated and the arid land is transformed into millions of acres of farms. But again, the initial step will likely involve force.”

The others nodded for him to continue.

“China? I wouldn’t do a thing. They are not stupid. When they see the writing on the wall, they will simply advance all that they have already begun. The people will either form additional political parties or stick with the Communist Reform Party of China. Shuffling people and adding a letter does not a better government make. The CRPC is turning out to be a lot like its predecessor, but

never mind. Either way, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness becomes number one. But the people will decide, not the CRCP. If the populace is content with the CRCP, so be it. But at the same time, any big changes in China must take place in an orderly fashion over a sensible period of time. A billion-plus people dictates deliberate actions, not radical overnight changes, and of course, the people can opt for the no-politicians program.” He smiled.

“The ‘no politicians’ program? You’ve mentioned that several times. How are you going to pull that off?” queried Henry, leaning forward.

“It occurred to me there is another option besides a dictatorship or a democracy or a People’s Party, and that would be the following – Imagine the US Constitution stated that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, was to be based upon the election of the best and the brightest minds in the land, not politicians. And the people would be voting on qualifications, not personalities. The identities of those seeking to manage the national government would be secret, only revealed when the votes were counted. The most important national policy issues would also be approved by the people, as would be the powers of the president. And today, this could all be accomplished very expediently via the Internet.”

“The key difference is ‘the best and the brightest’ and not politicians, so seriously talented and qualified people end up running the country, not winners of popularity contests.”

“The current government departments, albeit without a department of defense, would stand as they are, and those of little use would be abandoned. And, using the same strategy, each department is run by the best and brightest minds in their field, i.e., commerce, education, health, transportation, etc. These people are elected by a popular vote of the people based upon their qualifications. Their identities would not be known until they are appointed. People are voting on qualifications, not personalities. These people are paid a lot and they are paid to deliver. No results; they are fired. Maximum term of eight years.”

“The country is run by professionals, the best minds available. The citizens of each country, using the Internet, also vote upon major issues. In other words, if the regulators of commerce tie the economy up in regulatory knots, it is very likely the heads of the commerce department are fired. If health care doesn’t meet the people’s needs, the heads of that department are fired. If kids aren’t smarter than the previous generation, the education system hits the restart button with new people at the helm. You get the idea.”

“What about current governments?” asked John. “A few nations may like the way things are.”

“It’s up to the citizens of every country to go with the status quo or turn them out and insert a new system, a new, very accountable system of nationwide management. Up to them.”

“And this plan is layered, down to the state and local level. The best and brightest minds are *hired* by the people to do a job. There

are no more politics, no more political contributions, no more congress, no more political corruption, no more political favors, no more politicians, no more filibustering, no more lobbyists, no more special interest money, no more democrats and no more republicans, only the best and brightest minds, *hired* by the people, not politically elected, to run cities, states, and the countries.”

Frances nodded. “I got it. I got it. No more politicians, what a beautiful image. Boy, are we in for a rough ride!” The others nodded as the idea of exchanging too big, too fat, and incompetent world governments for efficient task forces hit them.

No one spoke for a moment as they digested Emmett’s comments. “Holy shit,” said Henry.

John looked at him, and then at Frances, Paul and Vladimir as their eyes widened. He nodded his head towards Emmett. “Holy shit is right... I love it.”

“What about the nuclear arsenals?” asked Henry. “They must be dismantled.” The others nodded.

“Worldwide,” added John.

“Indeed,” said Emmett. “As noted, that would be part of the plan to make this world safer. But exactly how do we pull that off?”

“First by persuasion,” said Vladimir, “and if that doesn’t work, well,

we have Plan B, and we all know what that is.”

“The first step in that process is to put disarmament on the ballot, along with you,” said Frances, looking at Emmett. “It’s a no-brainer. The people of the world will surely vote hands down to disarm the world. Enforcing it will be the difficult part.”

“But we should not underestimate the will of the people,” said Henry. “Billions of people voting for disarmament will be a force never seen before.”

“I would agree with that,” said Emmett. “Actually, we may have to do very little other than verify. A country will not have the choice to retain nuclear weapons, not if the people of the world vote otherwise. And for those who try to resist? Well, they, the politicians, will be relieved of their duties.”

“What else?” asked John. “India and Pakistan?”

“Once disarmed, the tension will ease. As far as Kashmir, I would suggest a cricket match between the two governments. The winner can claim rule of Kashmir for five years at a time. Of course we’ll let the people of Kashmir decide if they like this solution”

The others laughed out loud. “Are you serious?” laughed John.

Emmett nodded. “They are both such good-spirited peoples, and they both love cricket to death. Once the military issues are gone, what is left to huff and puff with but a bat? Can you

imagine the collective sighs of relief once the nuclear warheads and conventional weapons are gone? What's left but to make them dependent upon one another economically? Water is an issue, but we can resolve that fairly. Throw in a cricket match every five years; it'll blow them away. They will see the folly of fighting and end up letting Kashmir become independent, if it chooses, or align with either country. In the end, they will wise up and let the people decide for themselves what they want, and it will all start with a cricket match."

John laughed hard. "You know, what you say is true. Once the threat of military strikes has evaporated, once the war toys are taken away, the only thing left is the upside, especially if they become more dependent upon one another economically." He shook his head.

"Or China and Taiwan. Or China and Japan," said Paul.

"Or China and Tibet," said Frances. "Have you given that one any thought?"

"It is interesting the most powerful nations always seem to have the most difficulty with foreign relations, regardless of how much history is involved. China and Tibet is a case of a pregnant elephant trying to forcibly nurse a kitten with a full stomach. With Taiwan, two sons of different fathers but the same mother who live apart and fight constantly."

"China will argue all day long that they have a sovereign right to

Tibet, but isn't that like saying man has a sovereign right over a river. How can that be? The water only passes through the land. No single drop of water will ever stay, or return. Tibet is, in a sense, only passing through a physical space next to China. The bodies come and go like the drops of water in the river; that is the soul of Tibet. China can never lay claim to the Tibetan culture or the ebb and flow of life and death. It is a clash of cultures. Tibet needs to be left alone, to grow as it will. China is attempting to harness something that cannot be harnessed. That they don't see this is a lack of wisdom."

"A developing nation is a developing mind, third world countries are figuring this out. They need nourishment, understanding, assistance, and space to develop at their own speed. The mistake developed nations make is they stand in judgment of countries that are going through exactly what they have already gone through. They apply current thinking and current standards to a stage they were at perhaps one hundred years earlier. It simply doesn't work, not to mention it is bizarrely arrogant...and ignorant. It will never work. It's simply and blatantly unfair. The fairness rule comes into play again, and again, and again."

Vladimir leaned forward. "You are wise way beyond your years. Any shadow of a doubt has been erased. But tell me, what if you have to kill? What if China, or Russia, or the US calls our bluff? Say worst case, they attempt to invade, harm, shut down or destroy Augusta? What if they all gang up and try to destroy us? What will you do?"

The others watched Emmett's reaction intently as he pondered the question.

"I don't have an answer...now. I've thought about it for over a month. I've thought about how could the world disarm itself for most of my adult life, as I think most people do, at least now and then. It would depend on a lot of things, but each situation is unto itself. Could the will of the people come into play? I would think so, especially if they voted for a king. As we all know, you don't call it *The Trump Card* for nothing."

"What if it happens in the next two weeks, or months?" asked Henry. "China will not take to this lightly."

"As far as Augusta, your nuclear capability and the shield around it would make a strike difficult, at least from the air." Emmett looked at the others, they nodded. "Then that, theoretically, would preempt the destruction of Augusta...again, from the air, but who's to say regarding smuggled SND's? But I am sure either alone or together they can inflict serious damage, both militarily with covert operations and by using propaganda to influence public perception. They can either control or influence media. That makes the time between now and the election a very critical time."

"If you were China, or Russia, or the US, how would you derail this?"

"Good question." Emmett thought for a moment. "Force would be the last resort. I would work my ass off to form a global coalition

to fight it politically, using every dirty trick in the book, even paying citizens either to not vote, or vote against it. I would also pull the plug on the Internet during the voting process, spam the hell out of it with ‘no’ votes, and launch very patriotic campaigns to discredit the idea that a global entity is beneficial for the world, and that national sovereignty should not be usurped by the arrogant and medieval concept of a king.”

“Congratulations,” said Frances. “As far as I am concerned, you just erased any possibility of you *not* becoming King. You know your ‘enemies’ well. That is exactly what they will do, and more. And they will resort to force, guaranteed. As we have already seen.”

“That was nothing compared to what we can expect,” added John.

“They will stop at nothing,” said Vladimir. “I would suspect they already have a few trips to the Moon planned, aside from past efforts.

“It may sound strange,” said Paul. “But our saving grace is you, truth...and money.”

Emmett sat back, awaiting an explanation.

“You, because of who you are; truth, because it is inherently recognizable; and money because this could never be accomplished without it...*a lot* of it.”

“As far as I am concerned,” said John. “This is your destiny.

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Washington, D.C.