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**Minther
& Sklar**

"As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation."

-- William Bradford

Chapter 1 | THE BOOK

My name is George. I'm a traitor. At least that's what I've been called. And, when it's your mother who hangs the tag on you, you generally believe it. Let me begin by saying that my intent was not to be a threat to the country that I love. In fact, I thought that my actions were quite honorable. However, that's not how others see it. Am I a traitor—you be the judge.

It all began four weeks ago. I just turned twenty-years-old which means I have only one year left before entering the Social Compensation Program. It's going to feel good to be self-sufficient and on my own. Based on my school grades and curriculum completed, I will be a Level S7-1. Not bad for a kid from New York City. Unfortunately, I'm now in North Carolina because my father had to move for his employer, Standard Genetics. Because my mother is a Citizen Education Technician (CET), what used to be called a teacher, our family is at the F5-4 Level in the Social Compensation Program. That is, at least for the next year. When I start getting paid their compensation will drop to F5-3. I guess it's only fair as they will have one less mouth to feed. And, as President Sandra Holmes says, "No one goes hungry, so everyone is happy."

Phillip, my friend in New York, was pissed. He got classified as a Level S9-1. I told him it was a combination of screwing around and not getting good grades, as well as his choice of curriculum. Music? Really? What social value does classical music offer? He should have switched to entertainment when he had the chance. Level 9 will put basic food on the table, get him a small apartment in craptown, but not much more.

Level 1, the political class, is where you want to be, but you have to be born into it or marry into it. Compensation at Level 1 is hard to imagine. Here, let me try. This year, 2075, the Congress increased the portion of the budget allocated to Level 1 to 35%. That means that 35% of the available International Monetary Units, or IMUs, allocated to the Social Compensation Program will be distributed to Level 1 recipients, or about 1% of the population. Add to that the

“no earnings cap provision” they enjoy and Level 1s have unlimited income. No wonder they live like royalty. Well, he who controls the purse strings gets the lion’s share. That’s what my mother always says.

As for me, if I can land a job my lifestyle will get dramatically better. Think of it 20% of what I make is mine free and clear. So, on top of my Single Level 7 compensation from the government I’ll have enough IMUs to maybe buy a used car. Of course, that means I have to go through the training program, pay environment taxes, get a vehicle voucher, and then find a car that I am allowed to buy. Man, they don’t make it easy.

I’m glad that I was a finance major. Money is what makes the world go round. If I get lucky, kiss the right asses, and make good connections I could earn a higher salary and someday become a Level 3. That would mean a home of my own rather than government housing.

This old farmhouse outside of Charlotte, North Carolina is in rough shape. I’m surprised that it’s still standing. Unfortunately, it’s the best my family can afford. However, it’s far enough from any public transportation to warrant an automobile. We have a ten year old Ford Mini Wagon. With both my parent’s gasoline allocation cards we are fortunate because we have enough fuel for all of our needs. Given the high price and limited supply of fuel we are lucky.

Up here in the attic there are all kinds of dusty wood furniture that look over a hundred years old. I have my eye on a desk in the corner behind a dresser and headboard. It might be fun to have an antique desk in my room. But, am I ready to crawl through spider webs, bat guano, and who knows what else to get to it?

When I reach the desk I’m coughing from all the dust. The desk is relatively large and it will take a great deal of maneuvering to get it out of the attic. I decide to take out whatever is in the drawers to lighten the load. That’s when I find it. In the bottom drawer a real, hardcover, printed book, titled *History of The United States of America*. I’ve never held a real printed book. I’ve seen them in museums behind glass and in people’s private libraries.

In the dark attic with only my LED light I carefully open the book. The pages smell funny. It’s a heavy book. In the beginning there’s a page with a lot of information—Publisher, Library of Congress Catalog Card Number, ISBN Number, and copyright dated 1965. I’m amazed. The book I hold in my hand is 110 years old. I’m also intrigued. The title alone, *History of The United States of America*, is astounding. The book was written before the reorganization. I return to my room carrying my new, uh old, treasure.

For the next hour I read *The History of The United States of America*. Only it isn’t the history that I was taught in school. It begins with the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus who we all know was an evil man who was a drunk and enslaved the natives. It ignored the fact that the pilgrims were rich businessmen

who came to the New World to stake their claim on land they didn't own. There is one part, however, that I read twice. It's about the first form of government of the pilgrims who arrived at Plymouth Rock in 1620. The original governor of the colony, William Bradford, set up a system whereby each pilgrim was given a plot of land to farm. Whatever they produced went into a community store from which each was to take only what they needed. It sounds logical and fair. Yet, the book went on to say even in those harsh times with their lives at stake, there were parasites who realized that they didn't have to work for what they received. In addition, they took more than they needed and ultimately put the entire colony at risk. Productive hard-working members of the colony complained, but the non-producers claimed they were entitled to their share without having to work. William Bradford, the book says, was a man of great wisdom. He reassigned a parcel of land to each family and stated, "Whatever you do with this—you keep. It is yours. And if there's a surplus, you can sell it." This began an extraordinary time as the pilgrims prospered. Governor William Bradford wrote in his book, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, "This had very good success, for it made all hands industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been." This had never happened before in the history of mankind.

What I read doesn't make sense. We all know that the early colonists were greedy businessmen who grabbed up all the wealth, owned slaves, cheated people, and didn't care about the common man. After the first one hundred years the Liberal Party, the party of the people, slowly found ways to distribute wealth more fairly. It started with a graduated income tax, then Social Security, then Medicare and Medicaid which were replaced by single payer Universal Health Care, then the Income Equalization Agency (IEA) was formed, and finally after the big corporations and the Conservatives destroyed the dollar the Reorganization of 2024. If it wasn't for the International Monetary Fund and World Bank big business would have destroyed our nation. Greedy CEOs simply didn't care. That's why the government had to step in and regulate business to level the playing field. Of course, it's kind of funny that the political class replaced the big business CEO class when it comes to extravagance.

As I read more the book keeps telling how pilgrims came to the new land in pursuit of freedom. But, somehow the definition of freedom is all out-of-whack. Being thrust out on your own with nothing to fend for yourself—that's not freedom. Freedom is having a government income when you turn twenty-one. This way you don't have to worry about making a living. You have freedom from hunger and freedom from seeking shelter and freedom to get free healthcare and a free education. Why would I want to start out naked with nothing? What is the value in that? And, if I choose to work it's only fair that the government get 80% to pay for all of the services we receive, as well as the cost of the Social Compensation Program. These pilgrims had no idea what is real freedom.

When I tell my mother about the book that I found, at first she seems interested. I tell her what I read and she nods and says that early in American history capitalism was experimented with but proved to be a complete failure. Without government regulations the gap between the haves and have-nots was enormous and immoral. The true patriots were those who made income distribution work. They stood up to the corporations that kept the average working class people down. All of our freedoms come from the government and are protected by the government. Then she seems to get angry and tells me that I better appreciate what America offers me. I'm not looking for a fight so I agree with her. I just find history written over a hundred years ago to be interesting. As I try to end the conversation she tells me to destroy the book. "It's propaganda written by capitalists who were trying to protect their fortunes," she tells me. I nod, but don't say anything else. My intent is to end the conversation quickly without agreeing to anything. I have no intention of destroying the book.

At dinner my father says, "Your mother tells me you found something."

I hate when he does that. He knows damn well what I found, but he has to play this silly game.

I remember in high school he would ask, "Did something happen at school today?" Hell yes, I got suspended you already know that. He tries to make me confess. Well, I never fall for it. So, I reply, "Oh, what did she tell you?"

He gets all puffed up and indignant and says, "You found a printed book." "I did."

"You can't keep it."

"Why not?"

"Because its propaganda," my mother chimes in.

"It's history," I point out.

"From the perspective of a capitalist society that destroyed a nation," she retorts with a noticeable degree of impatience. "All you need to know is what is in our history programs on your tablet."

My father adds, "You have to give it to the government."

"Why?"

"So they can put it in a museum."

"Or destroy it," I object.

"Perhaps," my mother agrees, "but it's for the best."

"Why?"

"It's sedition, it creates unrest," my mother says angrily.

"It's just history, mom," I reply, "You're a teacher don't you want to have as many sources of information as possible?"

"You'll give it to the government," my father ordains.

"I'm sorry, but I want to read it."

"What could be so important that could be in that book?" he continues.

"A view from the past. People wrote this book over 100 years ago while they were living history."

My sister adds intelligently to the discussion, "Oh posh!"

All she cares about is who is on The World's Most Talented Show or who singer Gwamie is shacking up with. And, oh god, those awful tattoos. How can my parents allow a fifteen year old to deface her body that way?

I try to steer the conversation back to a non-confrontational discussion among intelligent adults. "Listen, there is a story about Governor William Bradford and the original colony at Plymouth Rock. Everyone drew from a community store, but they were not making it. They were starving. So, Governor Bradford sets up a system where each family grows their own food and can sell any excess for profit. In this way everyone became productive and were rewarded for their labors. It seems to make sense."

"You are rewarded as specified by the government," my mother offers.

Calmly, I reply, "Yes, but think about it. If I have a field and grow corn and my neighbor has a field and grows corn. Yet, I grow ten times as much corn but get paid the same as my neighbor. That doesn't seem right."

"Maybe your neighbor's field wasn't as good as yours or insects got into it. He still grew corn so he gets compensated," my mother counters.

"What if he slept in a hammock while I tilled and weeded and chased the crows away?"

"Should he be punished for not being as good at growing corn as you?" she asks.

"Should I be punished for working harder than he did?"

My father shows his impatience as he states, "You're not being punished. You get paid. Why do you care what your neighbor gets paid? Are you jealous? You should be proud that you did so well."

"There you have it the evil of capitalism," my mother says as she throws down her napkin. "Me, me, me! I don't care about my fellow man. Me, me, me!"

My sister sings, "Me, me, me."

"We have meat this evening." My mother continues, "Do we ask if the rancher raised more cows than his neighbor?"

"I'm just saying that if someone is compensated for their success they might work harder to have more success. If the rancher got paid by the cow he might raise more cows and we could have meat more than once a week."

"You don't know what you're talking about," my father states through a mouthful of corn. Yeah, that's appropriate.

I turn to him and say, "You're right. I don't know. That's why I want to read this book and learn more about pre-Reorganization history."

"It will only bring you trouble," my mother concludes.

Later in the evening I settle in my room in front of my computer tablet. I

place my left thumb with my embedded Individual Identification And Data Chip (IIDC) on the authorization indent to access the Globalnet. A familiar screen appears with my name, photograph, and clearance level. As a student who just graduated, my clearance is relatively low. When I turn twenty-one my clearance will change to give me more access to banking information and services, government services, and enriched entertainment—if you know what I mean. I type in Governor William Bradford and very little information appears. Simple facts are offered but no mention about his experiment with capitalism. So I type capitalism and get the standard descriptions and position papers that I saw in school defining it as a failed form of government that allows one group to steal from other weaker groups. On a whim I search Pilgrims. Nothing of any value. Then way down the search list I find a website BradfordWasRight.info. I point to it and up pops a portrait of Governor William Bradford. Immediately, my computer flashes the “dangerous site” icon warning me not to enter. I enter.

Before me is a picture of the Mayflower, the three masted ship that brought the pilgrims to North America. I scroll down to find numerous pictures of pilgrims working in fields, feasting, and meeting in the town square. It is as though I’ve entered another world. And, I have. We never heard anything about the pilgrim days in North America. Our history classes began with a quick review of Europeans’ invasion of the continent and the ultimate establishment of three nations; Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Of the three, the United States was the most aggressive imperialistic nation founded by rich capitalists who not only wanted to protect their wealth but to also obtain more from those who were weaker. For a short period of time the U.S. dominated the world with its military might. That changed when the dollar collapsed and the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Reorganization Tribunal comprised of Britain, Russia, China, Germany, and the Arab League bailed out America. The dollar was no longer a reserve currency and was replaced by the worldwide International Monetary Unit. In order to pay the enormous debt of the United States of America many assets had to be sold to foreign entities. Great Britain, China, and Russia purchased a large portion of military assets. The Arab League gained ownership of all nationalized refining and power generating operations.

During the crisis, the Constitution was suspended and eventually rewritten giving the executive branch overwhelming power and the Senate and Congress more of an advisory role. Presidential elections are held every six years with candidates selected by the Candidate Review Board. This way, only candidates who support the new government structure are approved.

I become fascinated with early life in America as I navigate BradfordWasRight.info. It seems so alien. None of what I read has ever been told to me before.

A message pops up on the screen. I actually jump because it was

unexpected and I feel like I just got caught doing something I shouldn't be doing. The message simply asks, "Profit or loss?" It is signed "Dawn."

I'm confused. So, I stare at the screen like a hypnotized chicken. I try to come up with a logical, or at least humorous, response to the question. Profit is better than loss, but that can't be what Dawn expects. Finally, I simply speak into the microphone and my message is typed onto the screen; "Profit is nice but I'm at a loss."

DAWN: LOL. You must be new. Can I help you?

GEORGE: I don't know. I was reading about Governor Bradford and the pilgrims.

DAWN: Why?

GEORGE: Curiosity. I didn't learn much about them in school.

DAWN: Are you a student?

GEORGE: Just graduated from N.Y.U.

DAWN: Congratulations.

GEORGE: Thank you.

DAWN: Why the pilgrims?

I don't want to reveal my possession of a history book to a stranger. You never know where a government or law-enforcement agent might turn up. So, I keep it simple.

GEORGE: I came across a story about Governor Bradford and capitalism. Simply, wanted to know more.

DAWN: Understandable.

GEORGE: Is this your website?

DAWN: No. I monitor it at certain times.

GEORGE: Monitor it for what? Do you work for the government?

DAWN: LOL. Quite the opposite. I simply answer questions, if visitors have any.

GEORGE: Are you an historian?

DAWN: In a manner of speaking.

GEORGE: Why is it so hard to get information about the founding of the United States of America?

DAWN: Ignorance is bliss.

GEORGE: What does that mean?

DAWN: What you don't know can't hurt you.

GEORGE: Excuse me, is this clichés.com?

DAWN: "Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you!" -- Pericles (430 B.C.)

GEORGE: I simply wanted to know more about the pilgrims. Not get into some right-wing argument.

DAWN: Beware what you seek for the light that shines on the truth also illuminates you.

GEORGE: What are you talking about?

DAWN: Oh George, you are curious and possibly a thinker. That combination doesn't fit the mold of a good citizen.

GEORGE: Why not?

DAWN: Are you using your own IIDC (Individual Identification and Data Chip)?

GEORGE: Of course, how else would I access the Globalnet?

DAWN: How long have you been on?

GEORGE: About fifteen minutes.

DAWN: GET OFF NOW!

GEORGE: Why?

There is no response. I'm confused but decide to heed Dawn's advice. I exit the Globalnet. It's getting late anyway and almost brownout time. If my parents want to watch Globalvision we have to shut down most appliances and lights. I decide to read my treasure by LED flashlight.

The early pilgrims had a difficult time and more than half died the first year. However, they persevered and built settlements in what they called "the New World." What I still don't get is why. Why give up everything to go into wilderness. Then I read what life was like back in England. People were poor and just barely surviving. It was a case where the nobles ate while the peasants toiled.

William Bradford was born into a family that owned a large farm and was considered wealthy and influential. He was just over a year old when his father died. His grandfather died two years later and when his mother died he was an orphan at age seven. Seems like people were dropping like flies. He was sent to live with his uncle and developed an intellectual curiosity. When William Bradford was twelve-years-old he became friends with William Brewster, a bailiff and postmaster, who introduced the teen to the church reform efforts taking place across England. In 1603 King James I took the throne and addressed the reform efforts harshly. As a result, a group of 50 reform-minded individuals broke from the Church of England and became known as Separatists. Many members of that congregation were arrested. Some were imprisoned in London and left to starve.

Members of the Scrooby congregation of Separatists decided in 1607 to illegally leave England for the Dutch Republic where religious freedom was permitted. William Bradford went with them. Unfortunately, they were betrayed by an English sea captain. Bradford and members of the congregation were put in prison for a short period of time. A year later they successfully made it to Leiden in the Dutch Republic. The Separatists lived in poor conditions because they were immigrants. By July, 1620 approximately fifty Separatists, including William Bradford, made plans to establish their own colony in the Americas.

Tired from reading I close the book, but what Dawn said haunts me, "Beware what you seek for the light that shines on the truth also illuminates you." Without question, it will be prudent to hide my irreplaceable treasure. Silently, I

wrap the book in plastic wrap and place it inside a waterproof backpack. In the dark I sneak outside and wander into the woods behind the old farm house. It is definitely spooky. However, led by my flashlight I find a hiding place and stow my connection to the past. In the daylight, I'll find a better place.

The next morning, at breakfast, my mother asks about the book.

"It's gone," I semi-lie.

"What do you mean, gone?"

"Gone."

My father enters the room and asks, "What did you do last night?"

Here we go again, "What do you think I did?"

"I think you were surfing the web and visiting dangerous websites," he answers. As he pours a glass of orange juice, he states, "We received an alert that you were monitored visiting potentially illegal sites."

"Illegal?"

"Yes, that's what the alert said."

"I didn't visit any illegal sites. All I did was research the pilgrims."

"That again," My mother complains.

"What is wrong with reading about the early history of the United States of America?"

"It was an experiment that failed. Capitalists today are anti-America, radicals, and seditionists."

"You're playing with fire, son," My father warns.

"The only thing that I am doing is reading," I insist.

"It is what you are reading that will get you noticed and bring you trouble," My father insists.

My mind repeats Dawn's warning, "Beware what you seek for the light that shines on the truth also illuminates you."

"You're just starting out. Don't do something foolish that will hurt you," My mother adds.

"Let's not have any more alerts, OK?" My father says.

Against my better judgment I say to my parents, "You know, the pilgrims that lived in England were poor and had very little chance for advancement. They were thrown in jail because of their religious beliefs and suffered under an oppressive king. Finally, they risked everything to have a chance to make better lives for themselves. At first I didn't get it. But, now I understand. They wanted to be free. Free from someone else controlling their destiny. Free to pursue whatever they wanted. Free to read what they wished without it being illegal."

"You sound like an anarchist," My father spits.

"Worse, a traitor to the nation that gave you everything," My mother concludes. So, there you have it. I'm an anarchist and a traitor. That, from my own

family who love and support me. I'm glad that I hid the book. Without the Globalnet it is my only source for information about the history of the United States of America. This turn of events, though unsettling, in no way prepares me for what happens next.

Visit: www.2076AD.com for more information or to participate in the creation of 2076AD. You can also view the YouTube version of Chapter 1.

