



Kenneth J. Munkens

**Minther
& Sklar**

*“A government big enough to give you everything you want,
is strong enough to take everything you have.”*

-- Thomas Jefferson

Chapter 5 | THE ARREST

My second day at STUS is completely different. When I arrive the computer screen greets me in a friendly tone, knowing my name. I decide to call it Ethyl. Don't ask me why, the name just came to me. I say, "Good morning Ethyl, nice day, isn't it?"

"Enter, Mr. Clymer," Ethyl answers as the door lock slides open.

Walter Tize is in his office when I stick my head in. "George, you came back. Damn! I had one day in the pool. God knows, I did my best to make it happen."

"Come 'on, I'm going to make it at least a week," I reply.

The pleasantries aside I am ushered into a media room with a few comfortable chairs and a large flat screen. What I am told is I'm going to watch a short history of STUS Corporation. And, by golly, that's what I see while drinking a very fine tasting coffee.

After it's over Walter stands up in front of the STUS logo and states, "There you have it the public story, the PR presentation." He pauses than looks me in the eye and adds, "The bullshit."

"It's not true?" I ask.

"Factually, it is true, to a degree," Walter explains. "But, you have to understand two things; 1) the world had become one big public relations, image over substance, great illusion and 2) American citizen's freedom was being siphoned off slowly so that no one noticed." He taps the screen, "Colonel Eastwood and Sergeant Shepherd noticed."

There is a change in Walter Tize's demeanor. He's not being a wiseass and his voice takes on a tone that reflects great respect. "Lieutenant Colonel Jeffery Eastwood and Sergeant Major Demarcus Shepherd were friends. In spite of the wide gap between their ranks there was no divide between them in terms of attitude or opinion. They served together in the Army Intelligence Division before The Reorganization. Often they did undercover work out of uniform. Sarge was a fire-eater who had a piercing stare that would scare the devil. He was so opposed

to giving ground; stories had it that his truck didn't have a reverse gear. Colonel Eastwood, on the other hand, had a calm reassuring manner that forged confidence. Colonel Eastwood was a WASP from the Midwest while Sergeant Shepherd was a black street kid from Newark, NJ. Oil and water, fire and ice, yin and yang, call it whatever you wish these two were as opposite as their skin color. Opposites; except in their love of their country, belief in the Original Constitution, and sense of justice. In this they were twins."

"After retiring from the military the two men remained friends. Colonel Eastwood became a consultant in the defense industry while Sergeant Major Shepherd became a police officer in Englewood, New Jersey. The two men met on a regular basis at each other's home. Together, they and their wives welcomed the twenty-first century at the Window on the World restaurant on the 107th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. There's a part of history that you've never been told."

"One night at Sergeant Shepherd's house, over a few bottles of Ballantine Ale, Colonel Eastwood said to Sarge, 'Do you know that in 1948 the total of all taxes paid by a family of four amounted to 4% of income? Today, direct taxes and hidden taxes take over 50% of a family's income.' Sergeant Shepherd replied, 'And, with that money the government has its hand in everything. You can't take a piss without there being a government charge or regulation.' Both men agreed with President Ronald Reagan when he stated, 'Government is not the solution, it's the problem.'"

Walter Tize stops his story for a moment and says to me in an introspective manner, "By his very nature, man is corrupt. Given the opportunity he will grab power and force his will on others. Whether by force, economic pressure, laws & regulations, or deceit the powerful control those who are weaker."

"You make it sound hopeless if you're not in a position of power," I observe.

"There are those who argue that because man is corrupt government needs to control his actions." He stops and looks at me for a reaction.

I nod in semi-agreement.

That's when he pounces, "Wrong! You dumb shit. If man is corrupt and you put the power of government in his hands what do you think is going to happen?"

"He'll use the power of government to force his will on others."

"Exactly."

"So, what's the answer?" I ask.

"In 1789 the Original Constitution of the United States was adopted. It defined the role of government, separation of powers, process and procedures. It started with the sentence 'We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty, to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION

for the United States of America.' You've never read the original Constitution, have you?"

"I've never seen it."

What you have seen is the current constitution. 'On this day 17 May 2024 this constitution has been adopted by the Congress of the United States of America and supersedes all previous documents and suspends all laws that are in conflict with the new government established herein with the powers and policies outlined in the following pages."

"Yes, I've read the constitution."

"It gives all of the power to the government and establishes a socialist state."

"It levels the playing field."

Walter walks over to me and sits next to me. He asks, "You like baseball?"

"Yeah. I played some in New York."

"Think of the rule book as the constitution of baseball. It keeps the game honest and, dare I say, makes it fair."

"OK."

"Now, along comes a group of commissioners who feel that it isn't fair because some players have more talent, experience, or training than others, therefore, are more successful."

"Well, that's the game."

Walter ignores me and continues, "They decide in order to make the game fair players with batting averages under 200 will get four strikes instead of three and walk on three balls."

"Wait," I protest, "that's not how the game was meant to be played."

"Oh, it gets better," Walter says, "Players with batting averages over 300 only get two strikes and walk on five balls."

"That's ridiculous."

"You're right. What you end up with is a mess and the game becomes unwatchable, unplayable, and irrelevant." Walter pauses a moment for me to see the point. He then explains, "Well, the same holds true for life. When you reward non-producers and punish productive members it destroys the society."

I don't say anything as I try to fully comprehend the analogy.

Walter returns to the history of STUS. "Eastwood and Shepherd were smart men and patriots. They realized that America was declining and had been for a long period of time. Decade after decade regulations, acts, and laws were enacted that grew the government and infringed on individual freedom. Concurrently the tax burden grew and grew. The public adjusted and adapted until it was too late and they no longer had the power to fight back. Professional politicians became a ruling elite, hijacked the nation, and 'We the people' no longer guided their actions."

"When I told my mother that the pilgrims wanted to be free from someone else controlling their destiny, free to pursue whatever they wanted, and free to read what they wished without it being illegal she called me an anarchist and traitor," I tell Walter.

He looks at me appraisingly then replies, "Most likely, your mother was born after the Reorganization. She's a product of a carefully developed government education. Don't fault her for believing what she has been taught. Colonel Eastwood grew up in the 1960s and Sergeant Major Shepherd the late 1970s. They both witnessed the greatness of America. If you ever get clearance to enter the Ghost Room you won't believe your eyes."

"What is the Ghost Room?" I ask.

"Another time. At the turn of the century, Colonel Eastwood had a fifteen-year-old son and Sergeant Major Shepherd had a sixteen-year-old daughter. Both men were appalled by what their children were being taught, as well as what wasn't being taught. It was then that they made the decision to take action."

As I listen I find myself having trouble picturing over seventy years in the past. Very little is available about those times. All I know is that America, before the reorganization, was dominated by big corporations that took advantage of people and kept them down. The gap between the rich and poor was reprehensible. People lived on the edge of poverty, couldn't get healthcare, were constantly in debt, and were cheated by big-business. They ran the country into bankruptcy.

"What are you thinking?" Walter asks.

"It must have been terrible in those days."

To my surprise, Walter laughs. He stands and says, "Son, if I could have lived in those times it would have been marvelous. You haven't been given a true picture of pre-Reorganization America. But, again, that's for another time. Eastwood and Shepherd began recruiting persons they knew and trusted who shared their political philosophy. They formed an organization that was called 'The Loyal Nine.'"

"Hey," I interrupt, "I remember that name. It was during the Revolutionary War. There was a group of nine Boston merchants and artisans who got together to fight the Stamp Act in 1765. They called themselves 'The Loyal Nine' which grew into the Sons of Liberty."

"Very good!" Walter says. Then he asks, "How did you learn that? It wasn't taught in school."

"I read it somewhere, but prefer not to tell where," I say hesitatingly.

"OK," his only reply. "So, you know the significance of the name Loyal Nine. The nine members in the Eastwood/Shepherd group were all very intelligent, driven, talented individuals who absolutely were statesmen, or if you prefer statespersons. They formed an organization that I consider the second miracle of America. The first, of course, our founding fathers."

There's something about this man that I like. He has sincere enthusiasm and a no-apologies style.

"When STUS was incorporated in 2015 these nine persons comprised the Board of Directors." He waves his hand over a sensor and nine photos, names, and areas of expertise appear on the screen.

Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Eastwood (M) (1950 – 2036) Defense Industry Consultant

Sergeant Major Demarcus Shepherd (M) (1963 – 2063) Law Enforcement

Asayo Nakahara (F) (1968 – 2056) Computer Programmer

Hector Santiago (M) (1955 – 2023) Mechanic

Hans Keller (M) (1962 – 2041) Designer

Erin Slattery (F) (1959 – 2054) MD Naturopath

Angelina Granelli (F) (1974 – 2064) Artist

Neha Crying Wolf (F) (1978 -) Naturalist

Benson Whittingham (M) (1957 – 2029) Financial Analyst

"They created STUS. If you last past the week you will learn more about each of them. Strategic Technology Universal Systems (STUS) went on to develop digital programs, mechanical equipment, technical approaches, new products, electronic devices, and technology that remains top secret. STUS created the Individual Identification Data Chip (IIDC) embedded in your thumb. Essentially, this privately held company is involved in every industry in the world. STUS—revolutionizing the way we live."

By the end of the day I'm certain about one thing; Strategic Technology Universal Systems embodies capitalism in a socialist world. This, of course, creates conflict in my mind. How does one ignore human suffering and injustice in the world? If man is by nature corrupt isn't there a need for him to be controlled? Does a redistribution of wealth help anyone? If I was allowed four strikes and Billy Williams only had two would I be a better baseball player than him? What the hell is the Ghost Room and do I really want to know? You have to understand that things are happening so fast that I am having trouble digesting it all. Yet, there is something intriguing about STUS and I can't help but wonder where does Dawn fit in?

Walter Tize said something else. After lunch I entered his office and he said, "Hi."

I replied, "Hi."

He said, "No idiot, H.I. I'm designating you as an historical Investigator—H.I. Or is that hysterical investigator? Oh well, it's all the same."

"What does that mean?" I ask.

"Whenever there is a need to know what events have taken place in the

past you will handle the request.”

“An historian.”

“More than that. You will have to delve deeper than what is readily available. You will uncover facts, reveal information, sight trends, and provide conclusions.”

“Is that important?”

“There is an old adage that says that history repeats itself. When you look in the mirror you see the future. Yes, it is important. You don’t understand it now, but Alice, you are about to step through the looking glass.”

“It’s only my second day,” I state with a little trepidation.

“No guts?”

“That’s not it. How do you know that I’m qualified?”

“Sooner or later, it’s going to Dawn on you that we know more about you than you realize. In some instances we know more about you than you know about yourself. You, ya pain-in-the-ass, are qualified.”

I don’t say much on the ride home and neither does Red.

At dinner the conversation revolves around the collapse of a bridge in Indiana. It’s just another example of the deterioration of a long neglected infra-structure. There is a knock at the door which my father answers. In a few minutes he calls me into the foyer. When I arrive my father says, “These two police officers would like to talk with you.”

Two large mean-looking law enforcers look at me. The bigger one says, “George Clymer, you’re under arrest. Turn around and put your hands behind your back.” He then asks my father to get my tablet. They attach thumb cuffs and lead me out of the house. Behind me I hear my father say, “I knew it.”

I’m in shock. All that I can mutter is, “What did I do?” I don’t get an answer. The police vehicle is big, militaristic, and intimidating. It’s painted black with the insignia of the National Police. I feel kind of numb like I’m going through the motions but I’m not really there.

One police officer opens the rear door and says, none too friendly, “Get in!” It’s not easy stepping up into the high vehicle with my hands behind my back. He grabs the back of my shirt and literally throws me into the back seat.

As we pull away I look at the house and see my mother, father, and sister standing in the front door watching. What did I do, I wonder. Do they know about the book? Did my mother or father turn me in? Did Dee talk? Does it have anything to do with STUS? My head is spinning. I throw-up on the floor. The officer in the passenger seat curses.

When we arrive at the police station I’m led into a small interrogation room with a large mirror on one wall. I’m not stupid. There’s an observation room behind that mirror. In the center of the room are a table and two chairs. I’m instructed to sit in one and then left alone. The thumb cuffs hurt and my shoulder is getting stiff. I wait. What have you done to me Dawn? That’s not fair. I started my search on

my own. I found Dawn, not the other way around. Beware what you seek for the light that shines on the truth also illuminates you. Dawn warned me. I'm thirsty and have a terrible taste in my mouth. I wait. Voices and movement can be heard outside the room but I can't tell what they are saying. My mind jumps to a vision of Dee. What if they arrest her? She would be terrified. Like I'm not?

Finally, the door opens and a detective walks in carrying my tablet. He reaches around and releases the thumb cuffs. After he takes the other seat he says, "I'm Detective Muller."

I nod.

"Where do I begin?" he says while examining my file. "George Clymer, you are on the Subversive Citizen List, have visited un-American websites, went off the grid for a prolonged period of time, requested release from the Social Compensation Program, have unauthorized software on your tablet, and have infiltrated a company that provides technology for national defense." He puts the file on the table, looks directly at me and asks, "Are you a terrorist?"

"Me, uh, what, uh, no."

"You visited www.61273???.edu last week. That website doesn't exist. How do you explain that?"

"I visited a lot of websites. I don't know anything about that particular one."

"You have Suicide Queen Encryption on your tablet. We've seen it before. See the icon? That's a warning. If we attempt to recover any browsing history, emails, or downloaded data Suicide Queen will destroy everything on the tablet. Only you have access to the information. Where did you get that Program?"

"I, I don't know, know," I stutter. "I didn't know I had it."

"We've only seen it on computers and tablets used by anarchists and spies." He leans close to me and asks, "Which are you?"

"Neither."

Detective Muller slams his hand down on the table, jumps to his feet and bellows, "You're lying! That program is so sophisticated that our best programmers haven't been able to find any way around it. This is highly sophisticated stuff on the international espionage level. You sure as hell don't have that kind of capability. Now, where did you get it?"

"I don't know how I got it on my tablet." Then something hits me. No, not Detective Muller. A thought. I ask, "If you can't access my browsing history how do you know I visited that odd-named website you mentioned?"

"Listen kid, don't play stupid with me. That will only get you in trouble. I can hold you indefinitely on national security suspicion charges. You will rot in the worst conditions possible with characters you won't believe." He makes his point, "What's your dress size?"

I don't mind admitting that I am frightened. My mother warned me what

could happen. I didn't believe her. My father probably can't wait to say, "I told you so." Maybe, I should have just fallen in line with the "good citizens" and quietly lived my life.

Detective Muller breaks into my thoughts, "Because you were flagged for visiting illegal sites your browsing record was tracked by our server. A funny thing happened, though. After you visited www.61273???.edu you went dark. Nothing. That's where you picked up Suicide Queen and ducked under the radar. What site did you visit after www.61273???.edu?"

I know it was www.AuntPeggy1776.per but I'm not telling. There is no way that I'm putting Dawn in jeopardy. If I end up in a hell-hole then that's the price of freedom. It occurs to me that the pilgrims were jailed in England before escaping to the New World. I guess Walter Tize is right, history does repeat itself. Am I the new pilgrim? Can't be. I'm just a kid from New York who found a book. Anyway, there isn't any New World to which to escape.

"You better start cooperating," Detective Muller warns, "There's more at stake than your lousy freedom." This gets my attention. "Your parents are still responsible for you. They could lose their jobs or get their SCP reduced. Your sister could become a ward of the state. Do you want your family to be broken up or to live in squalor due to your actions?"

Two things happen; 1) I fear for my family and want to protect them and 2) I get angry. My mind goes to the parades on May 17 celebrating the adoption of the constitution of New America, where freedom shines bright. What a crock. We are free to follow the rules established by faceless ruling elite. Yet, the nation is presented as one designed to protect everyone and give everyone an equal chance. America—equality for all. "How free do you feel now?" Thanks Dawn. "We the people," have no voice and essentially no rights. King George might as well be in power. I look at Detective Muller. He is a tool of the state. Instead of catching criminals, he is questioning a twenty-year-old kid who may have visited a website that the government doesn't like.

"How did you fall off the grid?" Detective Muller asks.

"What do you mean?"

"Your IIDC disappeared Friday night. How did you pull that off?"

"I didn't."

"Where were you Friday night?"

"I was just out walking in the woods," I lie. I know I was at STUS interviewing but they don't. I'm going to keep it that way. Of course, my parents could reveal that fact. I can only hope that they don't.

"It doesn't add up. Two highly sophisticated technical events perpetrated by a nobody with no technical skills doesn't make sense. Who are you associated with? What the hell is going on!?"

"I'm not associated with anyone."

"You are and I'm going to find out whom," he states. Detective Muller then asks, "Does STUS know you are on the SCL? One phone call from me and your job is history."

I smile. I can't help it—my job is history. Only Detective Muller doesn't know it.

"You think this is funny?"

"No."

"You are an enemy of the state and I'm going to bring you down."

I feel like I'm stepping off the side of a mountain and falling into a dark abyss as I say defiantly, "I've done nothing wrong! You threaten me and my family for no reason? You should be ashamed of being an automaton doing the bidding of your masters."

Detective Muller's face turns red with anger. He starts toward me but stops when his telephone chimes. I hear him say, "I've got him on a slew of charges. This kid is toast." There is a pause, then he asks, "Why?" Finally, he says, "Damn it. Well, it's your call!" He ends the call and looks at me. With a distinct sneer he spits, "OK, get out of here!"

My only reply—the only reply anyone would make is, "What?"

"You heard me—beat it!"

"Am I free?"

"Yeah!"

I look at the table and ask, "Can I take my tablet?"

"It stays here. When we break that Suicide Queen code you'll be back here. Now, blow!"

I exit the National police station and to my surprise see Virginia sitting on her Harley Davidson motorcycle across the street. When she sees me she pats the seat behind her.

"What are you doing here?" I ask.

"How did you expect to get home?"

"How did you know where I was?"

"I asked you first," she replies.

"Who told you I was here?" I press.

"George, just accept the fact that I knew and came to take you home." She starts the motorcycle. "If you don't want a ride—I'll leave."

OK, I'm not going to get any answers so I climb onto the Harley Davidson.

On the ride home, Red decides to become talkative, "What did they ask you and what did you tell them?"

"They wanted to know about my web surfing and about a program called Suicide Queen."

"And, did you spill your guts?"

"Yeah, in the back seat of the police vehicle."

“What?”

“I threw up.” Red laughs which causes her to swerve the motorcycle. I hold on tighter. That’s the first nice thing that has happened to me this whole evening. I add, “I told them nothing.”

“Did they ask about STUS?”

“They did make a comment about me being on the Subversive Citizen List and working for a company that does national defense technology.”

“Did they threaten your family?”

“Yes, how did you know?”

“It’s a tactic used quite often and quite effectively.” After a pause Virginia says, “North Korea not only jails citizens who try to leave the country without permission, but they also jail their parents, children, and grandchildren. You think that keeps the citizens in line?”

“I can see how it does.”

“Don’t underestimate your own government.”

“It’s hard to believe.”

“George, you didn’t ask for this, but you are the right person. It is going to take courage. I just want you to know that I believe in you.”

“What is going to take courage? And, what have I gotten into?”

As we ride into the darkness I can’t help but wonder if this portends things to come.

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