



Kenneth J. Munkens

Minther
& Sklar

“Greatness is not where we stand, but in what direction we are moving”

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes

Chapter 15 | THE ENTREPRENEUR

I have never flown. That should be enough said to give you an idea of what I’m feeling. It’s exciting, exhilarating, new, fresh, and terrifying. Air just isn’t thick enough to hold up this big heavy jet. I’m trying not to show fear, but I do believe the deer in the headlights look on my face is a giveaway. I have to admit the STUS Gulfstream G900ER corporate jet is luxurious beyond imagination. It seats eight with two facing couches. Leather and expensive wood everywhere. A large flat screen monitor is on one end and a small galley on the other. Large round portholes allow you to see just how high you are flying and how far you have to fall before going splat.

There are four other passengers onboard in addition to Virginia and me. I don’t recognize any of them. Therefore, being the wise individual that I am, I keep the conversation with Virginia general and innocuous. “Where are we going in Texas?”

“Austin, the capital.”

“I wonder what the weather is like in Austin.”

Virginia taps a screen on her tablet and the flat screen monitor on the jet comes to life showing the Austin, Texas weather. It’s going to be warm and sunny.

When I left home my mother shook her head and simply said, “You’re making a big mistake. You shouldn’t go to the devil’s lair.”

My father was more reassuring, “If you get into trouble I can’t do anything to help you.”

At least Dee was supportive, “If you get killed can I have the you-know-what?” Then with a wink she added, “Make waves—big brother.”

I don’t know if I’m going to make waves or make a fool of myself.

One of the other passengers comes over and introduces himself, “I’m Joseph, and you’re afraid of flying.”

“I guess it’s pretty obvious.”

“In time you’ll get to enjoy it.”

"If you say so. I'm George Clymer."

"I know." Joseph is a middle-aged man, I'd say forty-five or so. At just under six feet tall and slender he cuts a fine figure in a casual shirt and pants. And, cowboy boots. "Let's sit over here," he motions to one of the couches. I look at Red, uh Virginia, who nods.

Joseph immediately launches into a story, "Mankind has been in a constant struggle. The quest for power and control is insatiable. Those who are driven to be dominant fail to recognize their behavior as anything but normal. They believe that most people are sheep and those with the strength and ability to lead must do so to achieve some semblance of order." He looks out one of the portholes. After a pause he continues, "And, there are those who welcome a strong leader. Someone else making the tough decisions removes responsibility, stress, and fear from them." He taps his hand on the armrest, "You might think this is an ideal arrangement." Joseph then looks directly at me with steel-grey eyes as he points out, "It isn't."

I'm a little confused. Why is he telling me this?

"You might wonder why I tell you this."

"Um."

"There is a tremendous difference between government and leadership. Government needs to be a structured well-defined set of protocols, rules, functions, and objectives. Leadership is exhibited by those who participate in an activity, sport, business, or government. In terms of government, participants need to all operate within the bounds of established policies. That is more difficult than it would seem. Even the best, most advanced, logical, and just government ever created almost immediately comes under assault from those who believe they know better or who wish to wield more power."

"Sounds like a hopeless situation," I conclude.

"Not hopeless, but a dose of reality. Every government needs constant attention and protection to keep it from falling prey to tyrannical forces." He presents a serious countenance, "Beware the unseen, unexpected, and hyperbolic."

"You lost me," I admit.

"For centuries there were kings, emperors, sultans, czars, chiefs, and other monarchs who ruled people in different geographic areas. They mainly did so through military might. Often, they created the image of being a god or receiving their power from God. The people were kept in line by being held down."

"There is an ebb and flow of the forces in the world. Throughout the nineteenth century there was exploration, conquest, and colonization that added to a nation's fortune and position. Many nations fought distant wars to conquer less developed regions around the globe and thus create empires. Even the United States was not immune as we expanded west. It was the way of the world during that era." He looks at me for a reaction. I'm sure I disappoint him. "During the

twentieth century nations began conquering other developed nations in great world wars.” He tapped the armrest of the couch once more, “There have always been ideological differences between those who believe big government is needed to maintain control and peace and those who want less government. By the end of the twentieth century there was a tug-of-war between socialism and capitalism, big government vs. individual freedom.”

Joseph looks at his tablet, punches a few buttons, and then returns to the subject, “In the beginning of the twenty-first century the battlefield changed. It went from physical to psychological. By virtue of controlling the educational system, entertainment, and media the masses were brainwashed into believing big government socialism was the only way for things to be fair. Sadly, young people who never experienced how good things could be when given true freedom accepted the premise without question. As far as they knew all the regulations and free handouts made them comfortable and secure.” Joseph presents a wry smile, “It’s hard to argue with those who claim to be helping the little-guy and the victims while punishing the successful evil business owners.”

I have to admit that I was once one of those who thought the government was my friend and protector. That is until I found the history book and started reading about the history of the United States of America that the ruling class conveniently erased. The jet hits an air pocket and drops. My stomach hits the ceiling. Joseph takes it in stride as he goes on, “In the twenty-teens things really began to heat up. Big government statists had indoctrinated a large enough portion of the electorate into believing socialism was the answer, even though that ideology destroyed many nations while failing to improve citizen’s lives.”

“That’s hard to believe,” I observe.

“Why? You are a product of statist education and training. Until recently, you accepted the fact that the government established the rules to make things fair and take care of everyone. Your goal was to reach a certain Social Compensation Program level to live a reasonably bearable life. But, who decides what level you are allowed to reach or deserve? In the late twenty-teens there was a short period when those who support individual freedom seemed to be gaining popularity. That’s when the long knives of intolerance came forth with a vengeance. The first thing they did was eliminate freedom of speech. They shouted down anyone who disagreed with them, censored what could be distributed through media channels, and accused those who voiced an opposing opinion of being fascists and promoting hate speech. It was an old approach used by many dictators. Accuse your opponents of doing exactly what you are doing to take the focus off of your own actions.”

I know that I’ve had a lightening quick education in the past few weeks, but I can’t help but wonder why people didn’t see through the subterfuge. Without thinking, I ask, “Didn’t people catch on?”

“Never underestimate the gullibility of the masses,” Joseph replied. To illustrate he explained, “For decades when a conservative president was elected he was depicted as stupid, heartless, bigoted, inept, dishonest, and illegitimate. Then when a liberal, or socialist, candidate was elected it was the beginning of a bright, new, caring era. They were smart beyond belief, visionaries, going to solve all the world’s problems, and admired. The conservative could do nothing right while the liberal could do nothing wrong in the eyes of the media.”

He sits back as if reminiscing, “I never have been able to figure out how the same party of people who fought to keep slavery, then passed ‘Jim Crow’ laws to keep freedmen down, established the militant Ku Klux Klan, introduced gun control laws to keep weapons out of ex-slave’s hands, restricted the right to vote through poll taxes, and supported segregation were eventually depicted as the ones who cared most about minorities and were fighting for them. Amazing”

I find what Joseph is saying interesting, however, still don’t know why he is telling me this.”

“When we get to Texas it’s going to feel like you’ve entered another world—you have.”

We enter another world.

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is modern, clean, and active with jets moving in various directions. The Barbara Jordan Terminal is bustling and crowded. Everywhere I look there is activity. Some people are in a hurry scurrying along, others in groups conversing and laughing, and still others seated reading or watching a video while waiting for their flight. Even though there are a huge number of people they all seem to be in high spirits or focused on getting somewhere quickly. Its electric. I’m accustomed to seeing people on the street shuffling along as if resigned to the fact that they are stuck in the lifestyle to which they’ve been assigned. I literally shudder in realizing that if not for an incredible stroke of luck that would have been me.

Now, I don’t want to bore you but you have to understand that I’ve never seen so many restaurants, coffee shops, bars, cafes, ice cream shops, and other eateries in one place before. There are other stores and services, as well. Then I see it. It has to be a mirage—jet lag or something. It’s real! I look around fully expecting to see national police swooping down to arrest anyone foolish enough to enter that establishment. Yet, there are none. I stop and stare. Before me is a book store. I’m telling you God’s honest truth a real honest-to-goodness printed books store. How could that happen?

“Welcome to Texas,” Virginia says as she watches me drool.

“That’s a book store,” I stammer as I point.

“It sure is.”

“But printed books are illegal.”

“Not in Texas.”

“Can we go in?”

“Not now, maybe at a later date, we have an appointment.”

Outside the main terminal a large black limousine waits at the curb. Virginia waves for me to enter. When I do I’m surprised to be in the company of Joseph and the three other persons who were on the plane.

“You survived,” Joseph says with a smile.

I smile and nod. Somehow, I get the feeling that I’m the only one that doesn’t know what is going on much like the poor slob who is not in on a private joke. That’s me, the poor slob who seems perpetually in the dark.

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is southeast of Austin. The limousine leaves the airport and heads downtown. Whereas the roads leading into Charlotte are cracked, filled with potholes, poorly marked, and lightly traveled as most people don’t have a car. The roads in Austin are beautiful, like new, with fresh lines, clear signs, and lots of cars zooming this way and that. We enter an elevated highway—TX35. Modern shiny cars are flying in both directions. And trucks, massive trucks, are among them carrying “who knows what.” After less than half an hour we leave the highway and are downtown. I’m struck by a billboard that proclaims, “Keep Austin Weird!” The driver of the limousine explains that way back in the year 2000 a radio announcer named Red Wassenich first made the pledge on the air and the Austin Independent Business Alliance adopted it to promote small businesses. Somehow the craziness and positive nature of it makes Austin feel so much more welcoming and endearing. We arrive at our destination.

I exit the limousine and before me stands a modern five story building. It boasts bright shiny metal pillars and large tinted glass windows. Everything is clean and fresh. I look up and see for the first time the STUS logo on the top floor of the structure. Of course, it stands to reason that STUS would have offices in Texas. Six travelers enter the building through automatic doors.

Inside we pass through a security checkpoint and enter an elevator at the far end of the lobby. Joseph touches the thumb ID pad and the doors open. Inside the elevator, after the doors have closed, he punches in a code and the elevator begins to move—downward.

From what I can tell we go down about twenty miles—or so it seems. The doors open and before us is a long corridor with indirect lighting whose source cannot be seen. Our group, led by Joseph, walks down to the end of the corridor. Now, this is hard to explain. There isn’t any door but somehow we are in a large room that doesn’t have any walls or ceiling or floor. It’s quite disorienting. I’m not sure if I’m floating, falling, or having a stroke. All I can do is stand still. When I look around I see the others are also standing still, but they appear to be very calm and unbothered. Finally, the room, or lack of room, begins to take shape as real features appear. We are in a large central area with corridors leading off in six directions. I look at Virginia with a “What the hell” look on my face.

"It's a security program," she explains.

"A little heads-up would have been appreciated," I complain.

"And miss that look on your face."

We take a corridor on the right until we enter a conference room filled with computer monitors. There are scenes from various places that I don't recognize. Joseph invites us to sit. There are very comfortable chairs in a semi-circle facing the monitors. All with the exception of Joseph sit. He explains why we are here.

"The final stages of the War for Independence have begun," Joseph states. "It began a little earlier than we anticipated, but we have to work with the timetable that we've been handed." He points at one monitor that appears to be replaying President Sandra Holmes' surrender of the sovereignty of the United States of America. On another monitor is the map of the United Nations Economic Zones. I want to barf. Joseph continues, "In some areas we are ready. But, in some very important arenas we are sorely behind. We are here to devise a plan-of-action on how to address one of those arenas—public opinion." He looks directly at me. Why, I don't know. But, without question he speaks directly to me, "I hope you are up to the challenge."

Before I can say, "Why me?" one of the other members of the group observes, "There's been a new chapter of that online program The Capitalist uploaded."

We all fall silent as Chapter Two appears on the largest monitor.

THE CAPITALIST

The opening screen once again features dark blue storm clouds with white lettering that states, "The government under which you live has a direct impact on your freedom, quality of life, security, safety, and happiness." It fades to the same small-town street as was shown in Chapter One. Only this time things look a great deal better. It's not a dramatic change, but houses and yards look better maintained, people are moving this way and that way, and there are a few vehicles on the street. I'd have to say where the street looked abandoned in the first chapter, it now looks alive.

The scene changes to a forest path. Falcon is standing beside a tree looking up the path. A man approaches him from behind. When he gets near he says, "Mr. Falcon."

"Just, Falcon."

"I have something I'd like to discuss with you."

Falcon turns and looks directly into the man's eyes.

The man continues, "My name is Mark, Mark Templeton." He looks around as if trying to make sure that he is not being overheard, "I need your advice."

Falcon continues to look at the man as he listens.

"I have an idea for a business."

"You are an entrepreneur," Falcon states.

“A what?”

“Entrepreneur. It is a word that has been removed from American dictionaries. It is defined as ‘a person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.’ It comes from French which literally means ‘one who undertakes.’” Falcon smiles and adds, “A famous entrepreneur was once asked what it took to be successful. He replied, ‘courage and luck.’” In a serious voice he asks, “Do you have courage?”

“I believe I do,” was the reply.

“Tell me about your business.”

“For years, I’ve had a small above ground no-till garden. My father taught me that the best vegetables come from not plowing. You lay a base of paper or cardboard on the ground, cover it with compost, add a mixture we call tea, and plant seeds into the soft layer. It’s actually good for the soil below as water can pass through to it, it doesn’t evaporate as quickly, attracts worms, promotes important fungal hyphae and microorganisms, and reduces erosion. Every year I’ve improved the yield and my vegetables are delicious.”

“I see.”

“Until now, I’ve grown food for my family and given away any extra to my neighbors.” He pauses and looks around, once more. “It’s illegal to give uninspected produce to anyone.” Another glance around, “I want to expand my gardens and sell what I grow. Only that would really be against the law.”

“Individual freedom is against the law,” Falcon points out. “However, you must understand, there is a difference between the laws created by corrupt men and the inalienable rights granted to you by God.” He quotes the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Mark Templeton stares at Falcon trying to fully comprehend the words—words he had never heard before.

“Those words are in the original Declaration of Independence written in 1776,” Falcon explains. “After the reorganization, all reference to the original founding of the United States of America was deleted from history and educational curricula. Those who stole your rights felt it was too dangerous for citizens to be exposed to the radical thinking that promoted individual freedom and a government of the people.”

"It all sounds good," Mark states, "but doesn't do me any good if the government officials show up."

"The question is; do you wish to remain under the tyranny of the present government, or do you have the courage to be part of the revolution?" Falcon looks up the path as he continues, "Your neighbors are breaking the law, they're fighting back, and they are living better lives."

Mark Templeton follows Falcon's gaze and looks up the path as he considers what had been said. After a brief moment of silence, he stands tall and says with conviction, "I have a right to pursue my dreams, better my life, and be free."

"Well spoken. What do you require to expand your farm?"

The video continues. Mr. Templeton explains how he could make use of the wood scraps and sawdust left over from the production of guitars. In addition, he would like more property to farm. Finally, he confesses that he doesn't have the financial resources to do what he wants while he believes it will prove profitable.

The video goes on to show all of the improvements made in the village and ends with Falcon telling Mark Templeton, "I have arranged for a number of investors to back your project. In return they will receive twenty percent of the gross. You, at any time, can buy out their share for the initial investment plus ten percent."

Remember, way back when I started telling you my tale, I told you I was a finance major. If I were advising Mr. Templeton, I would tell him to take the deal. The video ends and I look at the number of views and can't believe my eyes--289,775.

Once our meeting begins again we return to the subject of public opinion. I point out that the video we just watched is exactly what is needed to get people thinking. Unfortunately, it would take too long for the message to get delivered. We all share our ideas but fail to identify any immediate solutions. It is decided that we should go to our hotel rooms and take a break before reconvening.

Once I settle in a very comfortable room I am compelled to contact Dawn.

GEORGE: I'm in Texas, can you believe it?

DAWN: You didn't enjoy flying to get there, though.

GEORGE: Who turned me in? Wait, were you on the plane?

DAWN: No. I just know.

GEORGE: You seem to know everything that's going on in my little mixed-up, in-the-dark world.

DAWN: You could say that.

GEORGE: I just did.

DAWN: LOL

GEORGE: Do you know why I'm in Texas?

DAWN: Yes.

GEORGE: Then you're ahead of me. Why am I here?

DAWN: It will become clear in time.

GEORGE: Sure it will, like everything else that I'm confused about.

DAWN: Keep an open mind, open ears, and open eyes.

GEORGE: Did you watch Chapter 2 of *The Capitalist*?

DAWN: I did.

GEORGE: It's a really interesting story.

DAWN: If you were still the mind-numb, good citizen, participant in the Social Compensation Program would it give you pause to think?

GEORGE: I think it would. The positive change experienced by the village would make me wonder if I could also enjoy such an opportunity. I'd want to move there and make guitars, be a farmer, or open a barber shop.

DAWN: Do you cut hair?

GEORGE: No. I was just expressing an example.

DAWN: I see.

GEORGE: What color is your hair?

DAWN: No need for us to go there. What do you think of Texas?

GEORGE: It is really impressive. There is so much energy and people are happy and driven. It's almost overwhelming.

DAWN: Quite a difference from Charlotte?

GEORGE: I saw an honest-to-goodness, real, book store.

DAWN: At the airport.

GEORGE: Of course, you know. Is there a hidden camera embedded somewhere in my body?

DAWN: What do you think?

GEORGE: I think I'm becoming paranoid.

DAWN: That's only a feeling.

GEORGE: Virginia tells me we are going to be making a lot of decisions while we are here.

DAWN: She's right.

GEORGE: What kind of decisions?

DAWN: Those that deal with life and death.

Visit: www.2076AD.com for more information or to participate in the creation of 2076AD. You can also view the YouTube version of Chapter 15.

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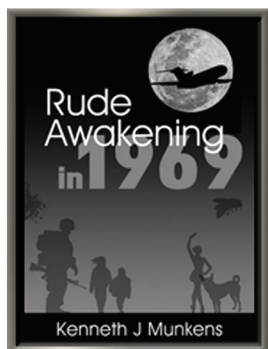
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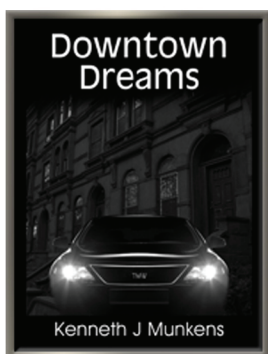
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