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WHEN I AM KING

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WHEN I AM
KING

Chapter 1

“Like Kings before me, so too may I fall. My legacy will, however, live through my works for mankind. Like Rulers before me, I too shall be subject to scrutiny. My actions will, however, live through the people I have touched. Like Gods before me, I too may be forgotten. My spirit will, however, live through the faithful and forever be present in the stones in which my texts are engraved.”

Such was the end of the will of Emmanuel T. Wilbur. Written by himself on luxurious eggshell paper, on his trusty old typewriter, the instrument he used to save and enslave. The final word was typed only hours before he stumbled out of bed, hand on his chest, eyes stretched open in fear and mouth oozing of saliva. He fell with a heavy thump on his floor, and was found seconds later by a disciple who heard the giant fall and kicked the door in. His final instructions before he stumbled into his room and locked his doors; “I need some rest, do not bother me.” His eternal slumber disturbed by weeps, cries and gasps, his body was carried into the living room and positioned on his couch until a team of paramedics arrived. The men who were deemed “enemies of wellness” by the man who claimed invincibility, dragged his fat and sloppy body out of that giant house, the Order standing by in a fine line, like they usually did to salute their messiah. One final time, they saluted their savior as his ugly being was transported into an ambulance on a spinal board.

I was in the house that day. The building that was given the nickname of Wilbur’s Resort, due to the luxurious items within, reserved only for Wilbur and his family. A large jacuzzi, a private cinema, an enormous collection of records, and in the last two years, a large swimming pool. Although Wilbur claimed that the pool was for recreation, it was clear to the Order that he was trying to lose the weight he had gradually gained through his slothful lifestyle. Two packs of

Red Marlboros, a six-pack of cheap beers, a line of cocaine and a ribeye steak, well-done and drenched in butter, including a bottle of fine cognac if guests were present, was the usual daily diet of Wilbur. His will stated that he did not want an autopsy. Though it claimed that he was “well and healthy” through his wellness therapy, and that his death was of “old age,” it was obvious to the Order that a heart attack or an overdose was the culprit. The rest of the night was spent cleaning out the room and covering up anything that could hurt the image of the savior. Cocaine, empty bottles, prescribed medications and pornographic magazines were put into an empty drum and set ablaze. The last evidence in a year-long battle to expose the man as just that, a man. No longer could the intoxicated rambles of the savior tarnish the image of the enlightened. Wilbur left nothing to his two sons, his daughter or his three ex-wives. His books, the organizations he had created and various trademarks and patents were left to his successor, Daniel Jenson, the Chairman of the Order.

I joined the Order in 1984, after nine years of studying the methods and therapies of Wilbur. The day I first picked up the new, revolutionary book in the field of wellness turned out to be the turning point in my life, and as the brochure assured, it would be a “life-changing experience.” Reading the book, titled “World Study: The Theory of Life” was the first, but far from last instruction I got from Wilbur.

I still remember turning the first page of the book; “An Introduction to the Life of Emmanuel T. Wilbur.” I read it in a very short time and without a break. Wilbur was born Lewis Tristan Wilbur in 1915 in Bakewell, Derbyshire to Jonathan Cecil Wilbur, a colonial officer in the British Army, and Annabelle Tristan Wilbur, a factory worker producing magazines and books.

According to World Study, Wilbur spent most of his childhood in the African colony of Cecilville, named after his grandfather who established the colony in South-Eastern

Africa in 1869. Wilbur spent time with a native African tribe, unnamed in the book. He claims to have used the first “theories” of World Study in 1935, at the age of 20, on a native woman who suffered from an unknown illness which gave her boils, sores and infections. The woman was “miraculously” healed from the treatments given to her by Wilbur, and he became a minor celebrity in Cecilville. In 1940, he set up his first treatment center, the Emmanuel Treatment Facility. He changed his name to Emmanuel and started referring to himself as Dr. Wilbur.

During World War 2, Wilbur was drafted and served in the Naval Forces. It is unclear how long he served, or if he even served at all, but he claims to have spent years fighting the evils of National Socialism. When he was not on the battlefield of the seas, he treated his fellow soldiers with his various treatments. He claims to have saved up to a hundred lives using his methods, and after the war he was awarded for his efforts. In 1952, Wilbur moved to London and started writing his book, World Study. He detailed his own, extraordinary life, and then laid out his theory of wellness. The treatments became known collectively as the World Studies. It claimed to cure anything from the common cold, minor mental stresses and neurosis, to terminal cancers and severe psychotic episodes. The book was conceived in 1954, after two years of dedicated writing in his small London apartment, and using his mother’s connections in the printing industry, he had over a thousand copies printed.

The book claims, rather ironically, to have “sold itself,” but critics pointed to several publishers having denied Wilbur and his book, stating that the method within were “unfounded” and “unscientific.” As such, Wilbur founded the World Publishers in 1955, and sold the book himself. Masquerading as an experienced salesman and publisher, he convinced several British bookstores to sell the book. To his own surprise, Wilbur’s creation sold in the thousands, and soon demand could not keep up. He had thousands more

printed, and all of them were sold to the masses. Money poured in, and Wilbur found, through his books, a young, beautiful woman whom he married in 1957.

Wilbur and Selma, his new wife, moved back to Cecilville in 1959, and setup the World Enlightenment Center, a small building dedicated to the techniques and treatments of Wilbur. People poured in, and Wilbur soon devised a system of education, in which a person, for a hefty price, could become a practitioner of World Study. Wilbur hired his first employee, Alfred Moore, in 1960, and Moore became the first "World Doctor." Moore was an incredibly sympathetic and caring man, he had spent years fighting for the rights of the native Africans in the British colonies. Moore and Wilbur decided to set up the Cecilia Independence Council, in hopes to create a sovereign nation based on the philosophies of World Study. A theocracy ruled by Wilbur, disguised as a democratic society of equal and progressive thought. The Council gained momentum, and due to the badly structured leadership, coupled with the immense fortune Wilbur had acquired, the Cecilville Colony became the Free State of Cecilia in 1962. Wilbur made himself State Councilor, and his Parliament was comprised of World Students, which Wilbur named the practitioners and users of World Study.

Despite being a minority, the World Students became synonymous with Cecilia. In international news, the foundation of Cecilia, despite it being unrecognized by all sovereign states, became good publicity for World Study. Wilbur established the Cecilia World Printing, and spent millions of dollars printing copies of World Study for the international market. World Study became very popular in neighboring Rhodesia, in the United Kingdom, in Germany, France and the United States. Wilbur sponsored World Enlightenment Centers, and demanded only a 50% cut of all profits obtained by the centers. In 1964, Wilbur issued the "Structure Ordinance" in the Free State of Cecilia, which in essence turned Cecilia into the Vatican. A parent

organization of all World Study groups was founded, called World Enlightenment International, which would manage profits, trademarks, patents, printing and membership.

WEI grew larger, and had, in 1974, over six million members and over fifteen million copies of World Study sold. Profits had started to decline, so Wilbur decided to expand his bibliography. To gain credibility as a legitimate researcher, Wilbur took out three million dollars from the WEI, which he used to travel around the world. Wilbur went to Egypt, Persia, China, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States down to Mexico, Brazil and Chile before returning to Cecilia. He spent over a year traveling, and in his new book "Practical Studies of Nature," Wilbur claimed to have documented unknown diseases and, subsequently, new cures for said diseases. Practical Studies of Nature became an instant success with World Students worldwide, and sold roughly five million copies within a year. More centers popped up in new places, and by 1980, the World Students were a household name in Africa, Europe and America.

In 1982, however, a respected scientist, who had done work with the Manhattan Project and various other significant scientific projects released "The World Fraud" which detailed peer-reviewed studies of Wilbur's methods, as well as interviews with former members who detailed abuse, criminal activities and fraud. The World Fraud had a major impact, and memberships fell rapidly, with more and more early converts calling out the ineffectiveness of the World Studies. In 1984, two million members were inactive, and half a million of them sent letters to the WEI directly, resigning their membership. WEI became subject to jokes, ridicule, and was outlawed in some countries. Described as critics as a "dangerous, money-hungry cult," World Enlightenment dwindled back into an obscure group. Only the most dedicated stayed, and as a result, Wilbur assigned a high-ranking World Doctor, Alice Reynders, to create The World Order, a clergy of only the most dedicated World

Students. World Order invitations was sent to various members worldwide, and they were promised free housing, food and treatment for free work on behalf of the organization. Wilbur set up the Enlightened World Center, in the former World Enlightenment Center, which would house the faithful. Roughly one hundred people packed their bags and moved to Cecilia, leaving house, family and work behind for spiritual freedom.

I was one of the lucky few. I was invited to join in 1984 and moved there within a few days. I sent my only daughter to live with her mother, abandoned my apartment and quit my job all in the same day. The invitation informed me of an "Order of the Enlightened," which would do work in World Study to research, develop and spread the cures and treatments in a world that had rejected them. It was my mission to work from early morning to late night, on helping Wilbur research his techniques and write them down for him. Enclosed was a plane ticket from the United States to an airport in South Africa.

That was many years ago. I am no longer a member of the Order, no longer associated with World Study, and no longer a proponent of the cure that would save mankind.

Chapter 2

My first day at the World Enlightenment Center was one I will never forget. When I left the plane in South Africa, I was picked up in a large SUV by a young man with a large beard. He met me with a huge smile and just about broke my hand when he shook it with such power and strength, as if he wanted to show me just how enthusiastic he was, and how enthusiastic I would become.

“Greetings, Brother! I’m David, I’ll get ya’ to the Center, sound good?” He told me. I was a little surprised by the short speech and rapid actions, so I just told him “Sure.” and hopped aboard. It was a very long way from South Africa to Cecilia, so I spent some time reading, some time sleeping and had an occasional conversation with David. Just small-talk, nothing out of the ordinary, mostly about how beautiful South Africa was, if I had ever been there, how long I had been a World Student, and so on.

“I joined back in in 1978, good Sir! It was some experience, I tell ya’! This cute little thing came up to me and gave me this little book. How dumb is that, huh? Just have these chicks give out ya’ book, no wonder I read that thing.” He said, laughing the entire time between his sentences.

“Ha-ha, yeah.” I said. “I joined in 1975, my brother was in the group.” I told David.

“Oh, is he coming too?” asked David.

“No, he left.” I said, met by an awkward pause from David, whose expression changed from manically happy to seriously mad.

“Ah, he’s one of them!” Said David, with a really apathetic and ridiculing tone in his voice.

“It’s only a shame for him. Imagine what he could accomplish if he wasn’t so thick, no offence!” Said David. I just said “Yeah, none taken.” and left it like that. I quickly

dived back into the book I was reading, and the rest of the trip was mostly silent.

After a few hours, we arrived at the border of Cecilia, and directly into the capital of Cecilville. Practical Studies of Nature had let me to believe that Cecilia was a thriving nation, comparable to the United States, but with an African charm to it. I was met mostly by small buildings, sand, broken roads and street vendors. At an intersection, an older man came up to my window and offered me a pineapple, which I politely declined. We arrived at the Center after about half an hour of driving around Cecilville.

The Center was located next to the headquarters of World Enlightenment International, and we parked there. David hopped out quickly, and before I could even open my doors, David had already opened them for me and gestured with his right arm which way we were going. We walked up to the front door, and inside to a small reception. The Center apparently used to be a hospital, which was bought and renovated by Wilbur, so a distinctive smell of sterile equipment, harsh chemicals and death met my nose. I expected David to comment, but I assumed he had already gotten used to it.

David stood still in the reception, apparently waiting for someone. He turned around and smiled at me from time to time, but other than that he stood with his hands on his hips, tapping his feet with his large boots, which echoed down the halls. Finally, a woman dressed in all black, except a white shirt underneath her black jacket emerged from behind a set of curtains behind a desk.

“Ah, David! And who did you bring with you?” She asked.

“This here is... Well, I never did get ya’ name Brother, did I?” He asked me.

“No, it’s William.” I told the lady, smiling at her as she smiled back. She took a clipboard from the desk and

moved her finger up and down, before turning to the next page and stopping about halfway.

“William Thurston?” She asked. I nodded yes. She made a check mark with a pencil she drew from her pocket before proclaiming “Right this way,” and walking down the right hall.

David walked after her, and I followed suit. Behind the first door was a large room with windows in the ceiling, possibly some sort of sanctuary for terminal patients when it was a hospital. The floor was tiles, the same with the walls, and the sunshine blaring through the windows mixed with the dust in the air created a hazy atmosphere. I was only in there for a few seconds before the lady opened another door and led us through, but my eyes were burning and my breath was short. The second room was a dark hallway with a small, wooden staircase that didn’t seem to lead anywhere. David and the lady walked up the stairs with me, and walked through the first door at the first floor.

It turned out to be yet another hallway, with several doors on each side. We walked into the fifth door on the left, and it turned out to be my new room. Two bunk beds were positioned in each corner of the room, with two closets at the end of each bed.

“This is your new room. You’re the first one here, so you can choose which bed you want, and which closet you want. Please use only half of the closet so your bunkmate can use the other half.” the lady told me. It wasn’t ideal but I had great expectations, so I nodded, smiled and thanked her before her and David left the room. David left with a “See ya’, bro!” and a wave before closing the door. I waved back, and as soon as the door was closed, I laid down in the bottom bunk on the right. I was pretty exhausted from the whole trip, so before I could even open my bag and get comfortable, I ended up falling asleep.

When I woke up, I noticed two male voices having a conversation. Startled by the new surrounding and unknown

voices, I quickly woke up and looked around. One guy sat in the bottom bunk next to mine, and another guy was in the bunk above me.

“Hello!” proclaimed the man opposite of me.

“Ah, hey!” said the man in the bunk above me, leaning over the bed and looking down at me.

“Hey, are you my new roommates?” I asked jokingly, which led them to laugh.

“Yeah, that’s us! When did you come here?” Asked the guy opposite of me while the other guy looked down at me.

“Not sure, probably a few hours, what time is it?” I asked.

The guy opposite of me looked at his watch and said “About 5:30.” I had slept for two hours, and was still tired, so I turned around to lay on my back, and positioned my hands behind my head.

“Oh, I arrived a few hours ago then. I’m William.” I said.

“Pleasure to meet you, I’m George.” said the guy opposite of me.

“Pleasure, I’m Jack.” said the guy looking down at me. I nodded at them.

“So, you were invited too?” Asked Jack. Kind of a stupid question I thought, but I answered.

“Yeah, a few days ago.” I said.

“Ah, great. When did you join?” Said George.

“1975.” I replied.

“Great.” George replied, before resuming his conversation with Jack. They were talking about the smell of the building, and Jack mentioned something about him remembering them smell from his time as a nurse. Before I completely dozed off again, a few knocks came from our door, before it was opened. It was the lady from the reception. “Please come down.” she said, before going to the neighboring door and doing the same routine.

Jack, George and I left our beds, reluctantly, and followed a small line of people down the hall, into the room which resembled a sanctuary. A group of maybe one hundred people, mostly males, sat on the tile floors, looking towards the back of the room. I found a spot that wasn't too dirty and sat down, George and Jack sat next to me. In front of me sat a skinny guy with long hair in a ponytail. I could see his thick rimmed glasses from the back of his head, and his bushy beard emerging from the sides of his head. I noticed people from all walks of life. Most were white, but a significant amount of black and Asian people were present. I also noticed a small group of guys speaking in Russian, and a smaller group of Indians laughing.

After a few minutes of sitting, a door in the back opened. Without any warning or preparation, there he was. From the door came a large figure. It was Wilbur. People started clapping and yelling, which Wilbur met with a smile and wave. I had only seen picture of him, so seeing his big size, greasy hair and rotten teeth was slightly unsettling, but I rationalized with the immense stress the guy had been under as a reason for his bad appearance. Besides, he wore a nice, brown suit with a purple tie and a white shirt underneath. His smile was enchanting, and his mere presences expressed charisma. Once the clapping slowed down, Wilbur started talking.

“Well, isn’t this nice! The loyal has finally gathered. Let’s make this world amazing together, shall we?” He said. It was met with applause, people shouting “Yes!” and even a few people crying.

“Now, dear friends. We have a lot of work do, don’t we?” He said. “Yes!” people shouted.

“Let’s first start out with a little introduction, I can imagine some of you all being quite confused.” He said, ending with a big smile and people laughing.

“Well, I don’t need an introduction, do I”? He asked. People laughed and a few said “No.”

“I’m Wilbur, and you are the World Students. I am immensely proud to have you all here, especially with the backlash from these so-called scientists and their nonsensical attacks on our group!” Said Wilbur. People started booing when he talked about these scientists, but Wilbur smiled all the way through.

“They hold no power if we do not let them have it.” He said. “So let’s focus on what is important; improving this rotten world and the people in it, so that we may leave behind a strong society for our children, and their children!” He yelled. People once again applauded and yelled.

“Consider yourselves fortunate, for when this world is recycled, you will be the martyrs of tomorrow!” Said Wilbur. The applause continued. I noticed a small group of people dressed like the lady at the reception appearing in the back of the room in a neat line.

“Now, for the practical information. You are all here of your own free will and desire to better this world. I have assigned my beloved staff to the creation of a new group, and order if you will, and you will be the clergy, working hard to expand the World Studies and spreading them globally!” Said Wilbur.

“There they are, in fact.” He said and pointed to the back. People turned around and saw the staff, who smiled and nodded. “These people, let me tell ya’, are a gift to mankind! I would not stand here were it not for them.” Said Wilbur. This resulted in an applause at the staff, who kept smiling and nodding. They looked happy and excited, which rubbed off on the new recruits.

“I invite you all to follow the staff into our study room, where we will do some studies. Before you go though, know that this is your point of no return. If you do not wish to be a part of us, do not waste neither my, nor your fellows time. Leave now, or forever be a member of the order.” Said Wilbur with a strong shift of tone in his voice. Where he had been joking and smiling up until now, that tone shifted into a

harsh, serious tone. People sat silently, as to suggest that they would not leave the order, and Wilbur once again smiled and said “Wonderful.” before laughing. People stood up, and the staff directed people through the reception, into the other side. A large line of people walked, and it became pretty tight in the small hall. Once we arrived at the study, a bunch of tables and stools sat ready for us. People started, rather instinctively, to sit down. This appeared to be a practice in World Study known as “Fellow’s Whisper,” in which two individuals talk to each other about their worries and problems in an attempt to resolve them. This is usually the first technique new recruits are presented with, as it is very simple and has a very fast effect. I sat down next to George, and in front of me sat a young girl. She had dark, red hair and freckles. She smiled and reached out her hand for me to shake. I shook her hand and introduced myself as William.

“Nice to meet you, William. I’m Claire.” She said.

Before we could start a conversation, Wilbur once again positioned himself in the center of the room and asked for people’s attention, which he immediately got.

“Now, all of you are familiar with the Fellow’s Whisper, correct?” He asked, which was met with nods and “yep.” “Excellent.” He said, “I want you to do a session for the day. Don’t think of it as much as treatment for now, but use it as an introduction to your new fellow order members.” He said. People nodded again, and he proclaimed “Begin!” Immediately, people began the process, and Claire was quick to ask her first question.

“Are you happy?” She asked. I said yes.

“Are you in love?” She asked. I said no.

“Are you excited to be here?” She asked. I said yes.

After three rapid questions, it is the next person’s turn to ask. The intensity of the questions are supposed to increase with time, until one individual encounters a question they cannot answer. These are then nodded down and used in later techniques as the “reasons for discomfort.” In essence, the

theory is to bombard the brain with commands, until one command does not produce a result, which is then later worked on. I started my turn.

“Are you scared?” I asked. She said yes.

“Do you want to go home?” I asked. She said no.

“Do you miss your family?” I asked. She said no. Her turn started.

“Are you sexually attracted to me?” She asked. I said yes.

“Have you ever regretted sex?” She asked. I said yes.

“Do you have homosexual tendencies?” She asked. I said no.

The questions have a tendency to focus on sex, which was a major part of World Study and the source of many frustrations people faced, according to Wilbur. I started my turn.

“Have you ever touched someone sexually without their consent?” I asked. She said yes.

“Have you ever been sexually molested?” I asked. She said yes.

“By someone in your family?” I asked. She said no, but I nodded it down on a piece of paper.

“Your turn.” I said.

“Have you ever killed someone?” She asked. I said yes.

“Have you ever conned someone for money?” She asked. I said no.

“Have you ever stolen from your parents?” She asked. I said no.

Fellow’s Whisper has a tendency to become boring, so it is not unusual to take a break and discuss the questions and answers. She asked me about my killing of someone.

“I was 22. It was an accident.” I said. She nodded.

“Why are you scared?” I asked.

“I left a lot to come here.” She said.

“My boyfriend and I joined the World Students in the 70’s, but he ended up leaving me and the World Students in 82’. I moved back in with my parents, who also despised my association with the Students. So when I got the invitation, it was such a relief. But I am still scared, I’m scared that I will once again want to leave. I’m not someone who settles very easily.” She said. I nodded and wrote down a few notes. “Want to continue?” She said. I said yes. “Do you often plan out your purchases before going to a store?” I asked. She said no.

“Do you smoke?” I asked. She said yes.

“Have you ever taken any drugs?” I asked. She said no.

She looked down at her papers for a while, and began her round.

“Are you divorced?” She asked. I said yes.

“Have you ever harmed yourself on purpose?” She asked. I said no.

“Do you drink?” She asked. I said no.

“Why don’t you drink?” She asked.

“My uncle lived with us, he drank a lot, so I never wanted to follow in his footsteps, as cheesy as that is.” I said.

“My uncle was a drunk, too.” She said.

There was a clear policy on drinking and doing drugs with the World Students, which stated that substance abuse was the result of trauma, and could be cured with the World Studies.

“I tried putting him through treatment, but he refused.” She said. “He actually became quite offended, and didn’t want to be part of some stupid cult, as he described it.” She said, laughing. I smiled back.

“My family has a strange relationship with the Students. My brother introduced me, but he ended up leaving a few years ago.” I said. “Why?” She asked. “I don’t know, that’s still a big issue for me. Why wasn’t it good enough for him?” I said.

“People are selfish and delusional. They refuse any help provided to them, if it means giving up comfortable distractions.” She said, practically quoting World Study, which had that exact explanation as to why people might refuse the World Studies.

“Yeah, they are.” I said. Before we could continue, Wilbur once again called for our attention.

“Well, it’s nice to be back in the Studies, is it not?” He asked. People said “Yes.” in unison.

“We have just a few more people arriving soon, so I want to hear if anyone wants to help them get introduced?” He said. Claire raised her hand, and took my hand and raised it too. Wilbur pointed to me, Claire, and a few others with their hands raised.

“Ah, excellent! Come with me.” said Wilbur. I was very excited to get a chance to speak with him while we waited for the others. I got up with Claire, and walked with Wilbur and the others outside. Wilbur immediately lit a cigarette, and a few others did too. I asked one of the men if I could borrow one, as I had left my pack in my room. He said “Sure.” and gave me one. He sparked his lighter, and with my hands tightly around the end of the cigarette, lit it.

“So, what are you all thinking of the place so far?” Asked Wilbur. “Lovely.” “Very good.” and things like that were proclaimed by the small group of maybe fifteen people. People resumed smoking and talking while looking around at the Center. I walked up to Wilbur, who looked at me and smiled.

“It’s an honor to meet you, Sir.” I said.

“Please, call me Wilbur.” He said, still smiling.

“Well, Wilbur.” I said, “How many do you think will be here?” I asked.

“Oh, probably between one and two hundred.” He said, taking a big puff on his cigarette.

“Wow, that’s a lot of people.” I said.

“Well, we need you now more than ever. The smear campaign really hit us.” He said. I continued smoking.

“Say, you’re William, right?” He said. I was very surprised that he knew me, and even recognized me.

“Yes, how did you know?” I asked him.

“I knew your brother, Joshua. What a fella, how is he?” He asked. I did not expect the leader to ask about a deserter, but I answered.

“I can’t imagine he is doing too well, -” I said, “- with him leaving and all.”

“Yeah, what a shame. What a shame.” Said Wilbur.

“He was one heck of a Student, I tell ya’. He was with me in Cecilville once, for a conference. We had a few drinks and a lovely talk.” Said Wilbur. I was not aware that Joshua had ever been in Cecilville, let alone having had drinks with Wilbur.

“If you ever see him, tell him he is still welcome here, will ya’?” Asked Wilbur. I nodded and said “Of course, Sir.”

Just as I finished my cigarette, David’s car pulled up with another, similar car following suit. Seven people emerged from the two cars.

“Welcome!” Said Wilbur. Five of them were recruits, and were surprised to see Wilbur. People took turns shaking Wilbur’s hand and he shook everyone’s hand and was all smiles. David walked up to be, lighting a cigarette.

“So, how are ya’ liking it, Brother?” He asked. “It’s nice.” I said, “Very nice.” David smiled and clapped me on the shoulder a few times. Wilbur threw his cigarette to the ground, stepped on it and directed the new recruits inside while engaging them in a similar talk to the one we received in the sanctuary. I heard him say “You’re an uneven number, one of you can do Fellow’s Whisper with me.” One of the staff walked outside to the group and told the new recruits to give their bags to us, so we could bring them inside. We took their bags and walked back to the rooms with them. The staff

directed us towards two empty rooms, and asked us to leave the bags in there. Although fifteen people were selected to do it, only I, Claire and two others ended up carrying the bags. Afterwards, the staff told us “There will be some dinners available when the new recruits are done, it’s in the Main Hall.” which apparently was the name for the sanctuary. Claire asked me if I wanted to sit down and wait with her, which I said yes to. There were a few old couches at the end of the hall, which we sat in. We didn’t talk much, and mostly sat and surveyed people coming and going to and from their rooms. It appeared that the group not helping with the bags were tasked with various tasks, one of which was cooking.

At around 6:30, Claire and I was directed by staff to the Main Hall, where most of the recruits were already seated on the floor. A large table of food stood at the end of the room. I sat down with Claire and waited for the rest to arrive. Once everyone was gathered, Wilbur came from the back of the room to the front.

“What a day it has been, huh?” He asked. People laughed and nodded. “Well, you all must be starving. We have prepared some healthy foods for you, go ahead.” Said Wilbur. People sat up and walked towards the table of good. On the left was a basket of white bread with butter on a plate, next to that a platter of roasted beef, a bowl of roasted potatoes topped with rosemary and coarse salt, and at the end of the table was a salad with a selection of dressings. It all looked fantastic. I took a plate and a fork, and began dishing food onto my plate. People sat down and ate and talked. It was a very nice atmosphere, and people seemed to be relieved at the situation. The entire time, Wilbur surveyed people eating, and still had his contagious smile. After the meal, some of the recruits gathered out plates and cutlery, and took it out back, which appeared to be a kitchen.

“You are all welcome to go get a cup of tea or coffee, or go to your rooms and have a rest. I can assure you that we

have a big day ahead of us.” Said Wilbur. People applauded one final time, and most went to their rooms. I told Claire goodnight, and continued my slumber from earlier.

Chapter 3

The next morning, I woke up at 5, when everyone else was sleeping. I decided to use this opportunity to explore the building while it was still dark, and there was nice and quiet. Since I fell asleep in my full attire, I slowly got out of my bed and sneaked across my sleeping bunkmates. I walked down the hall and into the Main Hall, where the smell of dinner was still present. I went across the reception, when I saw out of the window to the outside, three people smoking. I noticed one of them being Wilbur, but did not recognize the others. I continued to walk outside, and greeted the three men.

“Ah, William. Pleasure to see you up this early.” Said Wilbur.

“Yeah, I slept through.” I said, looking for my pack of cigarettes, which I had once again forgotten in my room. One of the men noticed I was looking for my cigarettes, so he offered me one. I thanked him and he lit it for me.

“So, William.” Said Wilbur, “How did you feel about getting this invitation?”

“I was very pleased.” I said, “It was quite a surprise, but I decided that I could use my time to spread the Study.” I told him. That wasn’t the only reason I was there, but it was a big reason.

“Glad to hear it.” Said Wilbur, before taking a big drag from his cigarette. I noticed he exposed his lower teeth each time he breathed in the smoke. His teeth were yellow and short, and had small black bits everywhere. It was quite disgusting. But as always, he wore a lovely suit and carried himself well, especially for a man of his size.

“What are the plans for tomorrow?” Asked one of the men.

“You’ll see. Let’s call it a surprise, shall we?” Said Wilbur. The man smirked and took a drag on his cigarette. He was holding it with his thumb and index finger, with the

remaining three fingers going into the air. It looked pretty stupid. Like he was doing an O.K. sign every time he smoked. Two more people came down the hallway, and out the door to smoke. Wilbur and the rest of us greeted them, and they greeted us back. Things were pretty quit in Wilbur's company, people were more than content to just stand and smoke, looking into the skies and on the ground, blowing smoke and fidgeting. I was starting to really wake up, I felt a mild breeze in the air, and the skies had turned considerably brighter. I was starting to prepare mentally for the day.

Suddenly, a larger group of people appeared. More people had awoken, and people starting gathering in different places, most outside to enjoy the fresh air, as opposed to the musty, thick air inside. It was a very special moment, kind of like being a kid again. Seeing all these grown people, congregated at one small building to live and work. I became more and more excited, the more I started thinking about it. Wilbur greeted many of the people as they came out, and was all smiles from the early morning, even among people who were still grumpy, tired and yawning.

"What do you all say we gather inside and start the day?" Wilbur proclaimed. People nodded, not many people said anything. I think they were still pretty tired. Wilbur led the way, and people slowly gathered inside the Main Hall. Just like yesterday, people sat on the cold tiles, and made small talk with their respective group. I saw George and Jack sitting, and decided to join them. Just like yesterday, the staff had gathered in the back of the room, and after a few minutes, Wilbur walked to the front, stood center, and smiled with his hands behind his back. A small applause met him, and he nodded and smiled.

"Thank you, thank you." Said Wilbur

"I want to talk to you today, about something that will drastically alter your lives. In fact, I want you all to completely reset everything you have previous held. This is

the day your lives really begin. Sound good?" Wilbur asked. People shouted "Yes!"

"Fantastic. Now, as I said, we have quite a day ahead of us, dear friends." Said Wilbur. He paused and looked out at us.

"I have prepared a little show for you." Said Wilbur, before fetching a whiteboard in a display, which he dragged next to him. He took out a marker, and on the top of the board he wrote "The New Era of The Studies."

"We have seen immense backlash from the media, the public, and the so-called experts. Let me tell you, folks; they are madmen! They want to rip you and your loved ones of all your money, your time and your resources!" Said Wilbur.

"Let us show them that World Study is the truth! We cannot rest at long as there exists disease, mental delusions, poverty and discomfort within our fellow humans!" Said Wilbur. Wilbur has this weird accent. It was mostly British, but very sloppy, and had a tinge of Afrikaaner Dutch to it. It was weird, but very hypnotizing.

"So, as you have all so faithfully congregated here, with me. I want to tell you all exactly what you are doing here. You will be known as the World Students Order of the Enlightened, and you will be the army of the World Studies. We fight not with guns and bombs, but with words and books!" Wilbur yelled, his eyes widening and spit flying from his mouth.

"As Students in the W.S.O.E. you will work with me personally, as we try out my new techniques and perfect them for the rest of the world. You will be my power, as I have become old and frail. I cannot do this work alone, dear friends, I need you all." He said, while pointing into the crowd. People applauded Wilbur, and while he was wiping his mouth and face from saliva and sweat, he again walked over to the whiteboard and jotted down "The W.S.O.E. = POWER OF THE WORLD!"

“I would like to dedicate today to studying. I have provided you all with my two darling books; World Study and Practical Studies. Now, the next in the installment will be of a much different character.” Said Wilbur.

“The Studies I have tried have been on the poor and sick, but you are neither. My next installment will focus on the enlightenment of those already cured. What is the step above wellbeing? That is the question I seek to answer, dear friends.” Said Wilbur, before jotting down “Step above wellbeing: Enlightenment.” It was pretty clear why we were brought here. Wilbur wanted to develop his new techniques. His old techniques focused on the wellbeing of poor and sick people, and I suspected Wilbur had found something beyond this world in terms of spiritual wellbeing. When it was clear to me, I got very excited.

“I invite you to come with me into the Study Room, so we can begin our first practice.” Said Wilbur, before walking to the back of the room and towards the Study Room. Everyone followed suit. In the Study Room, the staff had put down books, two books for a pair. It was, of course, World Study and Practical Studies. I sat down and in front of me sat a man I had not previously met. He was dark, maybe Arab, and had a short, black beard. He smiled and reached out his hand, I shook it.

“Greetings, I’m Ramy.” He said. I told him my name and greeted him.

“Are you excited?” He asked me. “Yeah.” I told him. When everyone was seated, Wilbur stood in the center of the room, and turned around a few times to make sure everyone was paying attention.

“Excellent. Now, let’s get ready. In front of you are my books. You have all read them, I suppose.” Said Wilbur, laughing at the last statement, which people also laughed at.

“Right, the partner in front of you, I want you to each take one of the books. You will study the words within them, and you will jot down your favorite passages, the ones

you found most beneficial. Along the way, you will consult your partner about the passages and get their opinion. Sound good?" Wilbur asked. People nodded. People followed the order, I took the World Study, and Ramy took Practical Studies. I knew immediately where to begin; Chapter Six. I remember the first time I read World Study. My brother, Joshua, bought the book from a street recruiter back in 1975, and read it in less than a week. I remember him talking about it a lot, about how "The medicinal industries and the psychologists are full of it." and "The only way to spiritual wellbeing is through study." He urged me to read the book, which I did. First time I read it, I found it rather boring and bland. The so-called theories and methods seemed like copies of older thoughts and ideas. But then I reached Chapter Six, which detailed the first treatment one could do. I suggested to Joshua that we do it, and he enthusiastically agreed. So we sat down in my living room, and we did the Fellow's Whisper. I started.

"Have I been a good brother to you? I asked. He said yes.

"Do you love mom?" I asked. He said no. I stopped. "What?" I said. "You don't love mom?" I asked him, rather offended.

"Sure, but she annoys me." He said.

"That's not what I asked. I said.

"Okay, fine. Yes, I love mom." He said. He started.

"Do you want to move back home?" He asked. I said no.

"Do you love dad?" He asked. I said yes.

"Do you miss Rebecca?" He asked. I said yes.

"I knew it." He said.

"Josh, you're doing this wrong. It says in World Study that you're supposed to be impartial and not offer your opinion while doing Fellow's Whisper. Please, can we continue?" I said, rather frustrated.

"This is pretty stupid, don't you think?" He said.

“No, actually I don’t. You seem to have a lot of pent-up trauma, Josh. Maybe that’s why you’re not doing this right?” I yelled at him. “I don’t think I can do this with you. Maybe you should go down to the Center and try with a professional.” I said.

“I can’t afford that!” He said.

“I’ll pay, don’t worry. You need help, bro.” I told him, before he walked out of my door and drove home. I kept on reading Chapter Six, and tried the Fellow’s Whisper on myself. World Study explicitly said that Fellow’s Whisper is meant for two people, but I did it on myself. So I began.

“Am I still in love with Rebecca? Yes.”

“Do I consider myself a failure? Yes.”

“Do I hate my brother? Yes.”

After the three questions, I pondered what I should do. I didn’t want to just keep asking myself questions, World Study said that asking too many questions at once would cloud the brain and not produce satisfactory results. But I tried again.

“Do I want to die? No.”

“Am I scared of death? Yes.”

“Am I sorry for killing Joseph? Yes.”

I became bored. I didn’t feel like I made any major revelations. I tried again.

“Should I apologize more? Yes.”

“Should I tell Joseph’s mother that I am sorry? Yes.”

That’s when I started to feel a lump in my throat. I had hit something that still had an impact on me. I went down the Road, as World Study calls it when you go further into the traumatic experiences still effecting you.

“Should I send money to Joseph’s mother? Yes.”

“Am I willing to contact Joseph’s mother? No.”

“Should I contact Joseph’s mother? Yes.”

I had made a breakthrough, finally. World Study calls this Traumatic Revelation, the moment when you narrow down the specific action needed to relieve yourself from the

trauma. I decided to write Joseph's mother a member. As I looked back up from Chapter Six, I noticed that Ramy had already filled half a page with notes about Practical Studies. I turned my head to my partner on the side, and saw that he had written down only one thing; "Why all the sex-stuff?" Wilbur walked around from table to table, asking people about their notes, and engaging in small conversations. He would walk to the next person, hands behind his back, and his smile growing wider and wider. He reached my table.

"So, William. What have you written?" He asked.

My page was still blank

"Sorry Mr. Wilbur, I was stuck in a thought." I said.

"What thought?" He asked.

"The first time I read Chapter Six and tried Fellow's Whisper." I told him.

"Hmm, interesting! Any thoughts you care to share with me?" He asked me.

I told him yes, and he pointed his finger upwards, asking me to stand up and follow him. Wilbur and I walked into a room in the back of the Study Hall, one I had yet to see. It turned out to be Wilbur's personal office. It looked amazing. He had a large cocobolo desk, with a typewriter and blocks of paper on it. A small lamp and an empty cup occupied the rest of the table. Behind his leather chair was a shelf filled to the brim with books. He had so many, some of them were stacked on top of the shelf. He also had a small African sculpture of a naked woman. In front of his chair was a large picture of himself, a trophy picture. He had shot and killed a large, male lion, and stood above it.

He invited me to sit in front of his desk, on a small, fold-up chair. Wilbur sat behind his desk. He loosened the top button of his shirt, exposing his fat neck, and loosened his tie. He opened a drawer in the desk and pulled out a roll of toilet paper, of which he took off a piece and wiped his forehead and lips.

“Well, -” He said, “- what is it you were thinking of, sonny?”

“The first time I did Fellow’s Whisper.” I said.

“Did you like it?” He asked me.

“No, it was actually a pretty bad experience. I did it with Josh.” I told him.

“Ah, Joshua!” He proclaimed. “Why did it go so badly?” He asked me.

“Well, Joshua thought the therapy was ridiculous.” I told him.

“How so?” He asked.

“He kept commenting on my answers.” I told him.

“What answers?” He asked me.

“I told him about a girl.” I told him.

“Which girl?” He asked.

“Rebecca.” I replied.

Wilbur took out a pen from his drawer and took some notes. His handwriting was too sloppy for me to understand what he was writing.

“Now, William. What did you do about this?” He asked me.

“I did something I shouldn’t have.” I told him.

“What did you do?” He asked me. His stare had been unbroken since he sat down, except for when he fetched the pen and wrote his notes, and although I tried to look around the room, his gaze always met me when I looked back at him.

“I did the therapy on myself.” I told him.

“On yourself?” He asked me.

“Yes.” I said.

Wilbur broke his eye contact once again to write some notes. He looked at me, then back at the paper, then back at me, and then back at the paper again. He wrote almost two lines on the paper before putting down the pencil and clasping his hands together. He looked at me for a while before speaking.

“Did it work?” He asked me.

“Yes.” I replied.

He looked at me for about thirty seconds, no expression on his face. Then he picked up his pen once again, and wrote two new lines down. Once again, he looked up at me.

“How did it work? What happened?” He asked me.

“I reached a Traumatic Revelation.” I told him.

“By yourself?” He asked me. I said “Yes.”

It suddenly hit me that I was perhaps stepping out of line. That questioning the techniques could be perceived as rude. I waited for Wilbur’s response. Wilbur was writing away on his notes, line after line filled the paper with his garbled handwriting.

“Now, William. If what you are saying is true, this could be revolutionary. Are you lying to me?” He asked me.

“No Sir.” I told him.

“Fantastic. Well, this has given me a lot to think about. Would you be willing to try out this technique again? If this is something we can replicate and document, it could be the entire theme of the new book!” He said. He suddenly smiled again, and I was very relieved.

“Thank you, William. It seems you aren’t the only bright mind in your family.” He told me. I smiled and thanked him.

“You can go back and study if you want.” He told me. I once again thanked him and returned to my desk with Ramy. Ramy had filled an entire paper with notes and began on a new piece of paper.

“So, what did he want?” Ramy asked.

“Oh, we just chatted a bit.” I told him.

“About what?” He asked. I didn’t want to tell him about the technique.

“Wilbur knew my brother.” I told Ramy. Ramy nodded and went back to studying.

I flipped through a few pages, mostly Chapter Six, but didn’t really read or write anything. After about half an hour of

skimming pages and making small talk with Ramy, Wilbur emerged from his office and asked for everyone's attention.

"Everyone, please! I hope you have all had a lovely time taking notes, you are asked to return these notes to me. A staff member will come and pick them up shortly. Thank you for your time, you are welcome to stay and talk, or talk around. I remind you that Cecilia is a beautiful country with many recreational activities to explore!" Wilbur said. People got up and left their notes behind. On the way out, I bumped into Claire again.

"Oh, hey Willie!" She said.

"Hey Claire." I said.

"Have you been in Africa before?" She asked me.

"No, I never left the states." I told her. "What about you?"

"Yes, I was born in South Africa. My parents are French." She told me.

Claire and I walked outside to have a smoke. A large gathering of members ended up going outside, either to smoke or get some fresh air. I didn't really say anything to Claire, and when I was done smoking, I went back to my room to read. I decided to brush up on World Study.

Chapter 4

I couldn't really get myself to read. I was excited. I fantasized about the future in the W.S.O.E. I lied under my covers, hands behind my head and let my mind wander. Could I have possibly found the next revelation in World Study? I started to think about the many stories I had heard about Wilbur. About his contributions in the British Army, his many adventures in Asia, Africa and America. The natives he had walked among, and the many diseases he had found cures for. Wilbur talked in Practical Studies about one particular case, a young girl in China who had convulsions, seizures, fits of anger, and blood in her vomit and excrement. Wilbur was asked by her mother to find a cure. Because the girl was too young and sick to engage in Fellow's Whisper therapy, Wilbur devised a physical method of therapy he called Solid Fields. Using acupunctural pressure points, and making the girl focus on the therapy by putting strong herbs in her nose, Wilbur was able to bring the girls seizures down, and she gradually gained better speech. When the girl was fully articulate, Wilbur used Fellow's Whisper to cure the remaining ill. Wilbur wrote in the final chapter of Practical Studies that the girl, now one year after the end of her therapy, was completely free of complications and illness.

I often wondered why Wilbur was chosen to administer these revelations. He was charismatic, friendly and intelligent, but that's it. He was also old, frail and forgetful. How could he have overlooked my results from personal Fellow's Whisper? I suspected that Wilbur would need a successor when he couldn't do his work anymore. What could I do to get into his position?

I was interrupted in my thoughts by George coming into the room. He had stayed behind, taking notes with Jack. He sat on his bad, and looked over at me.

"So, how are you liking it so far?" He asked me.

“It’s nice here. Like being in college again, huh?” I told him

“I wouldn’t know. Say, what did Wilbur want with you?” He asked me.

“He just wanted to talk about my brother.” I told him.

“Your brother?” He asked.

“Yeah, my brother knew Wilbur. He was an early convert.” I told him.

George nodded, and started looking into his backpack. He pulled out a copy of World Study and began reading it.

For the first time in a long time, I had started missing Joshua. Talking about him with Wilbur had ignited a small flame in me, and I was still wondering about my own answer to Wilbur, that I presumed that he was not good. It still had not dawned on me fully that I was going to be here for a while, and that I really had nothing to go back to, so I decided that I had nothing to lose by calling him.

I got out of bed and into the Main Hall, where I spotted a staffer, the woman I met on the first day in the reception, actually. I lightly poked her shoulder, and she turned to me with a smile.

“Hey, can I borrow a telephone?” I asked her.

“What for?” She asked me.

“I want to call my brother.” I told her.

“I’m sorry, Sir. If you want to use the telephone, you will have to be cleared by Wilbur first. I can sign you up for a call if you want?” She told me. I found it very strange. Why couldn’t I just call me brother?

“I’ll pay for the time, don’t worry.” I told her.

“That’s not the issue, Sir. What we do here can’t leave the premises before Wilbur had approved of it. If you were to share unfinished ideas with the public, that could be detrimental to the organization. Do you understand, Sir?” She told me. I rolled my eyes at her.

“Fine, I suppose. Can I talk to Wilbur then? He knows my brother.” I said.

“I don’t believe he has time right now, Sir.” She told me. I was getting pretty irritated, so I walked a few steps in front of her, so I could just see the windows to the outside. Just as I thought, there he was. Smoking and laughing with a few members.

“He doesn’t look very busy to me.” I said. Before she could reply, I walked towards the reception.

“Sir! His wife is visiting, I don’t think they want to be bothered.” She said.

“Fine, can I go smoke then?” I said, with a pretty harsh tone. I know it’s not her fault, but I was irritated.

“Of course, Sir.” She said, before turning around and walking away. I walked outside.

“Ah, here comes trouble!” Said Wilbur, which was met with laughs.

“Hey Sir. Do you mind if I – “ Before I could continue, I was interrupted.

“This is my dear wife, Selma!” He said. I shook the hand of the lady standing next to him. She was tall, skinny, and with very light skin. Her eyes were piercing blue, and her teeth white like ivory. A complete contrast to Wilbur.

“Good to meet you.” She told me, closing the handshake with a bright smile.

“You too, Ma’am. I’m William.” I told her.

“William, who?” She asked.

“William Thurston.” I said.

“Thurston? Say, do you know a Joshua Thurston?” She asked. I was still pretty amazed that my brother was apparently so well-known with Wilbur and his associates.

“That’s my brother. Actually, I wanted to ask if I could phone him really quickly. I’ll pay for the call.” I told Wilbur and Selma.

“Of course, sonny! There’s a telephone in my office, you can use it.” said Wilbur.

“Thank you very much, Sir!” I told him and smiled. I walked very briskly into his office and looked for the phone. It wasn’t on his desk, but on a small table in front of that giant trophy picture. I picked it up and dialed Joshua’s number. I was met with a sharp tone, but then it appeared to be calling. A few seconds went by before the tone stopped.

“... Hello?” I heard from the other end of the line.

“Hey, Joshua?” I said.

“Will! My God, how are you?” Said Joshua.

“Doing well, Josh. I’m in Cecilia.” I told him. It was met with silence.

“Josh?” I said.

“In Cecilia?” He said. I said “Yes.”

“What are you doing there?” He asked me. His tone changed and he sounded worried, I could just tell it. When you know someone for a long time you can pick up their emotions through their voice, it’s even described in World Study as the Emotional Tie.

“Wilbur invited me. He’s been talking a lot about you, you’re invited down here too.” I told him.

“Are you serious?” He said. I said “Yes.”

“I don’t know what you expected, Will. It’s so nice to finally hear from you, but what the fuck are you doing in Cecilia?” He said, clearly mad.

“Josh, I’m just here to develop the methods. It’s lovely down here, lovely people and it’s always sunny. I think you should consider it.” I said.

“Wow. I don’t want you to contact me before you’re back home, Will. Good luck.” He said, before hanging up. I sat with the phone to my ear, tone blaring for a while before putting down the ringer. I didn’t want to go back to Wilbur and tell him what Josh told me, and I was very angry, so I decided to go sit in the Study Room for a while.

I noticed Claire sitting and taking notes. I sat down next to her, she could apparently see my frustrations.

“What’s wrong?” She asked.

“My brother.” I said.

“Want to do some Fellow’s Whisper?” She asked me.

“No, I just want to do something.” I said.

“Well, I haven’t seen Cecilia yet, we could gather a small group and go into town?” She said. That sounded really nice, and I still hadn’t gotten much of a chance to see anything other than the four or five rooms in this building that I had access to. I said “Sure.” and smiled.

“I think David can drive us, I’ll go check” She said before packing up her notes and her books. I sat and looked at her. Her movements were so calculated and calm. I really liked her hair, too. She was just a very beautiful girl. She tapped the shoulder of a staffer and asked for David, he pointed her towards the Main Hall, and she appeared to have seen him. She was away for a few seconds before returning with David on her tail. A got up and walked towards them.

“Let’s go see Cecilia, yeah?” Said David. He was just as optimistic as the first time I saw him. I said “Sure,” and we walked outside. Before entering David’s car, David walked over to Wilbur and whispered something into his ear. Wilbur nodded and gave David a thumbs up. David gestured us to follow him, and we got into his car, in the back. David drove in reverse, and the followed the road just outside of the entry of the Center, towards a large settlement. The roads were pretty empty, I saw a few people here and there. In Practical Studies, Wilbur described Cecilia as a thriving metropolis of World Students. I saw a mother with three children, white, and a father with his son, black. Wilbur formed Cecilia as a multiracial and equal society, and as far as the wellbeing of people were concerned, it seemed everyone was equally poor. It probably was a bad neighborhood, so I didn’t think too much of it.

We reached the center of Cecilville, which had a lot of old British architecture from the 1800’s. I saw a bookstore with World Study in the display window, I saw a man wearing a t-

shirt with Wilbur's face on it, and I saw a building called the "World Education Center," which was an unrecognized college formed by Wilbur. They had legitimate studies like psychology and economics, but they also had an education on World Study. Young people, black and white, came to the education center in nice suits and briefcases. It was a pleasant sight. The entire time, mosquitoes flew in my face and the sun was cooking me alive. I noticed Claire was also sweating a lot.

"We can go to the store and get us some water." David said. Claire and I agreed and he stopped close by at small shop. It was a house, renovated to be a store, and I immediately noticed a sticker on the door which said "Welcome World Students!"

We walked to the refrigerator with drinks, which lit up the mostly dark and unlit store. Claire took out three bottles of water. It was a local brand, called "Cecil Refresh," supposedly filled to the brim with fresh, African water. David paid for them with American dollars. Cecilia never established their own currency, so most people used American dollars, South African rand and Botswana pula. They also still used the old Rhodesian dollar sometimes, despite it being replaced with the Zimbabwean dollar a few years ago. As David put the banknote on the counter, the clerk looked at us and started to smile.

"Ah, you are the new Students?" He asked me and Claire.

"Indeed they are!" Said David. "They are gonna be heroes, I tell ya'!"

"Oh wow, I am so happy to have to here. Please, these are on me!" Said the clerk. David thanked him, then Claire and I said thank you too. We took the water, opened it and drank about half of the bottles each. Before we left, the clerk came from the back of the counter and shook our hands. It was awkward, but we smiled and smiled at him. We left the store and went back into the car.

“Wow, what a reception.” Said Claire.

“Oh yeah, you are gonna be celebrities down here!”

Said David.

“I have something I want to show ya’ll.” Said David, as he took a right turn.

It dawned on me that David was Australian. What a long way to travel. I couldn’t keep my curiosity to myself, so I decided to find out who he was.

“Hey, David” I said.

“Yep?” He answered.

“You’re Australian, right?” I asked

“Indeed I am!” He said.

“What made you come all this way?” I asked him.

“Well, that’s quite some story, mate. I joined back in, uh... 75? Yeah, 75.” He said.

“How did you end up in Cecilia?” I asked.

“I wanted to go meet Dr. Wilbur. His book cured my arthritis with Fellow’s Whisper in the Perth World Center.” He said.

We had arrived at a park. Surrounding it were some large buildings, and I noticed the street was called “Emmanuel T. Wilbur Street.” David got out and walked towards the center of the park. As Claire and I followed, we noticed a statue of a man in the center, on top of a fountain. As we got closer, I realized that it was a statue of Wilbur. It was made of metal, bronze maybe. He was holding a book in his hand, and as always, his distinctive smile was engraved in stone.

“They erected this beauty a year ago, when that old bastard Price published that garbage he called the World Fraud. Everything that Wilbur had worked for, wiped away by just a single person. The people of Cecilville erected it to show their support. I remember the first time Wilbur saw it, I drove him down here. He broke down crying, it was amazing! I had never seen that old fool cry before. Wow, I’ll never forget that.” Told David. Claire and I looked in amazement. It was a great statue.

“Well, that’s really what I wanted to show you. Look around, guys, I need to go take a piss!” David said, before he stumbled away. I walked closer to the statue, and saw an inscription on the bottom. It was a plaque, plated in gold.

“To the Brilliant Mind of Cecilia: Emmanuel Tristan Wilbur.”

Claire and I stared for a while. I decided to go for a smoke, but had once again forgotten my pack at home. Claire saw me looking for it, so she offered me one of hers. We smoked for a few minutes before David walked back to us.

“There we go. Wanna go home?” He asked. Claire and I nodded and followed him to the car. On the way home, I noticed the surroundings changing. The center of Cecilville was beautiful, clean and smelled nice, but the further we got, the worse the buildings and smell got. Where people in suits and with briefcases walked on the sidewalk, people now walked on dirt roads in clothes that were clearly donated. We arrived at the Center. No one was outside, so I assumed Wilbur had called on the group. As we got inside, I heard laughing from the Study Hall. Claire and I snuck in and sat down. The room was full and Wilbur stood, once again, in the center of the room.

“Hey, Willie and Claire! Come join us!” He yelled. We sat down at an empty table.

“Now, as we discussed. I have gone over your notes with my lovely wife, Selma. I have found some things I found very interesting, and I’ll say the names of six of you. These six will join me in my office, and we will begin the first sessions!” Wilbur said. We all patiently waited for Wilbur to yell out the names.

“If your name is called, stand up!” Said Wilbur.

“Daniel Jenson, Christina Svendson, Vincent Oliver, Abubakr Nassir, Edward Cline, and William Thurston.” Said Wilbur. All of us stood up.

“As for the rest of you, you are welcome to roam freely! Please, stay and study if you will, we could need some more notes!” Said Wilbur, before walking towards his office and gesturing us to follow him. The others and I walked into the office, where six chairs were positioned in front of Wilbur’s desk. I had already seen it, so I sat down, but I noticed the others looking around before sitting down. Wilbur sat at his desk, and like before, he took out a roll of toilet paper and wiped his face from sweat and saliva.

“Now, Ladies and Sirs.” Said Wilbur, before coughing and clearing his throat.

“All of you had some notes that I found interesting. I have been writing tirelessly all night, and really didn’t sleep a lot. You seem to be among the brightest minds here.” He said. He took out a stack of papers from his desk drawer, and smacked them on the desk.

As Wilbur flipped through his texts, people sat patiently and waited for him to talk.

“Alright, the first thing we will discuss is the method discovered by William. Now, Willie told me of an incident with his brother, who refused to do Fellow’s Whisper with him. As a result, Willie tried to do it to himself, and apparently, it worked!” Said Wilbur, animating his story with his hands. People seemed surprised and excited. That made me happy.

“So, I have arranged to you all go through the new method. We have a few small rooms in the back, so you will all get your own private room to study in. Now, you have all done Fellow’s Whisper, yeah?” Wilbur asked, people nodded and said “Yep.”

“Excellent. There will be paper, a pencil and a copy of World Study in the rooms. Do what you would normally do in Fellow’s Whisper, but on yourself. Makes sense?” Wilbur asked. Again, people nodded and said “Yes.” Wilbur walked up from his desk and opened the door to his office. From the door, a staffer emerged. She gestured to us to follow

her, so people got up from their chair and followed her. We walked across the front of the Study Hall and into the door on the opposite end of Wilbur's office. Inside was a small hallway with three doors on each side. The staffer guided to our rooms, and closed the door after us.

Inside the room was a desk and a chair, no windows. Like Wilbur said, on the desk was paper, a pencil and a copy of World Study. I sat down, cleared my mind, and prepared myself to replicate the day I first treated myself.

Chapter 5

I couldn't really focus. The chair seemed unstable, the room was cold, and the tip of the pencil was cracked, so you couldn't write without properly. But I tried. I thought about Joshua, and I thought of how I felt after my Traumatic Revelation.

After Joshua left my house that day, he called me a few hours later. He apologized and asked if he could borrow the money so he could have some professional therapy done. I told him "Sure," and he came back a few minutes later. As he walked through my door, I could see he had been crying, but I ignored it.

"Sorry Will. You know I'm not doing too good right now." was the first thing he said to me. I didn't really want to, but I hugged him.

"It's fine." I said. I pulled out my wallet and gave him a few bucks, about one hundred I think. He took them, thanked me, and got back into his car.

I felt like I was in the mindset, so I began the therapy.

"Are you angry with your brother? Yes."

"Are you happy about being in Cecilia? Yes."

"Do you have feelings for Claire? No."

I didn't have anything to write down, so I sat for a while and looked around the room before I continued. There really wasn't anything to see, so I got back to it.

"Should you write a letter to Joseph's mother instead of doing this? Yes."

I stopped. I wasn't sure if I was allowed to send letters, but since I could freely get into town, I decided to give it a shot. So I tried sharpening the broken edge of the pencil on the side of the metal table, and got out a fresh piece of paper.

"Dear Miriam." was the first thing I wrote. I didn't know how to continue, so I started chewing on my pencil.

World Study describes fidgeting activities like biting pencils as a sign of discomfort, so I stopped. I got back to writing.

“This is William Thurston. I know you remember me. Believe me, I think about you a lot.” I wrote. It was very hard, I didn’t want to make it all about me, and I didn’t want to gloss over her feelings.

“1973 is a year I will never forget. I still remember being invited to the party by my friends in college. It was a pleasure seeing Joseph again, I remember hugging him. He had already started drinking, so he gave me a kiss.” I wrote. I stopped for a while. It was hard to go back to the incident.

“As you know, I did something that day I will regret until the day I die. I drank too much, I shouldn’t have been driving, and it should have been me in the passenger seat.” I wrote. I immediately regretted it, actually. Of course it shouldn’t have been me. It shouldn’t have been anyone.

“I have no excuses, and I would never expect your forgiveness. Surviving a car crash with minor injuries is not a pleasant experience, but finding your friend next to you, not breathing and covered in blood is nothing compared.” I wrote. I didn’t want to continue. How uncomfortable is it for her to relive all of this? This is selfish. I was doing this for myself, I didn’t need her to relive my mistake with me. But I continued, it was nice putting these thoughts onto paper, even if I never send it.

“I remember the funeral. You cried and cried, but you didn’t say anything to me. For years, I believed that all you wanted to do was kill me. Shoot me, run me over, anything. And for years, I wished the same for myself. When I talked to your sister, Joseph’s aunt, she told me that she forgave me. That was the first time in years I cried. Being forgiven by someone close to Joseph helped me overcome the pain. Like I said, I don’t expect you to do the same. I know it’s selfish of me to contact you, but it has been nagging me for years. This will be the only and last time I write, so I want to get it all out. I am sorry. – William Thurston.” I wrote. I set

down the pencil, and read the letter. I didn't like it, but I knew I couldn't write it any better, so I folded it up and put it in my pocket. A few minutes after, there was a knock on the door. It opened, and a staffer stuck her head through the opening.

"Are you ready?" He asked.

"Yes." I replied. I got up from my desk and walked with the staffer back into Wilbur's office. Two others were already seated.

"Ah, Will. Do you have some notes for me?" He asked.

"Sorry, Sir. I spent some time in there thinking, I didn't have time to note anything." I said.

"Ah, not keen on notes, yes?" Wilbur asked. I nodded and smiled.

"No worries, Will." He said and smiled. He took some notes from his desk, probably the other recruits notes, and read through them. Wilbur stuck his face into the pages, I think he needed glasses. He looked weird, and his big, sloppy mouth did him no favors, as he occasionally drooled down on the papers. He was like a big child in many ways. His thoughts and manners were primitive, but his mind was like that of man who had lived thousands of lives. After a while, Wilbur looked at his wristwatch, and then at the door. I think he was waiting for the others to come back. He went back to his notes. After a while, Wilbur got up from his desk and peeked out the door. A staffer came towards him and whispered something to him. His expression changed from tired, and irritated, to scared. Everyone in the room looked at each other, something was going on.

Wilbur walked towards us, briskly.

"Alright, I need you all to stay here, something happened." He told us, before going out the door with the staffer. We all looked at each other in confusion, but that was quickly interrupted by a loud scream. I couldn't sit and listen, me and the others got up and stormed out the door. At the

other end of the room, at the rooms Wilbur sent us to, a few staffers was standing in the door and looking in. We heard a few more screams, and other recruits had gathered in the Study Hall to see what was going on. After a while, two staffers came out of the door with a young recruit. They were holding his arms, and he was kicking and screaming. He yelled hysterically and cried, and I saw Wilbur coming after them. Wilbur saw the group that had gathered, and apparently irritated by this, he yelled to us.

“People! Get away, this man is obviously sick!” He yelled, gesturing with his hands for us to go away. People scattered, and whispered to each other. The staffers took the man outside, and Wilbur ran back to the office, where he gathered us again.

“Alright, listen.” He said, as he sat down and used the piece of paper he had previously used to wipe his face, to once again wipe it.

“That was Cline. I’m not sure what happened, but he apparently became hysterical and tried to hurt himself.” He said. The atmosphere in the room became pretty tense, and I felt that I would be blamed for this.

“Will,” He said, “you’re absolutely right. Your treatment works.” He said.

“If you would all please leave the room, so I can have a little conversation with Will.” Said Wilbur, as the others got up and walked out. Wilbur closed the door after them, and sat down.

“Will, wow.” He said. He was out of breath and kind of manic.

“I had no idea that man could enter his Traumatic Self so deeply on his own. This changes everything! Maybe... Maybe we can reach Pure Enlightenment by ourselves!” He yelled. I had never seen anyone so excited, so I smiled along and nodded, uncomfortably.

“That’s great, Sir.” I said.

“Listen. This is it! This is what we are going to develop.” He said. He quickly got out his pencil and wrote down a few lines of notes. He grunted as he wrote.

“Listen, Will. Do you have any experience with vitamins?” He asked me.

“Vitamins?” I asked.

“Yes, vitamins.” He said. He looked at me with ecstatically, eyes wide open and still somewhat out of breath.

“Uhm... No, not really.” I told him. And that was the truth, I knew nothing about vitamins. I wasn’t sure where he was going with this.

“Let me tell you a story!” He said. I said “Sure.”

“Back in Russia, I had a case. Do you remember case fifty from Practical Studies?” He asked me. I did, so I said “Yes.”

“Right... Well, this young man, maybe twenty, had sores and infections. He puked too. Well, I was tasked with treating this fellow. I tried Fellow’s Whisper, and it did nothing. I started to think in other terms, maybe some people are physically unable to receive the treatment because of diet or drug use. Sounds logical, right?” He asked me, I said “Sure.”

“Yes... yes... Well, this young fellow, I thought he lacked something. I had read about these vitamins, these little globs of stuff the body needs, and I thought: Maybe people need the proper balance of foods and vitamins to receive treatment.” He said. He opened his desk drawer and pulled out a case file. He opened it and looked through it, running his finger along, until he finally found what he was looking for. He poked the page a few times, and then turned to me again.

“Now, I put this guy on a diet of mostly fish. Tuna, salmon, mackerel. He drank fresh water and ate biscuits too, and would you believe it? He improved!” He said, raising his hands like a preacher. I smiled and muttered “Wow.”

“Wow, indeed!” He said. He put back the case file and got up from his desk, walking towards me.

“So you see, Will. When the puking and infections stopped, the Fellow’s Whisper worked wonders for him!” He said. He was so close to me, I could smell his breath. It was like smelling an ashtray, but I maintained eye-contact.

“Now, Will. We know that vitamins can help with Fellow’s Whisper... What do you think would help someone better receive your form of treatment?” He asked me. I honestly had no idea, and I didn’t want to make up anything, so I just said “No idea, Sir.” Wilbur stared at me for a while, before getting back to his desk.

“Will, my dear,” He said, “I believe that the body and the mind is one. The Omni, the spirit. If we effect the body, we effect the mind. Now, we need to find that one physical stimuli that will help a person receive Pure Enlightenment.” He said.

Pure Enlightenment is described in World Study as the absolute stage a person can reach spiritually. Like Nirvana, or heaven. Wilbur still didn’t know how to reach that state, but had previously claimed to have helped some people reach it. I was intrigued.

“So what do you suppose could help?” I asked him.

“Well, there are many actions that can be performed on the human body.” He said, “I have experimented with vitamins, fats, proteins. None of them have helped me reach Pure Enlightenment.” He said.

“You are one bright mind, Will. You can figure it out. Together, we will try and find the key.” He said, lights in his eyes, and his smile growing wider and wider.

“Thank you, Sir. I will do my best.” I told him. Wilbur gestured that I was welcome to leave, so I did. I walked back to the Main Hall, and I sat down next to Jack.

Chapter 6

Jack looked at me weirdly. I think some of the recruits might have been jealous of the treatment me and the others had received. Regardless of what he thought, he started talking to me.

“What happened in there?” He asked me.

“What do you mean?” I asked back.

“You know. That guy who freaked out.” He said.

“Ah, yeah. We’re trying a new treatment.” I told him.

“What kind of treatment?” He asked me.

“I don’t think I’m allowed to tell you yet” I told him.

He scoffed, and ended the conversation. Yeah, they were jealous. I didn’t mind to be honest. My priority in being here is to better the world, if I was made for that and the others weren’t, that’s not my issue.

I sat for a while before a staffer came running towards me.

“Sir, you have a phone call.” She told me. I followed her into the reception, and behind the desk, where there was a small room. This was apparently a room for the staffers, there were documents everywhere, a small desk in the center, and a typewriter, next to the black telephone. She gave me the ringer, and I put it to my ear.

“Hello?” I said.

“Will, it’s me.” Said the voice. It was Joshua.

“Josh? What do you want?” I said.

“You have to come home, mom’s not doing too well.” He said. I knew instantly that he was lying. My mother was a weird woman, but she was healthy. She never took us out to eat, she never smoked, and she was always working out. Once, Joshua and I had hidden a joint between the seats of the couch, when she found it, Josh and I were scolded and punished for a damn year. I knew she was doing well, so I confronted him.

“Are you jealous of me? I asked him.

“What?” He said.

“Are you jealous because I am here and you’re not?”

I asked him.

“No, what? Mom is sick.” He said.

“No, she’s not.” I said. There was a pause. I knew Josh, he always lied to get his way. I think it was a TMI speaking, which is a Traumatic Mental Implant. In World Study, TMI’s are the object within us that are planted when we experience something we shouldn’t, like a fight, a car crash or an assault. People can use TMI’s to cause destructive actions. Through Fellow’s Whisper, two people can find the TMI’s, and once they are located, Traumatic Revelation occurs, which maps the specific traumatic events that could lead someone to become ill, mentally and physically.

“... I want you home, Will.” He said. I knew I had caught him in a lie.

“Don’t lie to me, Josh.” I said, before hanging up. The staffer was standing by and smiling at me.

“Who was it, Sir?” She asked.

“My brother, we wanted me home.” I said.

“Do you want to go home?” She asked.

“No.” I said. She smiled.

“Sir, do you have anything to do now? She asked me.

“No, not really, why?” I asked.

“The Mansa is gathering people in the Study Hall in a while, you can go there and wait if you want to.” She said.

“The Mansa?” I asked.

“Oh, sorry. Wilbur. We call him the Mansa in the staff.” She said, laughing. Mansa was some African title for king. Typical of Wilbur to give himself such a title. I went to the Study Hall and sat down, there were only a few other gathered, they were talking.

After a while, people started storming in. Wilbur came at the end of the line, talking to a few of the people on the way.

Once everyone was seated, he got into the center of the room.

“Now, friends,” He said, “What happened earlier to our friend was not pleasant, but I can assure you, it was a major breakthrough here in World Study.” He took out a small, folded piece of paper from his inner jacket pocket, and folded it out.

“With the help from our friend, William, we have discovered a process of doing Fellow’s Whisper on yourself. I had Will and some others doing it to themselves. Now, despite the earlier incident being uncomfortable, it showed us clearly that Fellow’s Whisper on yourself is a possibility. Everyone, please give Willie a round of applause!” He said, as he pointed to me. People started clapping, but I saw Jack and George being really quiet about it. I didn’t care, if they became a problem, I knew Wilbur would move me to another room. Claire was smiling and clapping, that made me happy. I said “Thank you.” around the room, and smiled.

“Right. This is going to be the main study while we are here. I have done much writing already, and have decided to call the method Ego Whisper!” He said. People clapped.

“And as such, we have prepared staff to take care of individuals who become uncomfortable. In the Main Hall, there is water, protein bars and vitamin pills. I want you all to read my new writings on Ego Whisper, and try them out.” He said, as three staffers handed out a piece of paper to everyone, with the title being “Introduction to Ego Whisper.” It was apparently a guide Wilbur had created. I was excited to try it again.

“Please note down your Traumatic Revelations, and any thoughts you might have on this new method. It is still in testing, so please be patient and try a few times.” Said Wilbur, before looking around the room and walking out of the door. I saw that he was going outside to smoke. People started reading their notes, and some closed their eyes like the paper

instructed. I wanted to try as well, so I took the pen that was sitting on the pencil, closed my eyes and began.

“Do I hate my brother? No.”

“Am I happy that I wrote the letter to Joseph’s mother? Yes.”

“Do I want to inherit the World Enlightenment International? Yes.”

I opened my eyes and took a break, like the paper instructed. I began again.

“Do I like Wilbur? Yes.”

“Do I like the staff? No.”

“Do I like my fellow order members? No.”

I was unsure if I should note this. World Study has always been very open to practitioners being skeptical, seeing it as the result of a TMI, like an authority being bad towards them. A priest, or police, for example. I knew that it would probably set me back, and that it really wasn’t an issue for me that I didn’t like a lot of people here, so I didn’t note it. I began again.

“Do I miss my mother? Yes.”

“Do I miss my daughter?” I stopped. I didn’t have an answer. This was a Traumatic Revelation, finding out that I really didn’t know. I knew what I wanted to feel, and how I should feel, but I didn’t feel it.

“Do I regret having my daughter? Yes.”

Usually when you reach a TR, or Traumatic Revelation, you follow the Fellow’s Whisper, or Ego Whisper in this case, and make the questions about them. World Study has an index of questions to begin with, but you’re technically welcome to ask any question you desire.

Don’t get me wrong, I love my daughter. I love her more than anything. But I never felt I should have had her. Leaving her in the states with her mother might seem like a horrible decision, but I believe she will be better off without me. At least not until I reach Pure Enlightenment.

“Do I miss my ex-girlfriend? Yes.”

“Do I want her back?” Again, I reached a Traumatic Revelation. I missed her, but would hate having her back. TMIs usually manifest themselves with more than one emotion at a time, so most TMIs can feel both happy, sad, angry and excited. It can be especially difficult for an individual who has experienced a sad TMI to associate happy or relived feelings with the TMI. Either way, I now had a place to start, so I wrote it down. I wrote that I was happy for my daughter, and for myself that I left her, and that I missed me ex-girlfriend but didn’t want her back.

I snapped out of my train of thought at the sounds of faint crying. I saw someone across the room, eyes closed, with tears streaming out. It made me proud. If this method worked, and I was behind it, I am proud that I could help. The guy sitting next to me had his eyes opened, and was reading the paper still. I don’t think he ever started. Maybe he didn’t understand it. He saw me looking at him, so he turned to me.

“Hey, did you write this?” He asked.

“No, but I found out about the method.” I told him.

“Can you show me? I really don’t understand this.”

He said. I am sure he was referring to the writing, and not the method. Wilbur has a weird way of writing. I said “Sure.”

“Alright, close your eyes and do what you would do in Fellow’s Whisper, but to yourself.” I said, turned towards him.

“Ask myself the questions?” He asked. I said “Yes.”

“I don’t know what to ask myself.” He said.

“Well, what would you ask me if we were doing Fellow’s Whisper?” I asked him.

“I don’t know...” He said.

“Come on, you’ve done Fellow’s Whisper before, haven’t you?” I asked him. He said “Yes.”

“Ask yourself about your past.” I said. “My past?” He said, I said “Yes.”

“Hmm... Okay. What do you - “ He said, before I interrupted him.

“No, no. Ask yourself, with your inner voice. Stop after three questions and tell me.” I said. He nodded and closed his eyes. He made small sounds and mouthed the questions. After about thirty seconds, he opened his eyes again.

“What did you ask yourself?” I asked him.

“About my childhood.” He said.

“Did you find anything?” I asked him.

“No.” He said. “Try again.” I said. He closed his eyes. Another thirty or forty seconds went by before he opened his eyes again. He looked at me and seemed pretty tired. “Does this work?” He asked.

“It works if you want it to.” I told him. “Try again.” I said. He closed his eyes.

This time, he apparently didn’t stop at the first three question. I could hear his breathing become louder, and his eyebrows arching, like a scared dog. I held my hand on his shoulder, which prompted him to open his eyes.

“Anything?” I said. He said “Yes.”

“What?” I asked.

“My neighbor, he touched me.” He said.

“Alright, write it down and continue from there.” I told him. He took the pen, and although his hand was shaking, he wrote it down. He closed his eyes again, reluctantly. His breathing increased again, and to my surprise, he began crying. I saw beyond shocked, I honestly expected him to just quit it and not find anything. Apparently, he did. He opened his eyes.

“No, I can’t do anymore.” He said.

“That’s okay,” I said, “write down whatever you reached.” I told him. He turned the paper towards himself and covered what he was writing with his arm.

“Do you want to try again?” I asked him. He said “No.”

“You want to get better, right?” I asked him. He nodded.

“No use in quitting now, that TMI is still infected within you until you remove it.” I told him. This was only what I had read, and I realized I maybe wasn’t in the position to tell him all of this, as I wasn’t certified, I was merely a Student. I noticed, however, that Wilbur himself was standing at the end of the room, arms crossed and smiling, looking at me. As I met his gaze, he gestured me to continue. So I did.

“Let’s try again. What’s your name?” I asked him.

“John.” He said.

“Alright, John. Please, try again.” I told him. He closed his eyes, and already there, he was almost back to crying. He kept crying, and crying. I tightened my grip on his, and padded his back here and there. Wilbur watched in amazement. Suddenly, John covered his eyes with his hands, removing my hand from his shoulder in the process, and began sobbing loudly. He leaned over the table, both arms resting his head, and continued his crying. I again padded his back.

“John, you’re almost there. You need to remove this TMI from yourself!” I yelled at him. Everyone in the room had stopped their own sessions and was looking at me and John. “Come on!” I said. John got back up, wiped tears from his eyes, took a deep breath and continued. After a few second, he began crying again, but seemed more in control this time.

A staffer walked over with a roll of tissue paper. I took off a piece for John when he came back from his session. He did after a while, and although he was still crying, he seemed much calmer. I offered him the tissue, and he wiped his tears, blew his nose and wiped sweat off his forehead. “Wow.” he said.

“How are you feeling?” I asked him.

“Relieved,” He said, “like a new man.” He said, laughing softly. I smiled at him and gave him a hug. People

had been listening this whole time, so some started clapping. Wilbur clapped too.

“Hurry, write some of the things down so they don’t come back.” I told him, he quickly took the pencil and wrote a bunch of things down. He thanked me.

“Well, well, well.” Said Wilbur. “Isn’t this just amazing?” He asked the room, people yelled “Yes!” and some clapped.

“This young fellow, let me tell you.” Said Wilbur, as he walked over to me and squeezed my shoulder, “This man is a World Student in every sense of the word! Patient, kind and fiercely intelligent!” He said. People clapped. I saw ecstatic.

“Now, how about we all go our own way for a bit? I could use a smoke, that’s for sure!” Said Wilbur, people laughed and got up.

“Will, meet me in my office in a bit, O.K.?” Said Wilbur. I told him “Yes, Sir.” and walked into his office.

Chapter 7

Wilbur came back from smoking, sat down at his desk, and took out a mint from his drawer, which he stuffed into his big mouth. The first thing I noticed when I walked in was a half-empty glass of red wine on his desk. He took a big slurp, made a refreshing “Ahh...” and turned to me.

“Oh, Will. I knew you wouldn’t disappoint me.” He said, laughing loudly afterwards. I laughed, and thanked him.

“You’re a natural leader, aren’t you?” He asked me.

“Oh, I don’t know.” I said, smiling.

“You’ve been a great help so far. You seem to have a good role within the new recruits, Will.” He said. He couched for a while, and then wiped his forehead with that same roll of tissue papers.

“I have come up with a few medicaments for the Ego Whisper.” He told me.

“Which ones?” I asked him.

“Oh, simple ones. Vitamins, and proteins, and minerals, and so on.” He said.

“Sounds good.” I told him.

“I have a bulk order coming in a while, Willie.” He said, as he took a piece of paper from his desk and looked at it for a while.

“You should spearhead the next stage of study, if you want to.” He told me. He removed his eyes from the paper and looked into my eyes. I told him “Of course.”

“Great!” He exclaimed.

“I have some writing to get done. Thank you, Willie.” He told me. I thanked him and walked back to the Study Hall, which was still very much filled with people doing Ego Whisper. I walked outside to smoke, but before I went out, I walked towards my room to get my pack of cigarettes. On my way, I stumbled into Claire, who seemed very excited to meet me.

“Will! Come outside, I want to talk to you.” She said.

“Sure, I’ll just go get my cigarettes.” I said.

“No, no. Take one of mine.” She said, so I followed her outside.

Outside, a large group of people were standing. Some were smoking, and most were talking to each other in their own little groups. Claire took me over to Ramy.

“Hey, Willie!” Said Ramy. I greeted him back.

“What was all that stuff in there?” He asked me.

“I’m not sure, but it was great.” I told him. We began to smoke.

I noticed they guy, John, standing with a small group of people. He talked with big expression, using his hands and everything. I looked at him for a while before he noticed me. When he did, he nodded at me and began walking towards me.

“Brother, that was fantastic.” He said, as he hugged me.

“It was, yeah.” I said, hugging him back.

“Are you certified or something?” He asked me. I said “No.”

“Huh... How did you know all of this stuff, then?” He asked me.

“I just... Tried it on myself, it worked. I told Wilbur when we delivered our notes.” I told John. He said “Wow.”

“What did you write down, if I may ask?” I asked him. I wasn’t sure if it was something he wanted to talk about, but I had become very interested in my own technique, so I wanted to know which areas people did Ego Whisper on. He grabbed my shoulder and dragged me away from the group, a good bit away from the others.

“I was sexually molested by my neighbor as a child.” He told me.

“I tried gathering the entire experience. It was burning me from the inside to think about it, but it helped.” He said.

“Good to hear it. It’s one step closer to enlightenment, right?” I asked him. He grinned and said “Yeah.” We walked back to the others.

I had nearly finished my cigarette when a large truck pulled up on the property. It was unmarked, no logos or graphics on the side, and it had no license plate either. I assumed Cecilia didn’t have license plates, so it didn’t seem that weird. From it, a big guy came out. This guy was at least three times my size, and I’m not a small guy. He had a big beard and a red cap on. He walked over to the nearest group of people.

“This is World Center, right?” He asked. The people he asked looked confused, and said “Yeah, it is.” and “Yes.” and so on. A staffer came running from the door over to the driver, and pulled him over to the truck. He talked to him for a while, before the guy nodded and walked to the back of the truck. He opened the back of the truck and lowered a ramp. He walked in and got a large wooden box out, wrapped in plastic. He went into the van and drove out a forklift, which he lowered and used to pick up the box. The box was driven behind the Center.

Shortly after, while I was continuing my small talk with Claire and Ramy, Wilbur came out of the door and asked for me. I went with him inside, and into his office, where a bunch of white cardboard boxes were stacked neatly around the room. I sat down, and Wilbur pulled out a pill bottle, white and without any marking, from one of the boxes and sat down at his desk. He shook it, which produced the sound of pills rattling. He looked up at me, smiling, while holding the bottle midair, elbow on his desk.

“This, my friend.” He said, “This might be it.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“I can’t tell you yet, we want the full effect to be felt, so prior knowledge or experience with this medicament could reduce the effect.” He said, as he put the bottle down and put his hands together.

“While vitamins and minerals work in the long run for Fellow’s Whisper, I have theorized that, since Fellow’s Whisper is quite a long process, and your Ego Whisper has an immediate effect on people, that the physical stimuli should be just as instant. Makes sense? He asked. I said “Sure.”

“Excellent. These pills, I bought them from a nice fellow in South Africa, a former contact of mine, a man that I trust.” He said, as he got up from his desk and, as he always did, put his hands behind his back.

“Have you taken them before?” I asked him.

“Many times, sonny.” He said.

“Did they work for you?” I asked him.

“Well, my friend,” He said, “I am one special case, let me tell you.”

“How so?” I asked.

“William, I am the inventor of World Study. I didn’t wake up one day and decide that this should be my lot in life. I have endured much suffering and pain for my ideas, but they are worth it. You must understand, William, that I am way beyond World Study. I am World Study.” He said. It was pretty clear to me what he meant.

“Right, of course.” I said. I didn’t expect him to get so... Weird. It was a weird thing to say, but it made sense.

“Now, today is a big day. I don’t like wasting time, we do the first trails today.” He said.

“Today?” I asked. I didn’t really think we were ready for that. Or maybe we were, seeing that everyone was amazed at the session with John.

“Yep, today. Get into the Study, we’ll do it now.” He said, he was in such a hurry.

“Okay, Sir.” I said, and got out of my chair. I walked into the study, where some staffers had already started putting bottles on the table, one bottle for each table. I saw Wilbur storming out of his office and over to a staffer. He whispered in her ear, she nodded and walked over to two

other staffers. Two went outside, and one towards the Main Hall. I heard them gathering people, and people started walking into the Study Room. People slowly gathered, I saw some of them looking confused at the bottles. Some picked them up, and they quickly became a topic of conversation. When everyone was gathered, Wilbur walked to the center of the room, like we had all gotten used to. He looked around, like he always did.

“Listen up, people!” He exclaimed. It got everyone’s attention.

“I have some theory I want to share with you all.” He said. He had a small, folded up piece of paper, probably some notes, which he unfolded and started looking at.

“You all saw the amazing results of the Ego Whisper, yes?” He asked us. People nodded and said “Yes.”

“Yes. Well, I have asked a few of you for your notes, and I must say, I am very excited for the next few days!” He said, people laughed, and a few clapped.

“Oh, friends. You have become dear to me in a very short time. Anyways, I found a theme throughout your notes. You are all beings of potential! Everything you all wrote about as a TMI was something that would hinder your inner greatness. I figured, once one is TMI free, what next?” He said, looking around the room.

“I may have found it. I have devised a small system of steps for this process. You have all heard of the elusive status of Pure Enlightenment. I first coined this term back in 74’, when I theorized a world without TMIs. A place where we can reach yet another step of spiritual wisdom. Today, I intent to find it. He said. He was met with a small applause, people were excited about the idea. I was too.

“In front of you is a small pill. I call it an enhancer. I have taken many of these, and look at me!” He said, laughing. People laughed with him. I think he was trying to ease the worries and confusions people seemed to have about the pills.

“So, has anyone here reached level 4?” He asked. Two people raised their hands.

Now, in World Study, Wilbur devised a system of levels for spiritual enlightenment. You step up the latter as you remove TMIs. A level 4 is someone who has been officially purified of TMIs, it’s a very rare title, but I have met a few. In fact, Joshua was a level 4.

The two people who raised their hands were invited to go into the office with Wilbur. As they walked, he looked over at me winked. I didn’t know why the level fours couldn’t participate, but I didn’t think much of it. Before Wilbur left, he spoke to us.

“So, I will be talking to these lovely fellows while you try Ego Whisper again. Before you begin, take one of the supplements and give it a few minutes before starting the session.”

Wilbur walked into his office and closed the door behind him, so people started. There were three people at my table, the woman in front of me took the bottle, opened it and shook a pill into the palm of her hand before passing it. We were interrupted by a staffer.

“Oh, by the way. Wilbur forgot to tell, but these should be swallowed, not chewed. We have water for you up here if you need it.” She said, before going back to the wall to stand. They always stood there, in a fine line, like they were in the military.

I heard pills shaking everywhere, and eventually the bottle at my table was passed to me. I took a single pill, it was white and had no markings. I swallowed it dry. People sat and talked, probably curious as to what the effects of the pills would be. I saw people smiling, so I assumed people were generally excited. We all waited patiently for the results, and a few people were taking notes. Some closed their eyes and began, and I decided to do the same. I still had my paper with notes at my seat, so I looked at the last Traumatic Revelation

I had. It was about leaving my daughter. I decided to go from there, so I closed my eyes.

“Do I regret having my daughter? No.”

“Should I write a letter to my daughter...?” I stopped, and wrote it down

I didn't know how to deal with me leaving her. Should I come back some day, or should I send her a letter she could keep, in which I detail why I left her? I noted all of this down, and decided to ask someone else for advice, maybe Wilbur. This is where I found my first flaw with my technique, what if you simply don't know the answer yourself? I was going to give this to Wilbur so he could develop it further. I continued.

“Can I tell— “ I was stopped by a thought. The letter to Joseph's mother, I hadn't sent it yet. I should do that as soon as I could. It bothered me, so I wrote it down on the paper. This is actually also a World Study technique, believe it or not. Wilbur calls it the Secondary Mentality, it's when you write down your thoughts. The idea was to remove the thought from the brain to make more space. According to Wilbur, thoughts were physical things, with mass and identity. When you put them on a piece of paper, you convince your brain that it can delete the thought, and rest assured that it won't be lost. So that's what I did. I continued.

“Can I tell Rebecca why I am here? Yes.”

“Should I tell Rebecca why I am here? No.”

“Do I want to? No.”

Rebecca is the mother of my daughter. My daughter's name is Sara. Sara Thurston, my sweetheart. I really do not like Rebecca. Sara looks a lot like Rebecca, and it honestly pained me to see her face in Sara. That's not the reason I left Sara, but it was a relief.

I started feeling a little lightheaded, and my heart was pounding too fast. I felt good though, really good. My body became warm and felt ten times larger. I wasn't really freaking out, but it felt very weird. Wow.

I noticed the guy next to me clenching his fists and breathing heavily. His eyes squeezed tightly together, he started rubbing his eyes and fondling his beard. The girl in front of me also started to look funny. She looked around the room with her eyebrows completely horizontal, like she was paranoid.

I didn't think Wilbur had us come all this way to commit mass-murder, but I wouldn't exclude the possibility of him giving us something psychoactive to help us achieve Pure Enlightenment. That would actually make a lot of sense. I mean, if this life is only what we can experience, why shouldn't the next level be something beyond our own field of reality? I snapped out of it, these thoughts were a little too profound for me, and they weren't even that profound. I rambled with myself. It was actually kind of like being split into two individuals. One rational and sober, the other one apparently going on an adventure, without his consent or knowledge. Wilbur, you fucker.

And as I prophesied, there it was. The piece of paper in front of me started breathing. The corners of it moving together, then expanding, then contracting again. Little fuzzy objects floated around the room, and everything looked rather sharp. I was getting a little angry. Why would he just fill these pills on us? I mean, I had done my fair share of drugs in the past, but this was just unacceptable. But alas, I trusted Wilbur, and decided to continue my session, despite people in the room feeling visibly off. People started talking, which kind of broke my concentration, but I tried to ignore it. I started again.

“Am I mad at Wilbur? Yes.”

“Should I have stopped doing drugs? Yes.”

“What did he give us?” No, wait. That wasn't a yes or no question. You can only use yes or no questions in Fellow's Whisper. But this isn't Fellow's Whisper, this is Ego Whisper. Could I use multiple choice questions in Ego Whisper? I didn't know. I couldn't continue the session without knowing. I also started to feel a little guilty, I was

probably one of the only ones in here that had any experience with drugs. The staffers seemed more relaxed than usual, so I didn't think they would mind me asking someone how they felt. Besides, people were already talking all over the place. I turned to the guy next to me, who had his eyes closed, and was breathing heavily.

"Hey, how are you feeling?" I asked him.

"Bad... Really bad." He said.

"I feel sick, I'm gonna puke." He said, before storming up from the table and proceeding to puke all over the table, and the notes. Everyone at the table, including me, got up to avoid the sea of vomit. Incredible how he could vomit so much, we didn't really eat much here. But it kept pouring out of him.

Other people got up from their desk, a few even started crying. One of the staffers came forward and said "People, please!" More people started getting up, a few tried to go outside

"You need to stay and focus on your sessions!" Yelled the staffer. People ignored him and some stormed out, breathing heavily and crying. Two or three people were screaming. I noticed Ramy and Claire among the crowd, Claire was crying and Ramy was comforting her. It made me really uncomfortable to see Claire crying, despite me having no feelings for her. Maybe it was because she was a woman, but I didn't like to think that.

Maybe from the crying and noise, or maybe because he was simply done talking, Wilbur and the two level fours emerged from his office, to expressions of shock and terror. Wilbur tried to get a hold of the situation, running around frantically to people, asking them if they were okay, and ordering the staff on what to do.

"Everyone! Please settle down!" Wilbur yelled, with no reaction. A majority of the people were standing outside, some were laying on the warm sand, and a small group was standing with the staffers, drinking water from plastic cups.

I decided to go over to Wilbur, since I was relatively calm and collected, but no doubt affected.

“Wilbur, what did you give us?” I asked him.

“Just vitamins! I swear!” He exclaimed. He seemed very surprised at the reaction, which I found very strange. I don’t know what he expected. This was obviously more than just vitamins.

“Go outside, Wilbur, talk to them.” I told him. He frantically nodded and ran outside. I saw him doing the same routine, running around and talking to people. A staffer ran outside to him, whispered to him, and he ran with the staffer inside to the Main Hall. Another staffer yelled out into the room.

“People! Go to the Main Hall!” He yelled. People followed him in there, most were walking slowly, and some were running. I followed them to the Main Hall, first taking my notes from the table, and sat down with the others. A staffer came from the back of the Main Hall with a tray of water and plastic cups. Everyone were offered a glass, and most took it. I took one too. I was surrounded by screaming, crying and other frantic noises. I could imagine people under the effect of whatever Wilbur gave us having the bad feeling intensified by the chaos in the room. When almost everyone were gathered, Wilbur walked to the front of the hall, like he had previously done.

“Everyone, my apologies!” He yelled. It got people’s attention. They seemed sitting down and having a glass of water.

“I gave you a high dose of vitamins. I was not aware that the effects would be this strong. Please accept my apologies, this is part of experimentation. If you need anything, please let me know and we will have it arranged.” He said, hands folded and with remorse in his eyes. I heard everything he said but it didn’t really register first, I was more focused on the room spinning and people becoming blurry. The sounds intensified every second, and a ringing in

my ears manifesting. It was uncomfortable. Severely uncomfortable. I still felt I was in a much better position, so when Wilbur left the front of the room, I walked up to him and asked if we could talk in his office. He said "Sure." and I followed him. In the office, the boxes were still standing, and his office was still kind of a mess. He sat down, still visibly frantic, and I sat down in front of him.

"Wilbur, can you explain what that was all about?" I asked him.

"William, I gave you vitamins. Why aren't you affected?" He asked.

"I am, I am just used to drugs, I think." I said.

"There aren't any drugs in these!" He exclaimed.

"Well then, why are people frantically screaming?" I asked him, my tone becoming deeper and angrier. Like I said, I don't like being lied to.

"Maybe the dose was too high! Maybe people can't process Ego Whisper in groups, I don't know Will!" He yelled, standing up and walking back and forth.

"This is experimentation!" He exclaimed, "This is part of it!"

"I know, Wilbur," I said, "but people are going mad." I said. Wilbur walked around frantically. It looked like he wanted to say something but didn't know what to say. He seemed confused all around, though. He put his hands to his face, and sighed.

"Will, why does this happen to me?" He asked me. I had no idea why.

"I don't know, what do you mean?" I asked him.

"These things. Bad things, they flow my way! I just poisoned my students, Will!" He said, as he heavily flew into his chair, and smacked his fat hands on the table in frustration.

"Sir, with all respect. Right now, you need to take care of the people who have put their trust in you. You need

to tell them what happened, and be honest.” I told him. He nodded, and I left.

Chapter 8

I went to sleep early that day, and didn't eat anything. I assumed people were fed and taken care of, either way it wasn't my responsibility. I was only woken once, when George and Jack went to sleep, which they did rather quickly. Unsurprisingly, I had some very interesting dreams that night. I remember me standing outside of the Center, in the middle of the night. Wilbur, with a crown and a cape, storms out of the door and bows down to me. Thousands of students and staffers follow him, filling the parking lots and entrance, the entire building filled to the brim with people. Everyone clapped at me, their eyes lighting up, and their applause growing. Wilbur stands up, hands me his crown, and combusts. His fat body burning and turning to ashes.

I was awoken by a staffer around six thirty in the morning. I had slept for many hours, and was pretty well rested. I was still pretty shocked about yesterday, and the first thing I did, after going to the bathroom, was going to look for Claire. I found her in the Main Hall, eating oats from a bowl. She had a blanket wrapped around her, and seemed pretty out of shape. I carefully caressed her shoulder and sat down next to her. She looked at me with tired and empty eyes.

"How are you feeling?" I asked her.

"Better." She replied.

Ramy approached us, and sat down on the tiles next to us. "Hey." He said, Claire and I greeted him.

"How are you guys feeling?" He asked us. I said "Fine."

"Better, but not well." Claire replied.

"I heard some guys will come over today." Said

Ramy.

"What people?" I asked him.

"I don't know. Media people." He said.

"Where did you get this from?" I asked him.

“I heard the staff talk about it.” He said.

I got up and went looking for Wilbur. He was standing outside, and judging by his expression when he saw me, I think he was looking for me too.

“Willie!” He exclaimed as I came outside.

“Morning, Sir.” I said. He grabbed my shoulder.

“Will, I have some people coming over today, I need your help” He said, I said “Sure.”

“There’s a small television station down in Pretoria, they called yesterday and asked if they could send up a reporter to do an interview with me. I need a guy in the room with me who can help me if that reporter becomes a hassle. Do you understand?” He asked. “Got it.” I said. He smiled and patted my back, before returning to a small group he was talking to, and taking out a smoke in the process. I walked to the Study Room, and sat down at my seat. There was still a weird atmosphere in the room, a distant smell of anxiety. The pills had been removed and chairs that had been turned over had been neatly put back. I reached into my pocket, and took out the letter I had written to Joseph’s mother. I looked at it for a while, until a staffer walked pass me, I reached out to her.

“Hey, could I possibly borrow or buy an envelope and a stamp?” I asked her.

“Do you want to send some mail, Sir?” She asked me. I said “Yes.”

“Great. I can take your letter if you like, I’ll get it sent.” She said. I thought “Great!” and folded up the letter before handing it to her. She took it, put it into her pocket and walked into Wilbur’s office.

I went back to Claire and Ramy, who were still sitting in the Main Hall. I sat down next to them.

“Will, did he drug us?” Asked Ramy.

“I don’t think so.” I said.

“You didn’t seem very affected?” Said Claire.

“I wasn’t. I don’t know why.” I said. Claire continued eating, and Ramy began looking around the room, at all the people sitting. Most were eating, or talking. I sat up, and walked over to a small water station, where I took a plastic cup and filled it with ice cold water. Drinking it was refreshing beyond description. The drugs, or whatever he gave us, left me with a metallic taste in my mouth, which became beyond dry. I could feel my tongue cracking and suspected the metallic taste was the result of blood.

As I finished the glass, and quickly filled up two more, which I drank just as quickly, Wilbur came up to me and asked me to follow him, which I did. I walked behind him into his office, and sat down. He sat at his desk.

“Willie, that reporter is coming in less than an hour. He wanted to arrive early so he could get home and air it today. I have a lot of pressure on me right now, especially with handling the situation yesterday. I haven’t had a shower in a while, I need to go take one before he shows up. Could I ask of you a major favor?” He asked me. I nodded at him.

“Right. I have made a small list of things I need to get done before he shows up. I am growing very frustrated with my staff, so I don’t want them sneaking around right now. This will only be once I ask you for this.” He told me. I told him “No problem, Sir.”

“Thank you, sonny.” He said, before briskly walking out of the office, and to what I assume would be his personal bathroom. I got behind his desk, which was surprisingly comfortable. His red leather chair was just used enough that it was neither too firm, nor too flat. I took a look at the note he left me, which had three bullets with a small note attached to each. The first one was to clean up the desk and put documents into his drawers.

I took the first few documents, which were directly in front of me, and without really looking at them, I opened his desk drawer and stuffed them in there. He had a lot of stuff in there; a bottle of wine, a Swiss army knife, a few South

African rand and a pair of reading glasses. I took a few documents from the right side of the desk, and as I prepared to put it in the desk, I noticed the header of the last document hidden behind the others. It said "Invoice – South Africa Medicinal Associates," I decided to read it. I quickly found out that it was the invoice for the pills we had been fed. Like Wilbur claimed, it did say vitamins, but as I held my finger on a part of the paper with text, I noticed the ink smudged off. It seemed like a very cheap paper, and I suspected it may have been a false invoice. Either way, I put it with the rest of the documents. I opened the other desk drawer, in which his tissues were, and pulled one off the roll. I used it to wipe off superficial dust and a few crumbs from the desk. It wasn't a deep cleanse, but it was presentable enough.

The next chore was to put out a nice outfit for Wilbur. The note said to "look in the bottom drawer of the shelf," so I did. Like it said, there were a bunch of clothing crammed into the bottom drawer, under his books and sculptures. I took out a decent, simple suit, brown. I also fetched him a purple tie and a white shirt. I found a pair of simple dress pants and a brown leather belt, with some socks. I assumed he wanted to decide what shoes he wanted to wear. Along with that, his signature wristwatch and his short, thin hair slicked back. The third and final chore was to prepare a jug of cold water, two cups and a pitcher of black coffee. I didn't know where to get this, so I went outside and fetched a staffer, whom I asked. He looked at me weirdly when I told him why I needed the coffee and water.

"Why did Wilbur give you that assignment?" He asked.

"That's not for me to think about, I simply obey." I told him. It was kind of nice to speak down to authority, I felt pretty powerful. I know that's stupid, he's just a simple staffer, I could have become one of those, but it felt good.

"Huh..." He said, "I'll go get that for you." He walked towards the Main Hall, and I went back to the office. I could

hear a stream of water coming from the other room, probably Wilbur in the shower. It stopped after a few seconds, and I heard a knock on the door going to the bathroom.

“Hello? William?” I heard from the other side.

“Yes, Sir?” I replied.

“Do you have my clothes in there?” He asked me. I said “Yes.”

“Alright. You can leave the office for a few minutes while I get dressed.” I said “Okay.” and walked outside. I heard him fumble around in there, so I sat down at a nearby table in the Study Room. Before I could stop him, a staffer walked towards Wilbur’s office with a tray of coffee and water, he opened the door and was met with Wilbur screaming and hollering. The staffer had to be extra careful to not drop the tray from the shock. Wilbur yelled “Get the fuck out!” before the staffer closed the door. It was kind of funny, but when the staffer saw me smirking, I quickly stopped. He put the tray down on the table I sat at and told me to “get it in there,” before storming off. Wilbur stuck out his head and called me in, I grabbed the tray and went in.

Wilbur still hadn’t closed his belt or put on socks, but I put down the tray and sat on the chair in front of his desk. Wilbur fastened his belt tightly, with his white shirt tucked into his pants, and put on the brown jacket. He then sat down and put his big, nasty feet on the table, putting on his black dress socks on. It appeared to be quite a struggle for him, he was breathing loudly and sighing the entire time. When he was finally done, he brushed dandruff off of his jacket and cleared his throat.

“How do I look?” He asked me. “Amazing.” I told him. He smiled and laughed.

“Want to get a smoke before the reporter arrives?” He asked me, I told him “Sure.” and we walked outside. Wilbur offered me a smoke, which I accepted. We smoked and enjoyed the sun for a while, with people occasionally coming up to compliment Wilbur. I was very surprised that

people hadn't arranged a lynch mob against Wilbur yet. He literally just poisoned them. Maybe he said something yesterday when I was asleep. Either way, it was weird.

We stood and smoked for a few minutes before a black SUV pulled up into the parking lot. From it came three people; a nicely dressed guy, I assumed the reporter, a camera man and a sound guy. They walked towards Wilbur, who greeted them all with handshakes. The reporter was an older guy, at least late forties, but kept himself well. He had a nice, black suit with a red tie, and grey hairs on the side of his head. He was fit and looked healthy.

"Why don't we go inside and get comfortable?" He asked them. They followed him, and Wilbur gestured to me to follow him. We went inside, and everyone walked into Wilbur's office. On the way, Wilbur whispered something to a staffer, to which the staffer nodded. We reached his office, and Wilbur gestured the reporter to sit where I usually do, right in front of him. The cameraman positioned himself to the right of the reporter, and the soundman on the left.

"Shall we begin, Mr. Wilbur?" Asked the reporter.

"Just a moment, I have a staff member coming shortly." He said, smiling. He began striking small talk with the reporter about the drive, and the weather. While talking, Wilbur noticed I was standing very awkwardly at the door to the office, and gestured me to sit in the back. I did. After a few minutes, two female staffers came into the office and sat next to me.

"We can begin the interview." Wilbur said, and the reporter said "Alright." and took out some notes from his pocket. He looked over to the cameraman, who gave the reporter a thumbs up. The reporter turned around, counted down from three, and then began the interview.

"Thank you for letting us interview you today, Mr. Wilbur." Said the interviewer. "Thank you." Said Wilbur, hands folded and shoulders resting on the desk.

“Now, Mr. Wilbur. What are you and your students doing at this facility?” Asked the interviewer.

“Well, we call this facility the Enlightened World Center, or the E.W.C, mostly just the Center around here. We are attempting to establish the next frontier in spiritual enlightenment, and further the technologies of the World Study.” Said Wilbur.

“And have you had success with this?” Asked the interviewer.

“You can say that, yes. We have a technique we are currently working on right now. It’s a study on the self, and the therapies one can do to oneself.” Said Wilbur.

“What do these studies entail, Mr. Wilbur?” Asked the interviewer.

“Well, I can’t disclose that at the current time, but they will be public knowledge when the techniques are developed and ready. We anticipate within the next year.” Said Wilbur.

“Alright, Mr. Wilbur.” Said the interviewer.

“Now, who are the people you have running around here?” Asked the interviewer.

“They are friends. My trusted associates, and professional World Student.” Said Wilbur, as he poured a glass of water for himself, and took a big gulp.

“Mr. Wilbur, what is the goal you are trying to achieve with having all of these people here?” Asked the interviewer.

“Well, Sir.” Said Wilbur, “I have been subject to an immense campaign of terror from the established media and so-called scientific communities.” He said, before he pulled out a pack of Red Marlboros from his pocket and lighting one. “Do you mind?” He asked the interviewer, who replied with “Go ahead.”

“Now, Wilbur. When you say campaign of terror, why do you think your organization has been under such immense scrutiny?” Asked the interviewer.

“They neither can, nor want to understand that the work we do here is a revolution in spirituality and health!” Exclaimed Wilbur.

“You see... When someone comes along and tries to free mankind from his troubles, it threatens the industries that make money from those troubles. My students and I are trying to develop the technique that will put man into the purest state of enlightenment.” Said Wilbur, looking directly into the eyes of the interviewer, like he was trying to intimidate him.

“Does this not seem a little far-fetched?” Asked the interviewer.

“No, no. Not at all. The techniques we already have in use have shown time and time again to be the best!” Said Wilbur. He once again ashes his cigarette and takes a drag.

“Okay, Sir.” Said the interviewer. He looked through his notes, and then up at Wilbur again.

“What if someone at this Center would want to leave? How would you ensure that they didn’t share your secrets and techniques through other measures?” Asked the interviewer.

“I have nothing but confidence in the people here. They are chosen among the most dedicated, most fierce World Students.” Said Wilbur, before taking one final drag from his cigarette and pressing the bud into the ashtray.

“If they want to leave, that is up to them.” Said Wilbur.

“Okay, Mr. Wilbur.” Said the interviewer, “I think we have gathered enough today. Thank you for your time.” He said, before shaking Wilbur’s hand and gesturing at the camera and soundman to follow him outside. After they left, I got up and tried to leave, but Wilbur gestured me to wait in the chair.

“You see, William?” Asked Wilbur.

“See what?” I asked him.

“See how the media tries to make me out to be a bad guy? I have done nothing but try to help mankind!” He exclaimed. He stood up from his desk and started to stroll back and forth, which I apparently did whenever he was frustrated.

“They try so hard!” He said, “Every question is an attempt to try and make me admit something sinister.”

“I suppose. But now people will see that you’re a good man.” I said.

“Thank you, Willie. You have been an immense help.” He said.

“We have work to do. I have had some lunch prepared, afterwards we have to try the method again.” He said. “What method?” I asked.

“The vitamins. They have to work!” He said. I left his office.

Chapter 9

I went outside to have a smoke. The smoke in Wilbur's office gave me an immense want for a cigarette myself. I wanted to try to stop. It's weird actually, Wilbur claimed back in 74' that World Study could cure smoking. Wilbur described any physical substance as a way to push away the effects of one or more TMIs. Either way, I got outside. It was mostly empty, there were a few unknown members, and among some of them, George. I didn't want to talk to him, so I walked away from the group and smoked for myself. I enjoyed the cold breeze. For once, it was kind of nice down here. I feared it would be only sunshine, heat and thirst. The weather was really nice today. I had high hopes for the day. A few minutes into smoking and enjoying the weather, a staffer called on the small group outside, informing us that lunch was ready. We went into the Main Hall and there was a large table with food and drinks on it. There was fresh bread, butter and fruit on a platter. There were some cold cuts and cheese next to it. A few jugs of water with ice cubes, and what appeared to be iced tea was also on the table. I went into the small line of people waiting to serve themselves, took out a plate and dished some random foods on my table. I sat on the tiles, next to Claire.

"Hey!" I told her, she said "Hello."

I started eating. Claire looked pretty bad, still. She was breathing heavily, looked very pale, and had enormous bags under her eyes. Her red hair was covering her face. She looked a little scary to be honest.

"Doing better?" I asked her.

"A little. Still pretty bad." She said.

"Want me to go get you a glass of water?" I asked her. She nodded, so I got up and picked up two glasses of water. I gave it to Claire, and she chugged it in a few goes.

"I don't know if I can do much more." Said Claire.

“You’ll stick through it.” I told her.

“This just isn’t what I expected, Will.” She said, “I wanted to study and write, not take weird pills and cry.” She said.

“You’re missing the point, then” I said.

“And what exactly is that point?” She asked me, she seemed very annoyed.

“Why did you come here?” I asked her, bluntly.

“What?” She asked, she was caught off guard by my tone.

“Why are you sitting here, right now?” I asked her, looking directly at her.

“Because I want to help.” She said, confused and intimidated.

“Exactly,” I said “so take it easy and be patient. We’ll stick through it.” I said. She raised her eyebrows, sighed and looked away. I don’t know why I felt the need to defend Wilbur so much. I liked him a lot, and was very surprised that he had taken such a liking to me. I didn’t have many expectations, but I was positively surprised.

Someone was walking around the room, looking at the corners and at the floors. It looked weird. I stared at him, and noticed other people doing the same, so I decided to get up and talk to him. I walked over to him and poked his shoulder, he didn’t see me approaching so he jumped a bit when I poked him.

“What are you doing?” I asked him in a friendly manner.

“Looking for the sound.” He said, continuing his apparent search.

“What sound?” I asked.

“You don’t hear it either?” He proclaimed, he seemed disappointed or scared, one or the other.

“No, I don’t.” I said.

“There’s a ringing somewhere.” He said. I thought that was weird, until a thought popped up. When I had an

especially bad experience with drugs, my ears were ringing for a few weeks. I held his shoulders.

“Hey, try this.” I said, “Put your fingers in your ears.” I said. He looked at me, confused, but then complied. When he put both his fingers in his ears, I could hear his breath becoming much more rapid. His eyes widened, and he quickly took out his fingers again. It was clear that the ringing came from his ears, and not from elsewhere. He surprisingly seemed to submit to it, and walked off. I went back to Claire. Ramy walked over to Claire and I, sat down next to her, and started rubbing her back. It irritated me. Like I said, I had no feelings for Ramy, but why would she choose him over if me, if she had the chance? I was Wilbur’s favorite, I would pick myself if I was in her shoes. Why does she even need to find anyone? That’s not part of the mission here.

Wilbur emerged from outside, walking over and standing next to me. He kneeled, which took him a while, due to his weight. He tried whispering into my ear, but I got up and helped him get upright again, before letting him whisper to me.

“I need you right now.” He said. I nodded and walked with him towards his office. Claire and Ramy didn’t even look at me, they were busy being in love I suppose. We walked into his office, and he closed the door behind me. I sat down, and so did he.

“Now, William.” As he always started a conversation with me for some reason. “I have a little issue.” He said.

“Is this news?” I asked, jokingly, he chuckled.

“No, unfortunately it is not.” He said, smacking his fat hands on the desk.

“I have one hundred World Students here, Will. One hundred!” He exclaimed.

“It’s far too many. I can’t keep up the costs! I’ll let you in on a little secret that the rest are apparently too simple to pick up on” He said. I waited for that secret, excited.

“This is a purge.” He said.

“A purge?” I asked. He said “Yes.”

“What are we purging?” I asked him.

“The unfaithful!” He yelled, standing up and prancing around the room.

“I want only those who would give their lives for this cause here.” He said. He walked behind me and started rubbing my shoulders. It felt weird, but I let him.

“Tonight, a final test will be devised. The damaged will leave, the faithful will stay.” He said. He looked directly down at me from above, like a bird looking at their prey.

“Okay, Sir.” I said. “How can I help?” I asked him. He smiled.

“That’s what I want to hear!” He exclaimed, clapping my shoulders and getting behind his desk again.

“Tell me, Willie.” He said, “why did you come here?”

“Well, I’ve been a Student for a long time, Sir.” I said, not really knowing how to answer. I wasn’t too sure why I was here, but it felt right. I decided on that being my spin here, directing his question into a compliment. I was good at that.

“I came here without much direction, but in just two days, I feel completely compelled to stay.” I said. His eyebrows raised, and his smile widened, his yellow, disgusting teeth showing.

“Well, you’re a prime example. I have no fears of you abandoning us.” He said. I smiled back at him.

“You are excused, I will get back to you later.” He said, I thanked him and got up. I decided to go to my room and fetch my smokes, they were probably going stale, and I hate stale cigarettes. On my way, Ramy and Claire walked past me, going outside. They didn’t say a word, Claire looked awful and Ramy looked awful with concern. I couldn’t let it go, so I backed up and walked outside with them, someone would probably lend me a smoke.

When I got out, I asked Ramy for a smoke. He gave me one, but didn't say a word, which I took some offence to. He seemed a little mad, or at least annoyed with me for some reason. What did I do to him? I lit it and started smoking by myself. I was getting pretty bored and annoyed. I admit that my expectations may have been too high, and that I was still on a small ego high from the enormous praise Wilbur had given me these few days. Was he trying to abuse me? Could he spot me as a weak individual that he could exploit? I did I have legitimate ideas worth studying? I wasn't even smart enough to know, so probably the first. Knowing just enough, that's my trade.

We were all interrupted by a bell. It was a very deep and harsh tone, I noticed a staffer standing at the door. Apparently she wanted us to get inside, so we threw our smokes and went inside. Weird, I thought, since Wilbur didn't get the help he wanted from me yet. Unless the talk we had what the help he needed. I didn't know, so I followed along, into the Study Room, where I sat down next to Ramy and Claire, like always.

I didn't see any material on the desks, no books, or pens, or notes. We were probably in for a small lecture, one Wilbur had given thousands of. That's apparently how he made his money in the early stages of World Study, he would sell small shows for a lot of money, where he would demonstrate the techniques, and have small workshops for people. I bet he turned over a lot of people on charisma alone.

When everyone was seated a few minutes later, Wilbur came in. Usually, he came in smiling, but today he looked down at the ground. His hands were behind his back, and he was talking to himself, as he sometimes did. He walked to the middle of the room, slowly, and raised his head. His eyebrows deep-set and level, he looked around the room before opening his mouth, which made a big smacking sound.

“Why are you here?” He yelled out into the room. It startled people, he usually didn’t come on very strongly, and everyone looked around at each other. It was very unexpected.

“Is it to ridicule me?” He asked. “Is it to waste my time?” He yelled, even louder than before. People started at him with wide eyes and open mouths, unable to produce an answer, like a group of children being scolded by a teacher.

“I expect nothing but the best from you!” He said, pointing out into the room.

“People, we are under attack!” He yelled, as he slammed his fist into the nearest table. The people at the table all jumped, and you could feel the tense atmosphere becoming narrower and narrower.

“When I give you a simple, little supplement, I expect you to be at a spiritual level where you can handle that. That is the reason you are here! You were chosen, but that’s not good enough for you all.” He said, saliva flying out of his nasty mouth and hitting everything within distance.

“Today is your last chance. Only those who are worthy will stay.” He said, much calmer this time. I could see even the staff becoming uneasy. He was off a tangent, and seemed really unpredictable.

“I want you all to come outside, now!” He said, and started walking outside. Frantically, the staff followed suit, and people started getting up, although you could feel the reluctance clearly.

We got outside, and Wilbur gestured to his staff, who instructed us to get into a line, like a Roman legion. We all stood next to each other, behind each other and in front of each other after a while. It was very surreal, but I wasn’t scared, I knew Wilbur wouldn’t kick me out. Wilbur stood in the front, facing us all, perfectly center.

“Attention!” He yelled out. Everyone stood front, like a military about to do battle. Wilbur surveyed us for a while, and made sure to stare down as many people as

possible. I was in the third row, and Wilbur mostly looked at the ones in the front. Suddenly, he reached out for a young man in the front line, and pulled him out of the line. The young man looked terrified, and as Wilbur forcefully turned him around to face us, Wilbur forced him to make eye contact.

“Why are you in the front?” He asked the boy, very loudly. People were beyond confused and scared.

“I... I don’t know.” Said the guy, he was just about to bawl his eyes out.

“Why are you in the front?” He asked again, almost yelling at him.

“I don’t know!” The boy yelled, and with that, his eyes turned into waterfalls, and he sobbed like a child with a scraped knee.

“Do you think you’re better than everyone else?” Wilbur yelled at the kid, almost yelling his damn ears off.

“No Sir!” The kid yelled.

“Why do you deserve to be in the front? Why?” Wilbur yelled at him, almost drowning the poor kid in bad breath and saliva. The young guy kept crying, and Wilbur, hands still tightly wrapped around his shoulder, threw him backwards, so he fell to the ground. The kid lied in the sand, crying.

“Why is no one helping him?” Wilbur yelled into the crowd. Immediately, two young men in the front reached out grab the guy and pull him up. One guy pulled him up by grabbing the underside of his thigh, so Wilbur stormed towards him and smacked his hand.

“Are you a homosexual?” Wilbur yelled at the guy.

“What?” Exclaimed the guy trying to help.

“This is not the time to sexually molest this poor young man, you filthy animal!” Wilbur yelled, his eyes bloodshot and an endless supply of spit draining from him.

“Sorry, Sir!” The guy yelled, and grabbed the sobbing kid by his arm, pulling him up and positioning him

back into the line. Wilbur surveyed the front row, walking back and forth, seeing the frightened faces of the Students. Someone in the back started crying, a woman. The two people beside her started comforting her, but were quickly interrupted when Wilbur stormed through the lines, breaking up the formation, until he reached the woman. He stared at her, and she stared back at him. She was clearly holding back tears, as Wilbur kept staring at her. When she could no longer hold it back, and started crying again, Wilbur pointed his finger to the right, and yelled "Get out!" at her. The woman stormed away, and went inside the Center again. Wilbur, visibly manic and quite possibly psychotic, once again looked over the crowd like a mad king surveying his kingdom.

"You are all sick!" He yelled, almost screaming. "Sick, sick, sick!" He repeated a few times, pointing at the crowd.

"This is what we're gonna do to you sick animals." He yelled, as his gaze suddenly met a young woman in the front. As he approached her, she started screaming and trying to get away, but the men besides her kept her in place. Wilbur approached her and pulled her out to him by her hair. Pulling on her roots like she was an animal on a leash. People started yelling at Wilbur, things like "That's enough!" and "Come on!"

Wilbur just yelled "Shut your mouth!" into the crowd, and as he held the poor young girl, he bowed down to her and whispered something at her. She stopped crying and looked confused. She looked at Wilbur for a few seconds, Wilbur looking back at her. She then got up, removed Wilbur's fat, hairy hands from her scalp, and walked into the crowd. After clearing about five lines, she approached a young man. Handsome fellow, scruffy beard and long curly hair. She started kissing him, and although he was confused, he didn't appear to stop her. The sheer magnitude of the gesture, combined with the fast pace of crazy events everyone

needed to process left most speechless. Wilbur looked at them, shaking his head. He didn't seem that manic anymore, but knowing Wilbur, that could change in mere seconds.

"Bravo!" Wilbur yelled, and started clapping. It didn't make any sense.

"This is a prime example of Student ignorance!" Wilbur said, as he gestured the guy getting kissed to come towards Wilbur. He seemed like a tough kid, more than able to beat the living soul out of Wilbur if he tried to do anything. He approached Wilbur, and was met with a handshake. It seemed very out of place, but he accepted it, and shook Wilbur's hand.

"You are welcome to leave." Wilbur told the guy. He was dumbfounded, and seemed incapable of uttering a word. Wilbur gestured him to go inside, and he did so. Wilbur looked into the crowd again, closed his eyes, and cleared his throat.

"Chapter Six, On the Road to Survival, page 89 describes sexual deviance, including promiscuous activities, as...?" He asked the crowd. An older woman said "The result of TMIs?" She looked rather confused and scared, probably anticipating Wilbur to go on a rant. He didn't, instead he said "Very good!" We didn't understand the significance yet, and waited for an explanation.

"I asked this nice young girl to pick out the member of the crowd she found the most attractive. She chose Adam, a young man from the Scandinavian country of Sweden. As dear Adam did not immediately deny this random and whoreish act, his previous claims of reaching the prestigious level 4 seem to be bunk! You may remember me pulling Adam and Lewis aside for yesterday's experiment. Speaking of Lewis, where is he?" Said Wilbur. Lewis stepped forward, and Wilbur gestured him to come towards him. Lewis did so.

"Are you a Level 4, my friend?" Wilbur asked him, rubbing his shoulder in a very awkward way.

"Yes, sir." Said Lewis.

“Indeed you are! You would never deviate from the things I have taught you.” Said Wilbur. Lewis was visibly uncomfortable, but kept smiling.

“Today might be your final day here.” Said Wilbur to the crowd.

Chapter 10

We were directed inside, into the Main Hall. Some staffers had setup a few tables. On one table was a few pair of scissors, neatly laid out. On another was a selection of electric hair clippers, and on another was a few bottles of what appeared to be rubbing alcohol. There were also a few cardboard boxes on the floors beside the tables. We all went in there, standing, and Wilbur walked briskly to the front of the room, all the staffers standing behind him. He once again cleared his throat, and looked out at us all.

“What happens now is voluntary. You can participate, or you can leave forever. What we do here is for the spiritual survival of humanity, if you are not dedicated to your very core, do us all the favor of leaving.” Wilbur said. A few people looked around at each other, and whispered to each other. I noticed a small clique of six men leaving, loudly speaking in a foreign language. One guy flipped Wilbur off, to which Wilbur had no reaction. Three more people left, before Wilbur started talking again.

“Very good. I would like you all to strip off your shirts.” He said. A few more people left. One woman said “I don’t have a bra on!” to which Wilbur responded “So?”

“I don’t want to show everyone my breasts!” She exclaimed.

“Why does it matter? Didn’t you read Chapter 9, On the Roles of Humans, page 148, which states that sexuality and gender is an oppression?” Said Wilbur, very confident in his tone. The woman, as well as some others, walked out. After a brief pause, some people started removing their shirts, men and women. I did so too. I noticed a few more people leaving. I was wondering where they went, all the staffers appeared to be present, so they were pretty much left unchecked as far as I knew. Either way, the remaining people had left. I wasn’t sure if this was a test to show how far we’d

go, or if it had something to do with the hair cutting utensils. Either way, there was a sea of bare skin covering the Main Hall. Even a few women without bras, which some of the guys stared at a bit too long. Wilbur smiled and seemed very pleased with the result, so after once again clearing his throat and coughing like a maniac, he spoke.

“Very good, everyone!” He said, before walking to one of the tables and picking up a pair of scissors. He played with them like a child.

“I did not strip you down to ridicule you or make you submissive, I did it for practical reasons. Who remembers Chapter 9, On the Roles of Humans, page 168?” He asked. No one could answer.

“Human sexuality and gender are intertwined with Ancestral Implants, people! In order to strip ourselves of AIs, we must first strip ourselves of the tools that cause these TMIs!” He said.

The Ancestral Implants is yet another concept unique to World Study. It describes the TMIs of ones ancestors, which are carried onto new generations. AIs, as Wilbur calls them, is an integral part of the TMIs a person picks up in their lives, and the TMIs that they spread to others. Say your great-great grandfather is sexually molested and never recovers from it, this TMI will now infest his children, who will have an imbalance in their own feelings towards sex. This is the theory, at least.

“So now I ask you, again voluntarily, to come up here and let a staffer shave off the hair on your head. All of it! Hair, beards and eyebrows must go. This is your last chance to back out.” Said Wilbur. Only two people, males, picked up their shirts, put them on and walked off. The remaining, I think about fifty of us, all went into a line, and sure enough, a staffer cut off our hair. I wasn’t the hairiest guy, I had a small scruffy beard and short hair, so I didn’t lose much of my identity. It took about half an hour, and we were asked to go sit down once we were done.

I noticed both Claire and Ramy was still there. Claire looked really weird without her thick, red hair flowing down her shoulders. They sat down next to me, which surprised me. I was done before them, by the way. Claire was smiling, and seemed really happy with her new look.

“So, this is new!” She said to me, laughing.

“Yeah, didn’t expect this.” I said, smiling at her.

I noticed, when most were done with their haircuts that a group of people dressed like staffers came running into the Main Hall, towards Wilbur. I hadn’t seen them before, but I assumed they were real staffers. One of them whispered into Wilbur’s ear, and he listened with much enthusiasm. He said something to the staffer, and they ran off again. Maybe they were taking care of the people who left. I wasn’t sure.

Everyone had been cut, and the sea of bare bodies had turned into a sea of bald heads too. Wilbur clapped, wanting our attention.

“Everyone, thank you for your cooperation! It is an immense pleasure to see your dedication to this cause.” Said Wilbur.

“This is step one, the next step is to assign you a new name, one that has neither male nor female connotations.” Said Wilbur. “You will also receive a neutral set of clothing.” He said.

A staffer came over and told us to “Form a line,” so we did. Some other staffers picked up the cardboard boxes from the floor and put it on the table. They pulled out what looked like robes. Togas maybe. They turned out to be just plain long shirts, and very baggy pants. There was one string which you could use to tighten the pants. It was my turn, and I got a pair. We were instructed to strip down entirely, except underwear, and put on the clothing. It felt comfortable. It was a pretty course, but very thick and otherwise soft fabric. It was white, but had a slightly grey tinge to it. When everyone was dressed, we were instructed to sit down. Wilbur, who had silently been watching the entire ordeal, went into the

back room of the Main Hall, what I believe was the kitchen, and came back with a massive book. Wilbur, being fat and frail, could hardly carry it without sweating and panting. He put it down on one of the tables, flipped to a random page, and smacked down his finger on the page. He then looked over at the crowd, waved his finger around, like he was choosing one of us, and stopped at a young man. He then said "Nature," while looking at him. The guy looked so confused, until Wilbur uttered "Your new name is Nature!"

Wilbur started clapping, and the staff followed. Soon after, the crowd started clapping too, although obviously reluctant. He then closed the book, turned to a random page, smacked his fat finger down, pointed at someone, and uttered a random word. Some of the new names were "Apple," "Cinnamon," "Motor" and "Half." He had continued this weird motion for a few minutes before his finger landed in my direction. He stared directly at me, smiled and gave me my new name, "Force." I liked it. It sounded, well, forceful. Like someone of authority. I smiled and he carried on. This ritual became pretty boring, as it was essentially just one man pointing and saying random words. He gave Claire a new name, "Glow," which I found very appropriate considering her now shaven hair. Ramy was named "Chief," which was also a pretty good name in my opinion. I wondered if Wilbur had actually left the naming to random chance, or if these names had a deeper meaning. One guy, who I remember as being kind of an idiot was named "Brick," a pretty unflattering name. Once everyone had been assigned a new name, Wilbur gave yet another boring speech with his weird ideas, but we followed along.

"Very, very good, my friends!" Wilbur exclaimed.

"This is the true beginning of your path to the spirit! I have a small confession to all of you, as you are the select few who chose to stay behind with this strange, old man." Wilbur said, and everyone laughed quietly.

“I rented this place out a long time ago, to create the ultimate World Study center! I wanted the public to come here, study, do therapy and leave. That’s all I wanted to do, to help.” Said Wilbur.

“So this will not be our location. You see, when I founded this great nation, Cecilia, I did so with a mission. I wanted to create a nation of World Students. Now, since not everyone here is a World Student, that won’t be possible, but the next best thing we can do is assemble an elite force, that’s you, so powerful that no one can deny the efficiency of World Study!” Wilbur exclaimed. People clapped.

“I have a small mansion down south, near New Sarum, that I want us all to relocate to. It’s smaller, but you will all have a lot more quality than here. If I am being completely honest, this was a temporary arrangement. I want only the ones who would die for this cause.” Said Wilbur. People once again applauded him, I did too.

“I have arranged a small dinner in the Study Hall, afterwards I want you all to pack your bags, and we’ll drive to New Sarum at night. Sound good?” Asked Wilbur. People nodded and said “Yes.” He was applauded again, and afterwards people got up, and walked to the Study Hall. I wanted a cigarette first, so I walked outside with a few others, including Claire and Ramy, or Glow and Chief as they would now be referred to. Claire gave me a cigarette without me even asking. She was probably pretty tired of me forgetting them. I lit it and started smoking. It felt good. Although it was getting late, and the constantly blaring sun had been replaced by a mild breeze, the thick clothing turned it into a very comfortable and soothing experience. The only thing freezing was my head, now completely bald. I noticed Claire freezing, especially on the head.

Wilbur joined us, and he immediately walked towards me. He clapped me on the shoulder, and while smiling, pulled out a cigarette and lit it.

“This was a good event, do you agree?” Wilbur asked me. I nodded.

“Purging. Feels good.” He said, as he looked at the clouds, and took deep drags off his cigarette. I finished the cigarette about halfway, before going inside, into the Study Hall. The tables for studies had been replaced with long tables filled to the brim with food. I guess having less people to feed allowed the Center for better foods. There was fresh bread, hasselback potatoes, barbequed chicken, baked potatoes, salad and iced tea. I took a plate and loaded it with just about everything there was to take. I was pretty hungry, and hadn’t eaten or drunken that much during my stay here. I sat down at the nearest table, and started to eat. I ate the entire plate, and filled it again before Claire sat down next to me.

“Why did you stay?” I asked her. I was actually really curious, she seemed pretty shaken about the vitamins, or whatever the hell that was.

“Because I came here.” She said. It wasn’t much, but I understood what she meant. She came all this way, and one bump on the road would be a silly reason to leave. I left it there, finished my food, and decided to walk outside and enjoy the fresh air.

I went outside, and it was already dark. It wasn’t more than seven or eight, but the stars were brightly showing, and the moon was full and lightning the entire parking lot of the Center. A thought came up, the letter. I wanted to know if the letter had been sent, so I went inside again to look for Wilbur. He sat at the table, entertaining a few Students, so I politely waited for him to finish his conversation. He turned to me, and I kneeled down to his ear.

“Do you know if the letter I wrote has been sent?” I asked him. I’m sure the staffers ran it by him.

“Yes, it was!” He said. I smiled at him, and tried to walk away, but he grabbed my hand.

“Willie, I’m done eating, let’s grab a smoke, on me.” He said. I said “Sure.” and waited for him to finish, before we both walked outside. He pulled out two smokes, one for me and one for him. We lit them.

“So, Willie. Liking the new style?” He asked me.

“Sure, it’s pretty comfortable.” I said, smiling.

“I know it might seem a bit silly, but the brain is one amazing machine, Willie! When you strip down your physical being to a bare minimum, you remove that stimuli from the brain, allowing it to focus on more important things.” He said. I nodded. It made sense, really, and I honestly didn’t mind it too much.

“So why aren’t you wearing them?” I asked Wilbur.

“Well, because I’m not a Student” He said. I wasn’t sure what he meant, he invented the damn movement.

“What do you mean?” I asked him.

“Was Jesus a Christian?” He asked me. I said “No.”

“Right, in the same way, I am not a Student. I was blessed to bring this therapy and spirituality to humanity, and as such I do not need to follow quite the same process. You see, I am already beyond the steps you will take in the following days.” He said. It didn’t really make sense, but I went with it, and continued with my cigarette. He didn’t seem to be finished with his explanation though, so I turned to him and let him finish.

“Don’t think I’m better than you, though. Or think that my life is a blessing. I was put here through immense agony and suffering, and I will die a martyr someday.” Said Wilbur. He became a little too preachy and, quite honestly, scary, so I changed the subject.

“When are we going?” I asked him.

“Soon, I think. I asked David to arrange the transportation.” Said Wilbur. Sounded good. I took a few more drags before discarding the cigarette and started to walk, but something came over me. I question I just couldn’t stop myself from asking, although I knew it would get me in

trouble. So I turned back, walked up to Wilbur and looked at him.

“Why were you so rough with those kids before?” I asked him. His usually happy and smiling demeanor changed very quickly to one of anger, apathy and pure evil.

“Because they let me.” He said, “They didn’t do anything for themselves! I wasn’t hit, questioned or confronted once. William, look at me, and know this: I am not a human being, I am not a person, I am an idea!” He said, suddenly grasping my shoulder very firmly, and putting his sweaty face closer to mine.

“When you look at my face, my words and my actions, you better know you’re not looking at an equal, William. You are looking at World Study! You are looking at the man who will save you!” He yelled at me. I wrestled his arm away from me, which made him gasp loudly, and fall back a bit. I looked at him, as he brushed his jacket and cleared his throat.

“When I fail, the world fails, William. Don’t let me fail.” He said, before throwing his cigarette and storming inside, loudly smacking the door behind him. I was very surprised at the sudden burst of anger, but I understood entirely what he meant. I decided to go inside, and while trying to avoid Wilbur as much as possible for the rest of the night, I sneaked into my room to pack my bags.

When I got inside, I noticed that Jack and George’s beds were completely empty, and the sheets were neatly folded. I checked the closets, and their clothing and bags were also gone. I suspect they left during the whole freak-out from Wilbur. I was pretty happy with it, I never liked them too much. I quickly packed my things. I didn’t have a lot with me. I mostly had my clothing, a comb, a few towels, a few books, some World Study vitamins, and of course my cigarettes. I packed in under ten minutes, and neatly folded the bed before I walked out, and down to the Main Hall.

In the Main Hall, I saw most of the Students standing, still in their robes, with their bags. I didn't notice anyone when I came down, so maybe I was a little late. A staffer walked over to me and informed me that Wilbur had given everyone directions, and that I was going when David came back. I figured they took people in intervals, so I sat down on the floor.

Chapter 11

As I sat on the floor, I noticed how tired I was. I closed my eyes and started to think very vividly. I started to think about my daughter, about Joseph, about Josh. I thought about a lot of things. I thought about Wilbur, and the power he had over me. I have to be honest, I knew Wilbur wasn't always the saint he made himself out to be, but I believe it is important to humanize him. He is charismatic, and as such not always truthful, but the core message of World Study, and the purpose of the system is something I believe the world cannot be without.

I was interrupted in this brief thought by David, who had returned to pick up the next team of Students. He walked in, and a lovely breeze followed him. When he saw me, he waved. I'm not sure why, but he did. I waved back. David walked over to Wilbur, tapped his shoulder, and Wilbur nodded, and walked slightly forwards to everyone could hear him.

“Everyone! If you have been assigned to the third team, it is your time to go.” Wilbur said, and a few people got up. I slept through the assignment, but Wilbur looked at me and pointed at me when he was done, so I got my stuff and got up with the rest of the team. We walked outside. It had become very cold, and I saw most people freezing instantly when they came out. We all got into a large bus that had “World Study – Hope & Growth” on the side, with a picture of the World Study logo. “Hope & Growth” was a long-lasting motto of the World Students, and I remember it being stamped on the inside of my personal copy. They don't use it much anymore, but I think it has a nice ring to it. I admired the side of the bus while walking towards it. It attracted me. The World Study logo is a mess of weird symbols and pillars. It is all encompassed in a hollow circle. In the hollow section is the full name, World Enlightenment International. I

reached the door of the bus, and walked inside. It was modeled like an old city bus, and although the seats were pretty torn and the bus kind of smelly, it felt nice getting in there. Most of us were pretty tired, and I heard a lot of yawns, so I choose a seat in the back. I crammed myself so far into the window as I could, and used my bag as a pillow. The robes served nicely as a small cover, and I already heard snoring after having just sat down. In front of me, a young girl was sleeping already. When everyone had entered the bus, David, without saying anything, stormed in and sat at the driver's seat. We took off immediately, and the old bus seemed to protest the driving, loudly. Despite the many bumps already, only just leaving the driveway, I quickly felt comfortable, and rested my head. I heard some people chatting, but most were quiet.

I was back on my train of thought. I thought about Joseph. Joseph and I were good friends. We grew up together in the town I was born in, in North Carolina. Joseph and I went to high school together, and we even lived together briefly, but he moved in with his girlfriend a few months after. They were so lovely together. I forgot her name, but they were cute. Either way, Joseph and I had a common interest if you will. We were both far more preoccupied with drinking, than doing work. We both struggled financially, but we somehow always had enough for a bottle of cheap vodka and a jug of orange juice.

I was a pretty heavy drinker back then. I don't think I had any serious issues, like alcoholism, but I did use it to curb the boredom. Joseph and I would get very drunk, and do whatever. Watch TV, talk, and go for walks, anything to spend the time. One particular night, we had gotten very drunk. Probably more drunk than any of us had ever been. I don't know why that day in particular stood out. Joseph and his girlfriend were doing great, I had the possibility of a job around the corner at my uncle's auto shop. But that night, we got really drunk. We would often lounge in my apartment in

North Carolina. It didn't have much. A couch, which I slept on, a small kitchen, and a bathroom that had an awful stench. I'm being honest, it smelled like death and terror. We went through a few bottles in a few hours, and we smoked a lot of cigarettes too. I remember us listening to music, some pop record I bought. We eventually ran out of cigarettes, and Joseph had the bright idea of driving to the gas station to buy more. I clearly remember being opposed to the idea, but I think the alcohol took over, so I agreed to go. Joseph and I both had our licenses, but Joseph seemed a little bit drunker than I did, so I decided to drive. We got into the car and Joseph turned on the radio and started singing along with whatever song was on. I laughed, and we took off in a rush. It went pretty well, and I was extremely confident after successfully leaving the driveway, waiting for a car to pass, and driving the speed limit. We talked on the way. I remember Joseph talking, partially to himself and to me, about what brand of cigarettes he wanted to buy. He wasn't very brand loyal, I often saw him with many different brands of cigarettes, sodas and candy bars. I was more linear, I knew exactly what I wanted. We reached a roundabout, and I entered it.

The last thing I remember is a loud thump. I lost my consciousness for a good while, and when I woke up, I saw a car parked a few meters away. I came to my senses, and I was laying on the asphalt. The pain started storming my body, like bursts of electricity was being pumped into me. It seared, like meat on a grill. I reached my hands forwards, and noticed two of my fingers were broken. Both of my hands were covered in blood, running down my hands and onto the pavement. I saw a woman approaching me, holding me head up, and laying me on my back. I remember asking her what had happened, to which she replied with "Just take it easy." I don't really know what happened for the next few minutes, I guess seeing my hands made me pass out. I remember waking up again, this time in an ambulance, with three

paramedics taking care of me. They asked me bunch of questions, shined light into my eyes, and I slowly dozed off again, while they pleaded with me to stay with them. After being in and out of consciousness, I remember clearly waking up in the hospital, with tubes everywhere. My doctor told me I was lucky. I had a few broken bones, a torn ACL, which still affects my knee, and a lot of superficial damage. He also told me of Joseph, but not in details, although I pleaded with him to just let me know. Joseph had died instantly, is all he would tell me. I remember sobbing uncontrollably one minute, and staring at the wall another. Joseph's girlfriend tried breaking into my room, but was apprehended. I later learned that he didn't wear a seatbelt, which I had no memory of. He had been tossed out of the front window, which resulted in him smashing his skull on the pavement. In court a few days later, one witness said that she saw brain matter partially out of Joseph's head. I was lucky, and was only sentenced to four months in prison, of which I served three. I honestly don't have a lot of interesting stories from prison, I spent most time by myself. Joseph's mother visited me in prison, actually. She wanted to tell me that she forgave me, and I told her to spend as much as she wanted for the funeral, and that I would cover the costs. Joseph wasn't buried until a few weeks after the accident, due to an extensive autopsy. I didn't attend his funeral, but I visited his grave a few times. I didn't like it, because I remember so clearly being reminded of him all the time when I was finally released. The couch we used to sit on, the clothing he left behind. Everything I touched reminded me of Joseph. It drove me crazy. I got into the habit of sleeping in my bathroom, on a blanket. Every time I tried to sit on my couch, it was like sitting on a hot stove. I couldn't do it. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford to leave my apartment, so I was essentially a prisoner in my own home. It was a feeling I had never felt before, or even come close to. I never had any

close losses. I was overwhelmed constantly with the accident. It was literally everything I could think about.

I got rid of the apartment a few years later though, and eventually met Rebecca, the mother of my daughter. I essentially moved in with her right away. She didn't like having me there all the time too much, but I persuaded her to let me stay, and even paid her. I wasn't shy of telling her about the accident, so she eventually let me stay. I was an idiot. When we got our daughter, I didn't really know how to deal with being a father. I was still trying to deal with being a killer. Rebecca raised her on her own, essentially. This was a long time ago. I eventually broke up with Rebecca, and let her raise my daughter full time. I forgot to mention, I actually started doing World Study only a few months after the accident. Joshua, my brother, was pretty shook about the accident, and as I have already told, he introduced me to it. When I received the letter to join the Center, it was probably the first time since the accident I felt excited. I was genuinely happy, and I felt amazing. When I broke the news to Rebecca, I expected to be torn down. Beaten with words, and abused with hands. But I wasn't. She just said "Okay." and everything seemed to be fine. To be honest, I would have preferred a little resistance, but I took it. I asked her if our daughter could stay with my parents, and she agreed.

I still think I sound like a massive asshole when I think about it. I really should have manned up and taken care of what is mine, instead of selfishly going on this spiritual quest with this weird group of people who are equally as messed up as I am. I think still, that the best thing would be to take over where Wilbur left off, when he eventually busts a vein in his brain. He worked and preached to hard that you could often see his veins, pumping and pulsing like an old machine. I wanted to be in his place.

Chapter 12

I was woken from my slumber by a massive thump. Almost instinctively, I thought we had crashed. In reality, we were just on a really old bus. I looked out, and noticed we had entered a very different part of Cecilia. Now, the torn down buildings and dirty roads had been replaced with green, cut grass and flowers. I knew this, because the streetlights actually worked. It looked like an American suburb, and not a crumbling African colony. I didn't think we had much time left in the bus, so I put my bag on the seat next to me. Exactly as I predicted, after a few minutes we drove into the driveway of what was perhaps the largest home on the entire block. A huge villa, painted white. It almost looked like marble. There was a massive driveway, covered in small rocks, and a stairway leading into the home. David parked the bus, and opened the door so we could get out. One by one, we got up and walked out. David walked out first, and gathered us in front of the bus before we could enter. When everyone had gotten out, David clapped once to get out attention, keeping his hands together.

“Alright, everyone! We're here.” He said.

“This is Wilbur's Resort, as we staffers like to call it.” Said David, laughing. Some people laughed with him.

“It has just about everything a man could want. You can use the indoor swimming pool, the extensive library with books in psychology, anthropology, history and religion. Most of you will also get your own room, though a few will get roommates. If you have preferences, we can arrange accordingly. You are here, because you are the ones deemed worthy of being here. Spend your time as the intellectuals, authors, philosophers and thinkers you were destined to be.” Said David. I had never seen him give such a Wilbur-esque speech, so I highly presume that Wilbur wrote it down and made David recite it. It sounded a little fake and

disingenuous, but everyone seemed happy and understanding. I was very excited too, it sounded like a nice place to be. Much nicer than the Center, at least. Everyone got their bags and walked inside. We were met by a huge hall, with stairs going up in the center. It was like an old castle, very beautiful. David led the way, as we walked through a door on the right, and into another room. There, we went through a door, which led us down to what appeared to be a renovated basement. Down there, through yet another door, was a very long hall. And kind of like the Center, each side had a door, which were numbered. David told us to "Take whichever room you want," so we did. People walked very calmly through the hall, the group steadily losing numbers as people found a room. I went with room No. 31. Inside the rooms were a small hallway. It was modeled almost like a hotel room. We had our own bathroom, small kitchen, and living room. In the living room was a massive bed, a small stool and a table, and on the table, our very own typewriter. This wasn't a cheap typewriter, either. I was ecstatic. I couldn't wait to write, work and develop World Study. The bed was made, and the light was on. I continue to be impressed with Wilbur's level of preparation. He has a grip on everything. There was a knock on the door, and when I answered, it was David.

"Hey Force! We're meeting in the study, come join us!" He exclaimed, very excitedly as always. I said "Sure!" and followed him to the study. I had almost forgotten my new name, Force. The study appeared to be Wilbur's personal study, I had seen some pictures of it in a book published by the W.E.I.

They would often print books of Wilbur's achievements and travels. A boost of morale, or proof of his superiority, I suppose. Either way, it was interesting and nice photos. The study had two rows of books, covering the walls. Like the Study Hall, this one had chairs and tables set out for people to study, but these were much nicer. Each had their own

lamp, they were pretty far apart, and each table was made for one person only. Combine the places to study, the vast library, the typewriters, free paper and pampering staff, and you have what would become an amazing atmosphere to study in. As we all stood in a crowd, I noticed another group of Students coming to join us. David stood in the front.

“I hope you all like the new place!” David said. People nodded, and most were smiling.

“I have a few more people to pick up. If you’re tired, you’re welcome to sleep. There’s food in the dinner hall. Welcome!” David exclaimed. As people clapped, David smiled and briskly walked outside to the bus. For the first time since I got here, I didn’t have anyone to go to. I was alone in a crowd of people, essentially. I still had the sense that people didn’t like me, or were jealous of me. It’s no secret that I had a special relationship with Wilbur. Through my brother, or through my discoveries, Wilbur seemed to like me.

I felt hungry, but I also felt a craving for a cigarette. I decided to go outside, and see if there were even any smokers left, except for Claire and Ramy, of course. I walked outside, and there was only two others, standing in their robes. It was two guys, probably in their twenties. I said “Hey.” as I approached them, they nodded and said “Hey.”

“What’s your name?” One of them said. I said “Force.”

“No, no. Your real name.” Said the other. I was pretty insulted.

“It’s Force. That’s the name Wilbur gave me.” I said.

“Alright. Nice to meet you, I’m Michael.” Said one, and “I’m Christian.” said the other.

“Nice to meet you.” I said. I wanted them to say their new names. Why would they stay with Wilbur if they weren’t going to listen to him? It really annoyed me. I didn’t even want to ask for a cigarette, so I went inside again, and into the dinner hall. Like I said, it was like an old castle. There

were beautiful paintings, a nice warm light, candles and even faint music. Classical mu-sic. A large table in the middle of the room was filled to the brim with gorgeous food. Wilbur never failed to impress me with his vast supply of luxury meals. There was a massive, juicy brisket with a crispy and charred rub. Mashed potatoes with small pieces of parsley. There was a nice, simple salad of lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots sliced lengthwise and sunflower seeds. To that was a World Study classic, the homemade iced tea in a pitcher with ice. Like I had done before, I took a plate and filled it up with delicious food. I sat down at a nearby table. It was such a different atmosphere from the Center. The tables were set nicely, there were napkins, and a tablecloth, and a pitcher of cold water on the tables. I sat down with a small group, who were talking. I didn't want to interrupt, so I just sat down and assumed it was okay with them. One of them, a guy I recognized, looked up at me, and with a face that can only be described as smug, with a hint of confused. I think his name was Daniel, I was chosen with him in the earlier experiment.

"You're William, right?" He said. Apparently he recognized me too.

"Yeah. Well, it's Force." I said. He scoffed, and smiled.

"Right. You stayed too?" He asked me. What a ridiculous question. Firstly, I was clearly sitting in front of him, and secondly, I was clearly a dedicated Student. I know what he meant, but that level of impersonal blabber was insulting.

"I sure did." I just said, before going to town on my plate. The food tasted ten times as good as it looked, and I will remind you, it looked amazing. I could feel Daniel's eyes still on me, like he was trying to study me. I looked up, and caught his eyes. We looked at each other for a while.

"Wilbur seems to have taken a liking to you." Said Daniel. His expression changed from smug to threatening. As

if he was jealous. I liked that. I want that smug asshole to be jealous of me.

“Sure, I believe he has.” I just told him, before going back to stuffing my face. I wasn’t going to play his games. If Wilbur loves me, so be it. Daniel accepted the answer, and also went back to eating. The two others at the table silently watched the exchange while eating. I quickly finished my meal, and went to put my plate out into the kitchen. As I approached the door titled “Kitchen,” I noticed that Wilbur had come to the resort. As he walked into the room, people started clapping for some reason. Wilbur nodded, and occasionally mouthed a “Thank you.” He spotted me, and walked towards me. I could see Daniel noticing, and he did not look too happy. Wilbur went to me, and hugged me, which was a surprising gesture. I awkwardly hugged him back.

“I am glad to see you, Force!” He said.

“You too Sir, why?” I asked him. I don’t re-member us leaving on very good terms.

“Come, let’s talk.” He said.

“Okay, I just need to put my plate out-” I said, as I was interrupted by Wilbur raising his hand. A staffer came over and took my plate, so I thanked her and went with Wilbur. Wilbur took me up the stairs in the entry, and to the right. Through a hallway, and into a room on the left. It was marked as “Wilbur’s Office,” so I wasn’t too surprised at what was inside. Like the office at the Center, this one had a similar layout. The giant trophy picture was replaced, however, of a massive painting of Wilbur. A portrait. It was a very nice picture. Everything else looked similar. A chair, a desk, a library and a bunch of weird trophies and trinkets. There was even a typewriter on the desk. There was also no door in the front, so I don’t know where Wilbur’s bathroom and closet was. Wilbur sat down at his desk, and I sat down at one of the chairs, so I could sit in front of him. It was a very comfortable chair for a change. Wilbur had a cup of

something standing on the desk, I don't think it was coffee, since that would have gotten too cold to drink. He took a sip, and curled up his lips, so I suspected there was some strong liquor in there. I didn't mind, I would need something too if I was in his position.

"So, what do you think?" Wilbur asked me.

"It's nice. Much more room to study." I said. Wilbur smiled. His smile quickly disappeared, and he almost tipped over the glass in an attempt to grab it quickly. He was shaking and extremely sporadic, and the drink flew everywhere. He grunted and smashed his fat hand into the wooden table, giving a massive thump, which only disturbed the glass further.

"Are you okay?" I asked him.

"I'm fine, Will." He said. He opened his desk drawer, but before retrieving whatever he wanted to retrieve, he looked up at me with wild eyes.

"You trust me, right?" He asked me. The question caught me off guard, but I said "Sure," now kind of nervous as to what he was going to pull out. A gun? Medication? I didn't know, but the excitement grew as his hand reached into the drawer, and from it a bottle emerged. I sighed very slowly and quietly, I knew he was a drinker. The bottle was unmarked, there was no label or indication as to exactly what was inside. He pulled off the cap and poured the glass about halfway, before taking a massive sip. It was as if he was quenching a fire in his guts. Again, he made an ugly face, and even burped. The rancid mixture of booze, smoke and whatever else this fat bastard put into himself flew across the room, and with scary accuracy, into my nostrils. It was horrible. I pulled through, and as I focused on not letting him know of the odor attack he just unleashed on me, he put down the glass and put his hands to his head, smearing the sweat from his fore-head all over the rest of his face. His mouth was gaping, and his eyes were pointing up. He looked scared, but also relieved.

“Don’t tell anyone, Will.” He said. I nodded. Not sure what he meant. Don’t tell anyone that you drink? Everyone who has been within distance of you know you’re a heavy drinker. It’s in your clothing, your breath, and your sweat. But I wouldn’t tell anyone, it wouldn’t be news. Wilbur put the bottle back, and pulled out a few pieces of paper, which he laid neatly on the desk. He turned the pages around, so they were facing me, and asked me to pick them up. It was a few writings from Wilbur. The first page was titled “World Study 3 - The Final Insight”

“Is this the new book?” I asked Wilbur.

“This is some drafts, yes. I wanted you to go through with them. We’re far from done, but this is a start.” Said Wilbur. He took a final sip from his drink.

“I see. I’ll go through them.” I said, before getting up with the papers and walking towards the door. Wilbur stopped me.

“Oh, one more thing.” He said.

“I forgot to tell you, the letter was sent.” Said Wilbur. It made me smile. I was completely convinced it had been tossed to the side, or tampered with. I thanked him, and walked out. People were still in the dinner room, and Daniel kept staring at me. I went to my room, the entire trip was extremely quiet, in contrast with the constant noise of the Center. I turned on the light, which lit up the room in a nice, dimmed glow. The bed, which was neat and made, and the empty desk which was clean, made the space a very good place to read. I decided to read through the papers that Wilbur gave me, so I laid down on my bed and started at page one, which was the beginning of a chapter titled “On the Will to Live”

In it, Wilbur talks about the first days of life in the Center. He describes in vivid detail the warm sand, the mild breeze and the blaring sun. He talks about the Army of Scouts, which is probably one of his thousands of names for us Students that Wilbur came up with. He was really bad at

picking a name. First, we were the Order of the Enlightened, then the World Student Order of the Enlightened, or the W.S.O.E. and now Army of Scouts. What a stupid name, by the way. I think Wilbur was trying to cram as many cool and official sounding names into this organization as he could. These scouts, or whatever you prefer, were the premier intellectuals in the search for final enlightenment. Again, this was complete bunk. We weren't intellectuals, and most of the Students had already been purged. There were no mentions in these pages about the events that took place, like the massive drugging and the physical abuse in the purge. Maybe they were for later. Most likely, they would never be mentioned, except for so-called disgruntled ex-members, like my brother was called. They even have a name for it; Peeves. Joshua told me, before he left, that Wilbur had a secret archive, with many hidden lists and texts that could only be accessed after his death. Among these, Joshua told me, was a text that described the way to deal with Peeves. Now, Joshua was in early. He joined in 1975, as I have already said, and he was in on the early scene of World Study. He worked for the World Enlightenment Center in Raleigh, North Carolina. He told me that the director there, Gustav Tiebosch, who was a South African convert, knew Wilbur personally. He worked with Wilbur in Cecilville, and was even on the Cecilia Independence Council. Gustav was annoyed with the way Wilbur seemed to not want to have blacks on the Council. I think Gustav was also becoming a little disgruntled with the position he had been put in, forced to leave his family to setup a center in a country he had never been in before. According to Joshua, Gustav had been granted special access to the secret archive with a small group of other Students to organize the files alphabetically. While working there, he of course read through some of the files, despite being clearly ordered to not even look at anything but the titles, to determine their alphabetical status. Gustav came across on titled "The Peeve Problem," which he

ended up reading in the corner of the library so none of the others would rat him out. The document, which was handwritten by Wilbur, detailed a plan of extermination. Pure and simple, it described the different ways of making a Peeve commit suicide, or instrument an attack that would look like an accident. Gustav was scared, and when he was done organizing the library, he was moved back to North Carolina, where he broke away from the group. He went into hiding, but Joshua claims to have talked with him from time to time. He moved to Detroit, Michigan, and lived there for a few years. Now, this is where it gets a little hairy, and I'm not sure if I trust Joshua completely, because he told me this in 1980, a few years before the exposé and while he was out of World Study, but he claims that Wilbur had Gustav killed. Gustav killed himself in his apartment in 1979, and the police ruled it as a suicide, but Joshua told me that someone working in the archives had told Wilbur about reading the Peeves Problem. I'm not sure who to believe, and I wouldn't be entirely surprised if Wilbur had blood on his hands, but knowing Joshua, and knowing World Study, I remained skeptical. I put down the papers, and decided to go to sleep.

Chapter 13

I woke up with a slight headache. I'm not sure where it came from, but I fell asleep very heavily, Wilbur's pages were scattered all over the bed and floor. I picked them up, and organized them neatly. There was a clock on my desk, which I checked. I had missed breakfast. It was eleven. Now, since we weren't under the same kind of leadership as the Center, I presumed I wouldn't be scolded and hounded for sleeping in. I changed my clothes, took a shower in my own, personal shower. It was really nice. I changed my clothing and brushed my teeth, and with Wilbur's texts in my hand, I walked down to the dinner room. It was mostly empty. I became increasingly scared that I had missed something big. I noticed Claire and Ramy sitting and eating, so I decided to join them. I sat down, and they both smiled.

"Hey Willie." Said Claire.

"Hey," I said, "did I miss anything?" I asked. Claire and Ramy looked at me, confused.

"No, you didn't. What do you mean?" Ramy said.

"Well, I just slept for a long time, maybe I missed something." I said.

"No, no. We can sleep whenever we want." Said Claire, "Didn't you hear Wilbur last night?" She said.

"When?" I asked her.

"Pretty late. Maybe midnight. He gathered us and told us to basically do whatever we felt like. He talked about us not being tied down by him and what-ever." Said Claire. I fell asleep before this speech, so I guess I did miss out on something. Nothing big, though, Wilbur held speeches all the time. It sounded nice though, not being tied down, and being able to basically lounge in luxury, in exchange for a few pages of spiritual wisdom once in a while. What a deal! I walked to the kitchen to get breakfast, or lunch. There were bowls, cereal and fresh bread with different top-pings. Jam, cream

cheese and other spreads. Even an old classic appeared, Cecilia Refresh. The bottled water I bought in the old, dingy store in Cecilville. I grabbed one, and the crisp coldness through the thin plastic hugged my warm and tired hands, and by extension, my entire body. I also took some grain cereal, and walked to the dinner room, next to Claire and Ramy.

While eating, Claire suddenly put down her spoon, and looked into the air. She looked confused. Ramy looked at her with concern.

“What’s wrong?” He asked her.

She looked at Ramy for a while, then at me.

“Did any of you hear something yesterday?” She asked us. Ramy and I looked confused. I was sleeping like a rock, and Ramy was probably with Claire the entire time.

“What do you mean?” Ramy asked her.

“I heard something hitting the windows. Small rocks, or something.” She said. Ramy and I were human question marks. Neither Ramy nor I had heard anything, especially as minor as small rocks being hurled at the resort.

“No, I didn’t hear anything.” Ramy said. Claire looked back at me and I said “Me neither.” Claire let out a hum and continued eating. It was probably the huge trees surrounding Wilbur’s resort, combined with wind she heard. If anyone wanted to do damage to the building, I doubt small rocks would be a very effective way to show disdain. We finished eating, and I was already excited to get started on my studies. So I put the bowl out into the kitchen, where a small kitchen staff was apparently stationed to prepare food and cleaning.

On my way to the study, I noticed some people had changed into regular clothing, and not the robes that Wilbur gave us. This is something I didn’t like. It was kind of like the names, Wilbur gave these things to us, why are we denying them? I really wanted Wilbur to expel them, but I knew he needed all the help he could get. All I could do was avoid them, really. I

found a nice, secluded area of the study, and put down the papers Wilbur gave me. There was a selection of typewriters you could borrow, so I took one and carried it over to the table, along with a few pieces of paper and a pencil.

I wanted to make some notes for Wilbur, I thought he would appreciate that a lot. So I setup the typewriter, and continued from where I left off on Wilbur's drafts. I left off on the Army of Scouts. The first thing I noted for Wilbur was to "never reference the WSOE as the Army of Scouts again." Wilbur talked in the texts about Ego Whisper, which made me happy. Some of the things he had written were copies of the papers he gave us during our first trail with it, that didn't go to well. I was really torn on the whole experimentation with drugs. It seemed wrong, and I can understand why it scared people. I don't know why it didn't scare me. Most people would run away from such a place. But not me, and apparently not the people currently occupying the building I call home. It was an immensely interesting thing, really. All of these people under one roof, sharing one vision. How few people get to do this? I have to be honest, I was living the life. Free food, good people, my own room which was not only larger and nicer than my own apartment at home, but also didn't make me want to vomit and panic at the mere thought of sitting on the couch. If nothing else, it was nice to not be home.

I didn't have much to note about the Ego Whisper part, as it was pretty clinical and straight forward. This covered the entire first and second page, by the way, and I turned to the third page. As I read, I quickly discovered it was about something called the Dazed. I wasn't sure exactly what this meant, it wasn't a term I had heard before in World Study. As I read some more, I realized that Dazed simply meant someone who is not a World Student. What follow was a long rant on how the Dazed would never realize their true potential, and that the Dazed and the Peeves would form an alliance to destroy World Study. A very primitive and, quite

frankly, paranoid view of outsiders, so I went back to the typewriter. I wrote to Wilbur about how both so-called Dazed and Peeves were, in my opinion, pretty irrelevant. They're not a threat to us, and we're not a threat to them. Trying to convert, or even battle them would be a waste of resources and time. I think I formulated this very well, and in a way that Wilbur would easily understand. I continued to the fourth, and last page. It was mostly empty, but it had a small section of text written with a typewriter, and some personal notes left by Wilbur.

Wilbur talked, on this paper, about the future of World Study. He envisioned a more selective and controlled structure of organization. He also mentioned the Army of Scouts again, referring to them as the personal army of World Study. It was really just a bunch of garbled words. Army of World Study? What does that even mean? We have no guns, no defense. It was a waste of time to pretend that we were a frontier of anything. We are a therapy! I was quite unhappy with the direction Wilbur wanted to go towards. It was not what I felt I signed up for, really. Either way, if I was going to take over after Wilbur, I would need to prove to him that I had a similar vision. I could only add my own twist to an extent.

I had a weird range of emotions on World Study. On one hand, I wanted to follow Wilbur, almost blindly, and trust his vision. After all, he is the reason we are here today, exclusively. Without Wilbur, there is no World Study. I wrote down a bit more about keeping the focus on the treatments, and not on the enemies. After I was done, I noted down the date and my name on the notes, I folded up all the papers, and walked to-wards Wilbur's office. I knocked on the door, and he told me to come in. When he saw me, he smiled and said "Come in, sit down." He was typing something on his typewriter, but stopped when I sat down. I leaned forwards and put the notes on his table. He took them, and started looking at my notes. He looked at them, and

looked up at me a few times. When he was done, he put them on the table, and let out a big sigh. It scared me a bit. This sigh could mean anything. I eagerly awaited his response. He folded his hands and looked directly at me with heavy, pointy eyes. I was mentally preparing for a mental takedown.

“You’re right.” Wilbur said. I stopped being tense, and my body and mind eased up. I said “Sorry?”

“You’re absolutely right, Will.” Wilbur said, before getting up and walking towards me.

“Why focus on the enemies?” He said. I said “Right,” while looking up at him. He appeared a giant when standing in front of me. He put his greasy hand on my shoulder, and maintained his unbroken eye contact. Then, all of the sudden, he turned around and sat back down. Again, he folded his hands.

“Some of the Students here have expressed concern.” Said Wilbur.

“Concern over what?” I asked him.

“There were a few rocks thrown at the resort last night.” Wilbur said. Before he could continue, I interrupted him.

“Yeah, Claire told me about this.” I said. “Who?” He asked.

“Red hair, young. Some freckles, with the Egyptian guy.” I said. He said “Ahh...” and put his hands on the desk.

“Well. I happen to know who it is.” Said Wilbur.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“Enemies.” Said Wilbur. I waited for him to explain, but I think he waited for me to ask. So I did.

“What enemies?” I asked.

“When I established the Cecilian Council, it wasn’t without opposition. Some people, mostly the natives and the communists, were very opposed to our influence.” Said Wilbur. He folded his hands again. He was so fidgety, always playing with his hands, or tapping the desk or something similar. He let out a small cough, before continuing.

“They didn’t very much like us. They thought we would be some sort of mafia state. Or a cultist country of sycophants. They were scared, and full of misinformation. I didn’t let them get in the way, William. There are things in this world, so important that nothing can get in the way of their success.” Wilbur said. He starting talking in this weird, husky tone again, like he sometimes did. Though he used few words, it was obvious what he meant. I was intrigued.

“How did you stop them?” I asked Wilbur.

“I can’t tell you, but I made sure they didn’t get in our way.” Wilbur said, laughing. He took out a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket, and grabbed one with his lips. He offered me one, and I took one. I hadn’t had a smoke for a while. Wilbur lit it with matches, and then tossed the matchbox over to me. I lit my cigarette too, and Wilbur placed his ashtray in the center, between us, so we could both reach it. It didn’t scare me too much that Wilbur was openly implying murder. I had heard stories of the communists in South Africa, I would gladly put a bullet through them too. Wilbur took deep drags from his cigarette, the tip of his smoke glowing and crackling like a fire-place. We sat and smoked for a while, completely silent for a change. It was nice being able to observe Wilbur in a less manic state. Him just sitting there, enjoying himself and not stressing out over anything. This was the vision of Wilbur I had; a contempt and superior individual, with thousands of thoughts and considerations brewing inside his head. It was nice to keep up that illusion for just a few seconds. Wilbur broke the silence with a cough. He leaned back in his chair, and looked over at me.

“I have sent a few people out to take of the rock throwers.” Wilbur said.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Well, let’s just say I have a small supply I got from some South African associates. Rifles and such. I got a nice discount on them, just to scare them, you know.” He said. I

didn't like the sound of that too much. This sounded like an extension to Wilbur's defensive plans, which is what he agreed we should stay away from.

"Isn't that a little... drastic?" I asked him, "They're just rock throwers." I said.

"Yeah, well, that's how they start." Said Wilbur, before taking yet another massive drag on his poor cigarette.

"First its rocks, then its bricks, then its guns and eventually you have a war, don't you?" He said. I suppose he was right, I would just hate to jeopardize every-thing because of some stupid commies.

"You know best." I told Wilbur, with slight sarcasm in my tone. Wilbur got it, and laughed, before taking a final drag on his smoke. I was done too, so I put it out in the ashtray. Just as we finished, Wilbur and I were caught off guard by the sound of small thumps. Wilbur immediately recognized the sound.

"It's those fucking rocks again!" He yelled, before storming out of his office as fast as his massive body let him. I ran after, both curious to see what exactly these attackers looked like, and to assure Wilbur didn't make any drastic decisions. Wilbur ran over to a young, male staffer and said something to him. The staffer quickly ran to the kitchen, and Wilbur ran to-wards the door leading outside.

Wilbur and I came outside, and were met by four hooded figures, pelting the resort with rocks. These weren't small rocks either, these were an entire handful. If you hit someone over the head with one of those, they might not wake up again kind of rocks. Wilbur didn't say or do anything, other than stand in the doorway and stare down the attackers. Surprisingly to me, they didn't flee, or even attempt to. They all appeared male, I couldn't tell much more as they were covered from top to toe with black articles of clothing. Once one of them spotted Wilbur and I, they stopped for a brief moment, before collectivizing and talking for a while. They then began throwing rocks directly at us. Wilbur tried

ducking, and I hid most of my body behind the frame of the door. We were under attack for a good while, before the staffer Wilbur had consulted came to our aid. What I first thought was a stick, or a bat turned out to be a brown, loaded rifle. Before I could even try to react, the staffer had fired four shots at the attackers. I covered my ears at the sound of the loud bangs, and the only thing I could focus on was the sound of empty shells hitting the ground. A frightening symphony of massive explosions, followed by faint and symphonic clinks. This went on for three more shots, before the staffer stopped and lowered his weapon. I was in shock. If we had a small massacre on our hands, everything we had worked for would be spoiled. The thought of Wilbur being arrested, the resort shutting down, me going back home and me having wasted my time and money here all flew through my mind with unbelievable speed, and as a result, I grabbed the staffer by his collar and yelled at him.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” I yelled at him, my eyes bloodshot and the poor staffer falling into a submissive and frightened state. I think he feared me, even before me screaming my lungs out at him. Most of the staffers were aware of the respect I commanded from Wilbur.

Wilbur grabbed me, and pulled us from each other. As I calmed down, I looked out at the place where the attackers were previously stationed to do their attack. No attackers were present, but a trail of dark, red blood followed the footsteps of the wounded soldiers. At least one had been hit. Wilbur, without saying a word, and with his hands still firmly grasping me, pulled me into the resort, and almost instinctively, I followed right behind him into his office. On the way, worried Students stared at the scene of a furious Wilbur, and me in his trails. Wilbur pulled me into the office, and forced me down into the chair. He got on the other side of the desk, and put his hands on the desk.

“You don’t interfere with my staff!” He yelled at me. I looked at him, carelessly. My lack of response annoyed him, so he banged on the table.

“You don’t interfere with my staff!” He yelled once again. I looked up at him.

“I love this group too much to let it fail!” I yelled back at him. He quieted down for a bit, and appeared to wait for me to say more.

“Is this just how we run things now?” I yelled at Wilbur. He sat down, and seemed to feel uncomfortable with me confronting him, instead of apologizing and becoming submissive. I got up from my chair, and almost in unison, we switched position. Now, I was staring down at him.

“What if that guy killed someone, Wilbur? Then what? The police come here, raid this fucking place and we’re done!” I exclaimed. I was getting very heated, and although it felt unnatural and scary, I continued to confront Wilbur.

“This is not how you run an organization, Wilbur! This is how you run an army! We’re not soldiers, we’re a therapy, for fucks sake!” I exclaimed. After I said that, Wilbur’s eyes lit up with anger. He stared me down, as if to threaten me with weapons, fire and death through his stare. He got up, very slowly, and both of us stood, in front of each other, staring each other down.

“Why are you here?” Wilbur screamed at me.

“Why can’t you just get it through your fucking head, William?” He exclaimed, visibly exhausted from yelling. He took out a handkerchief and wiped his sweaty forehead, which he followed with a few heavy coughs.

“We are more than a therapy, William. We’re the engine that will run this world! Don’t you see? Why is it so fucking hard for you to see this?” Wilbur screamed. His entire face was red and his veins were just about to explode. He looked like his face was in a vice, squeezing with as much pressure as possible his blood into his fat head.

“You’re insane, if you think you can take out every enemy! They will be there forever, Wilbur! They will never change. They will never see the truth!” I yelled at Wilbur, in an attempt to both get my point across, and reason with his ideals.

“Didn’t you just tell me that I’m right?” I asked him. He settled down, his veins going back, and his face turning paler. He looked down, still very tense and frustrated though. He sat back down, and I did too. He folded his hands together, and looked into the distance for a while, before looking back at me.

“Okay, William,” He said, “what should we do?” He asked me. I really wasn’t sure, and ignoring them wouldn’t be a very good answer, but I didn’t have much else to say.

“If we ignore them, we show both the attackers and the rest of the world that we are not quick reacting, psychopathic cultists who shoot anyone we disagree with!” I said. It wasn’t a very good answer, and I knew such a plan would not work in the long run, but I had nothing else to say. Wilbur chewed on it for a while, before finally letting down his last guard, and letting go of the final tension in his body. “Okay,” He said, “We’ll do it your way.”

Chapter 14

I went to my room. I was tired and worn out from the intense atmosphere produced by the attackers and amplified by Wilbur. I still wanted to do some work, though, so I was very grateful that I had a typewriter in my room, so I could work in peace. After lounging in my bed for close to fifteen minutes, staring at the walls and sighing heavily, I got up, and walked over to my desk. I sat down, and took out a few pieces of paper from the desk drawer. I set up the typewriter. As I did, I noticed how new and clean it was. I think these were new purchases, which was just a delight. Nothing worse than working with new ideas on old equipment. I set up the typewriter, so I could center the title. I titled it “Ego Study,” and prepared to write. Now, I had the beginning thesis from Wilbur, and from the tests we did. The first thing I wanted to focus on was the effectiveness of the treatment, which was still, at the time, largely undocumented. I wrote about the guy who broke down, the discoveries by me, and the ways in which Ego Whisper could be further developed in the style of other World Study treatments. I wrote, and wrote, everything I knew and had documented. The hard clicks of the typewriter and the increased banging of my fingers on the keys created a singular atmosphere, in which it was only me and the text in front of me. It was like literally pouring my thoughts onto a piece of paper, doing my best to make the letters stick.

As I kept writing, I was abruptly disturbed by three loud bangs. These were louder than firework, and way louder than just rocks. As I ran out of my room, I noticed a few other heads sticking out. We looked at each other for a while, in confusion, before running down to the hall. People quickly gathered, and Wilbur made an appearance in no time. A few staffer came running, and quickly opened the door. When it

was apparent that no one was outside, people started pouring out of the door.

The staffers stared at one part of the wall, and every-one gathered around them to see what they were looking at. Over the door, about center of the building, were three large holes. They were bullet holes. Some-one had fired three shots into the resort. When Wilbur saw, he just stared at it, blankly. I tried to get his attention, but he seemed to purposely not acknowledge me. Without saying a word, Wilbur walked inside, and the staffers continued after him. After a while of talking and staring, people starting walking inside again. I was one of the last people to go inside, I studied the holes for a while.

As we got inside, I was getting more and more worried that Wilbur would not take my advice, and would abandon the idea of remaining peaceful. To be honest, I didn't expect it to escalate to gunshots, but at least no one was hurt. I still don't understand why anyone would try to threaten us, though. We're really not a threat to anyone. Even if Cecilia is relatively unfair, shooting at the estate of a founder is completely unprecedented.

I was frustrated and annoyed with the entire situation, so I decided to go back to my room and relax. Maybe I would continue my writing, but I wanted to remain relatively focused on the atmosphere of the resort, in case Wilbur decides to retaliate. I walked back to my room, and laid down on my bed. Although I had slept for a long time, I was pretty tired already. Not from exhaustion or hard work, and maybe exactly because of the lack of that, my entire body turned to jelly, and I almost became one with the soft sheets.

In the next half hour, I was in and out of sleep. I would doze off, then wake up, and repeat. I became very bored with it eventually, so I decided to get up again. Not really knowing what to do, I decided to walk down to the study again. My frustration increasing, as I genuinely felt bored for the first time in years. No kidding, I was never bored at home. There

was always something to do, weather is was work, drink or watch TV. Here, there are no TVs, not even newspapers. All we have are books, most of which were religious or philosophical in nature. It's interesting, sure, but sometimes you just need to turn off your brain for a while and tune into a different brain wave. I got down to the study, which was surprisingly full. I suppose everyone was doing the same as me, trying to write as much as possible to please Wilbur.

I sat down at an empty table. No typewriter, no paper, no books. Just me, observing. That's something I was really good at, just reading people. In front of me was a small group, two men and three women. I recognized them from the purging, the two guys held back that poor girl when she tried to escape. They appeared to be pretty dedicated, which I could appreciate. They had at least a hundred pieces of paper filling the table, most of which appeared to have hand writing on them. I suppose they could do much more working in a team, but I was never good at that. I was much better at just sitting by myself, as isolated as humanly possible, focused on my work exclusively. I never listened to music or watched TV when I worked. I looked to the right, at another table. A young woman was sitting by herself, completely bald and in robes. It was a weird look, especially for a group like ours. Wilbur always seemed to emphasize professionalism, and was a pretty snappy dresser. These robes made us look more like pagans, or old Greek philosophers. We were just a bunch of kids, really. It was naive to think dedication alone would excel us to intellectualism.

I was interrupted by a staffer, a young girl. She tapped my shoulder. At first, I thought she would lecture me in not studying, or would ask me to leave, but she didn't. Instead, she told me someone was asking for me on the phone. I was surprised. Who would call me? Maybe it was Rebecca, wanting to tell me about my daughter, or maybe it was Joseph's mother, having received the letter. I followed her into a small room, what appeared to be an office for the

staffers. It was noticeably less luxurious than Wilbur's offices. On a desk, a black tele-phone sat, and I picked it up. As I put it to my ear, I let out a "Hello?"

"Are you alone?" The voice on the other end asked. My frustrated state turned to confusion.

"Yes, who is this?" I said, despite the staffer standing right behind me, staring at my neck. I could feel it.

"It's Joshua." the voice said. I became silent for a moment. Every thought ran through my head. Was he trying to get me to come back? Was he calling to tell me what an idiot I was? I had to stop myself from thinking further.

"Josh, what do you want?" I asked him.

"I'm in South Africa." He said. I really didn't know how to react. I was scared this would end up messy. Wilbur knew Joshua, and he did not like him very much. I didn't want him getting near the Center or the resort.

"What?" I said, "Why?"

"I need to talk to you." He said. I don't know exactly what he expected. Why should I get on my hands and knees for him? I'm not responsible for him, and he's not responsible for me. I was actually pretty angry. I was angry at the situation of him spending money and time to come to a place that would be dangerous for him, and I was angry that he could be making it all up.

"About what?" I asked, with a pretty harsh tone. I think it was deserved. He came crashing into my space. This was my destiny. He can't just come and expect me to drop everything for him.

"Meet me outside the resort in half an hour. If you want, pack your stuff." He said. Now I knew what he wanted. He wanted me to leave. That was not going to happen. I contemplated whether or not to meet up with him, but there was no way he was getting me back home.

"Fine." I said, before hanging up the phone. As I turned around, my mind was already trying to prepare a lie for the staffer. We looked at each other for a while, and I just

waited for her to ask me who it was. She didn't. Instead, she showed me the door. Maybe she was busy. Either way, it was my luck, because I hadn't prepared anything. I walked out, and decided to, once again, go back to my room.

I sat at my desk, thinking through the few days in Wilbur's care. I was still not sure I had made the right choice, and I was still not sure why I stayed. Maybe it was Wilbur's praises, maybe it was the desire to leave home, or maybe it was something else. I didn't know, and it drove me crazy. I sat for a while, surveying my room, and seriously debated with myself whether or not to pack my bags and leave. On one hand, I was very aware of Wilbur's politics. If you don't want to be here, we don't want you here, but I also knew of the policy on Peeves. I didn't want that label on me. I wasn't even really supposed to associate with them. I knew that I would have to lie to meet Joshua. Thinking as fast as I could, which was not very fast, I decided to fake an ill-ness. Nothing big, maybe a swollen foot or a strep throat. I also had my knee injury I could use. I decided to go with that, just a usual check up on my bad knee. Wilbur was aware of my accident through Joshua, as far as I knew. I lounged around my room again. The boredom was agonizing. I didn't have time to write, I didn't want to end up telling someone I was leaving for a while, and I was still pretty upset with Joshua for contacting me to abruptly and so unprecedented. It was very typical behavior of him, though, so at least I wasn't too surprised at the nerve he had. He always expected people to be there whenever he needed them, but he was rarely there for others. Maybe he was trying to be there for me. If he was, this was a bad way of doing it. Thirty minutes went by rather quickly and uneventful, which it often did with the Students. Time didn't seem to be a factor in here, actually. Everything either went way to slow, or way to fast. Sometimes so fast I can't even keep up with the last few days. So many new interactions and impression, it's overwhelming. I snuck out of my room, very slowly. I didn't want to stick out, but then

again, it was pretty hard to do in a sea of white robes and bald heads. I walked out of the door, and to my luck, there was only two people out to smoke. They seemed pretty occupied, so I didn't think they'd be too shocked at someone walking away from the resort for a while. I walked on the pebbles towards the road, trying to minimize the sound of my footsteps to no avail. I quickly reached the entry to the resort. It was a nice area, big houses everywhere. The roads were neat and the streets were clean. I enjoyed the fresh air for a while. It was a weird sense of freedom. I didn't feel particularly free while with the Students, but then again, I associated freedom with responsibility, and the freedom to do stupid things took the life of Joseph.

As I stood there, I noticed a parked car flashing its lights at me. It was an old, black car, probably a rental. I saw someone sitting inside, and upon further inspection, I could identify them. To no surprise, it was Joshua. It was so weird seeing him again. He gestured with his hands for me to approach him. I did. I walked over to the passenger's seat, and got in. Although Joshua was all smiles, I was neither impressed nor happy. I stared at him, and patiently waited for him to explain himself. His smile turned to a frown, and he started the engine of the car. We started driving without exchanging a single word, which was not my intention, so I decided to break the awkward silence.

"How much did you pay to get down here?" I asked Joshua, as he rolled with his window. I did so too, the car was already warm.

"Don't worry about that, Willie." He said. Afterwards, we were back to silence. I was getting annoyed, and surprisingly, was not the least bit excited to see him.

"So, you're gonna bring me home?" I asked him, with slight arrogance in my tone. He smirked in a way that really bugged me.

"No, not unless you want to." He said, continuing to drive. He was very focused on the road, and I'm not sure he

knew where he was going. His unresponsiveness, and apparent lack of reason to even come here infuriated me. It was as if he was trying to manipulate me into coming home without saying anything, making it my decision, and not his. That was not going to happen.

“Can’t you just leave me alone?” I asked Joshua, sincerely.

“Why should I?” He asked me.

“Because I don’t want you down here. It’s not safe for you.” I said.

“Well, they can do whatever they want to me. As long as I know you’re safe, I really don’t care about anything else.” Said Joshua.

We continued to drive. He appeared to know exactly where to go, as we didn’t go in circles, and we had already left New Sarum. The tension was incredible. It seemed we both wanted to just spill our hearts out and tear each other apart. But we didn’t, instead we sat in silence. Listening to the road, the wind and the occasional bird chirping. Joshua suddenly broke the silence.

“Is it fun down here?” He asked me. He seemed sincere, which annoyed me. Was I having fun? This wasn’t a resort, this was hard, unpaid work.

“Not really. I didn’t come here to have fun, though.” I said. Joshua took the clue that I was annoyed with him, although he probably knew from the second he got on the plane. Joshua knew me like no one else.

We continued to drive in silence for a few more minutes, before approaching a long patch of sand, dirt and trees. There was no longer any solid road, and we drove on the trails of other travelers. I didn’t want to ask any questions about it, and patiently waited for him to get me where he wanted me. We drove for a few more minutes, until we eventually reached a huge body of water. I realized quickly that we had reached the border of Cecilia, at the Mozambique Channel. Joshua stopped about a mile from the channel. He turned off

the engine, and got out without saying a word. Although I knew he expected me to, I got out too. The wind was intense, and we were surrounded by sand and tall, waving grass. The sky was clear, not a single cloud. Joshua walked further towards the sea, and I followed him.

Eventually, we reached a bench. It was wooden, and very broken. There were massive cracks in the wood, and the metal frame was rusty and partially broken. Despite this, we sat down, with caution. Joshua and I sat down, next to each other for the first time in years. I honestly don't remember the last time we just sat down without doing anything. Simply enjoying each other's company. I think that's the reason he was here. Not to reconnect, or to get me back. But to enjoy, perhaps for the last time, the simple silence of just being with your brother. I could appreciate that, and I won't lie, it was comfortable. Joshua suddenly offered me a cigarette, which I took. We used to smoke a lot, and I would always bum one off him. I rarely bought my own pack-age, I just asked him. He was always nice to me, really. That's what I missed most about him, going here. We lit our cigarettes, and sat for ourselves, enjoying the breeze and the view.

"It's nice to see you again, brother." Said Joshua. It was a pleasure to confirm my thoughts, but then again, I really did know Joshua. We were really the same, deep down.

"Yeah, you too." I said, as I took a drag from my cigarette. We didn't look at each other while talking. We just stared into the sea. The waves crashing, the grass blowing and the smell of smoke in the air made for a nice, calm atmosphere. For the first time since I got here, I felt I could really enjoy myself.

"How's Wilbur?" Joshua asked me. I didn't really know what to answer. I didn't know Wilbur that well, and from what I have seen, it would be impossible to pinpoint a single emotion or moment to describe him. That's really the person of Wilbur; everything. He can be exactly what you

want him to be. He appeared to be a mould in which to put our own impressions and emotions.

“He’s fine, I think. Pretty emotional.” I said, even though I didn’t think it was a very good description. I hoped Joshua would understand.

“Okay. Are you feeling okay?” Joshua asked. I didn’t like the question too much. It felt forced, and like common small talk. I didn’t risk my position at the Order to do small talk. I wanted every card on the table, every emotion and thought out. I wanted to know how he felt about me leaving, and I wanted him to know how I felt.

“Why are you asking?” I asked him.

“Because I know it annoys you.” He said, smirking. It made me smile. He did know. I always complained about how much I hated small talk, and meaningless conversation. I had an idea. I didn’t know if it was good, but I decided to try it.

“Are you hurt?” I asked Joshua. He said “No.” and looked over at me. As we looked at each other, he seemed to understand almost instinctively what I was trying to do. He smirked once again, and looked into the distance.

“Are you?” He asked me. I said “No.”

“Do you miss being home?” He asked me, I said “Yes.”

“Do you miss your daughter?” He asked me. I sat and thought for a moment, but realizing how terrible that was, I immediately said “Yes.”

“Your turn.” He said.

“Do you miss me?” I asked him. He said “Yes.”

“Do you want me back home?” I asked him. To my surprise, he said “No.”

It caught me off guard for a moment. I didn’t really want to interrupt, but I decided to do so anyway.

“Why?” I asked him.

“Because you seem to be doing well. I just want you to do the right thing, however you feel you can best do that.

I came here worried, but I no longer am. You're still the same brother you always was." He said. It really touched me. Turning your life around like I did is drastic. I would be scared for him too if I was in his situation. The answer made me happy.

"William," Said Joshua, "In the search for answers, we sometimes get so stuck in our own train of thought that we forget about the world around us. As long as you remember that, I don't care where in the world you are."

I finished my cigarette, and tossed the stub to the side. Joshua got up, and so did I. We walked to the car, and without exchanging many words, Joshua drove me to the resort. In the car, he gave me a hug, before dropping me off and driving back to South Africa.

Chapter 15

Back at the resort, my entire body was light. It was like a cleansing, and although my interaction with Joshua was short and superficial, that's exactly how we preferred it. In essence, all we wanted was to know that we were both doing our own thing, and doing it good. I quietly walked back inside, not acknowledging that I had been away for close to an hour, and if anyone asked, I had been out for a small walk. For inspiration, of course.

I walked to the study, where I saw Claire and Ramy. My initial annoyance was gone, and it dawned on me that it was always unprecedented. I had absolutely no reason to despise anyone here. Everyone was doing their own thing, and doing it well. I sat down next to them, and gave them a smile. They first appeared annoyed with my presence, but my smile made them light up, and they smiled back at me.

"Where have you been?" Claire asked, with a delightful grin. Ramy leaned in, as if to signal that he was curious as well. Picking up these small gestures have always been difficult for me, so I was happy to understand them.

"Just out." I said, smiling with everything in me. I was happy, simply because I allowed myself to be. They both chuckled, as if I had been doing something I wasn't supposed to. Which, in reality, I probably had.

Claire and Ramy had a bunch of notes at the desk, and they appeared to go through them with each other. They had a pot of coffee on the table, and a few spare glasses.

"Do you want a cup?" Ramy asked me, already on the way to pour me a cup. I said "Please." and received a cup of steaming, jet black coffee. The coffee here wasn't that good, but it was a nice gesture, and I happily started sipping it.

I noticed the staffers running around. They seemed more stressed than usual, and I noticed one of them making eye

contact with me. As she did, she immediately stopped, and after a while she ran over to another staffer, whispering in his ear. They talked back and forth for a while, and the staffer walked over to me with a brisk speed.

“Wilbur needs to see you.” He said. No tone, no intention, just a simple, open statement. I said “Okay.” and got up. Without saying anything, the staffer started walking towards the office, expecting me to follow along, which I did. I took my cup of coffee, and looked at Claire and Ramy. They seemed a little worried, but were still, somehow, grinning. I followed the staffer to the office, and he opened the door, standing beside it to let me in.

In the office, Wilbur was typing away at his typewriter. There were empty cups of coffee on his desk, and a few more chairs than usual in front of it. I noticed a table of empty plates and utensils in the back. When Wilbur saw me, he stopped typing and told me to sit down. His usual introductory demeanor of being friendly was nowhere to be found. I sat down, without much worry, and smiled at him. He didn’t acknowledge it, and started folding together pieces of scattered paper.

“Did you have visitors?” I asked him. He looked up at me, and smashed the paper he was folding onto the table. Visibly, and clearly annoyed with the question, he said “Yes.”

I decided to not ask any further questions. He was steaming, but for a change trying to keep it for himself. He gestured for the staffer to close the door, which the staffer did. Wilbur finally finished organizing his papers, and folded his hands. His face, which was pointed down on the table, quickly rose. He stared at me, with blank and emotionless eyes. I stared back for a while.

“Where have you been?” Wilbur asked me. I of course did not want to tell him where I was, so I decided to lie.

“I was walking, to clear my mind.” I said. It sounded both convincing and productive. While I was patiently waiting for Wilbur to ask another question, I was quickly startled by Wilbur suddenly flailing both arms to one end of his desk, and clearing everything on it. Typewriter, cups, paper and pencils all flew to the floor with a massive bang. Especially the impact of Wilbur’s expensive typewriter made a sound that I swear was present throughout the entire resort. My feet rose from the floor, and I was midair for a good while, as I was covering my face. Wilbur’s short, black teeth emerged, and his face turned to a shade of red I didn’t even know existed. With every vein in his face pulsing and popping, Wilbur stared me down, with his arms spread over the now empty table. He was already out of breath, and while panting like a madman, he used all his concentration to stare me down.

“Where the fuck were you?” Wilbur yelled at me, his brown hair flowing down over his face, and spit flying everywhere. I was frightened. I feared that Wilbur would make me an example, and even more, I feared that Wilbur knew I had been with Joshua. He waited for me to respond, and not with a lot of patience. His eyes were peeled open, and I could almost feel the tension in his head on myself.

“I was out.” I said. I really didn’t want to risk telling him about Joshua, in case he didn’t know. I knew, however, that if he knew, I would be punished for lying. Wilbur froze, and not even a few seconds after, rose up like a giant, and flew across the room towards me. I swear, he held me by my neck, like he was going to choke me. The awful combination of Wilbur’s sweat, breath and spit put me in a situation of absolute horror. I waited for him to punch me, or throw me to the floor. But like the cunning manipulator he was, he stopped his mad demeanor as quickly as he produced it. Now, just staring blankly at me, he cleared his throat.

“I knew I couldn’t trust you.” Wilbur said with absolute calm and confidence in his voice. His change in tone,

and the words he said all grabbed my full attention. Every sentence and behavior Wilbur expressed was a cipher.

“What the fuck do you mean?” I asked him, with clear and direct frustration in my voice. I had nothing to lose. If he wanted a fight, he was going to get one. He turned around, and went back behind his desk. After standing in front of it for a while, he starts slamming his fists into the table, producing loud and intrusive bangs with each impact. Once again back to madman is his expression, he starts screaming and yelling incoherently. He went absolutely crazy. I started wondering why the staff didn’t bust through, but I instantly assumed that he had very explicitly told them to not intervene. He stopped, when he noticed I consciously didn’t react. I didn’t want to give him the reward of making me submit to his anger. I knew it was only to intimidate me.

“I saw Joshua.” I said. I didn’t want him to escalate things further.

“I know!” He exclaimed. I was a little surprised, but I suppose nothing slips through this group. No desertion, no critiques, only oppression. Wilbur sat down, and started coughing. I tried to be motionless, but I was honestly on the verge of tears. It was uncomfortable on many levels. I never liked getting scolded or getting yelled at, I was annoyed with myself for having angered the leader, and I was afraid what Wilbur could do to me. As I thought about this, I noticed Wilbur’s coughing fit getting more and more intense. He almost blew his lungs out, and spit kept flying. He kneeled over, holding onto the desk for dear life, as he kept coughing, and coughing, and coughing. After a good while of me waiting for him to finish, and him keeping the coughing up, I decided to get up and approach him. If nothing else, having Wilbur die in a private meeting with me would not look too good. I ran over to him, and grabbed his shoulders. He tried holding his hand over his mouth, but the intense coughing hurled his body back and forth, and he ended up holding onto the desk with both hands, as to not fall down. Sweat, tears

and saliva dripping, I pulled him up, so his fat stomach didn't press on his lungs. I don't know if it does anything, but it felt right at the time. When I got him up, I kept him upright. He panted like a dog, and started grabbing onto me. He seemed scared, sincerely. I know it is a weird emotion to feel, but I suddenly became very scared and sad for him. Seeing the giant, Wilbur, the man I had dedicated my life, money and time to for years, was sitting like a babe in arms, and I was, at this specific time, responsible for his life. Wilbur calmed down, but a new fit seemed to be emerging. With his first cough, a small spot of blood hit his hands. Wilbur and I both became pretty scared. He looked at me, and I ran out of his office. The first staffer I saw, I ran after. He started running towards me, and into the office. When he saw Wilbur, he yelled for another staffer.

With the immensely small amount of breath Wilbur had, he screamed out "No! Leave me alone." to the staffer. His voice was husky and suppressed. The staffer, although visibly reluctant, walked out and closed the door. I was now alone with the violently coughing Wilbur. As he seemed to once again calm down, he gestured at the table in the back of his office. I saw a jug of water, and quickly ran towards it. I found a glass with the used dishes. I didn't know if it was clean, but it didn't look too bad, so I took it, filled it with water and quickly delivered it to Wilbur. Wilbur's hands were reaching towards it, and as soon as he got a hold of it, he ripped it from my hands and drank. He finished the entire glass, and with his eyes closed, he let out a sigh. Wilbur put down the glass, leaned back in his chair, and opened his eyes. I stood in front of the defeated giant, looking down at him, as he slowly regained his breath. After clearing his throat a few times, he leaned forwards.

"You were supposed to be my successor." He told me. It was weird having it confirmed, especially while my title was being renounced. I said "What? Why?" and became pretty upset.

“Because... You were good.” He said, still panting and trying to catch his breath. I hated this answer. It was not enough for me, and in sheer anger, I walked out of Wilbur’s office.

Several staffers were standing by outside. When they saw me, they immediately waited for me to tell them everything was alright, which I did. Relieved, they scattered, except for two staffers, who stood directly in front of me. It was the woman who received me in the reception of the Center, and David. They looked at me with disappointment, and I looked back at them with anger.

“You have until tomorrow to pack. Thank you for everything.” Said David. Once again, this was not David talking. It was his weird speeches that Wilbur probably gave him. I hated seeing this surface. I hated seeing him not being authentic, and I didn’t even like David that much. Not wanting to confront him, I decided to swallow my pride, and nodded my head. The lady staffer opened the door to Wilbur’s office, and he was already on the way out. Wilbur stood in the frame of the door, in front of me, the lady staffer and David. He was ruined. His face was sagging, his eyes were black, and his lips were pointing down.

“I need some rest, don’t bother me.” Wilbur told the staffers, who nodded, reluctantly. As Wilbur dragged himself towards the exit of the study, he turned around and looked at me. He, surprisingly, gestured me to follow him. I thought about it for a bit, and then did. I followed Wilbur to the hall, and up the wide stairs in the center. To the left, we entered a hall, and we both entered the first door. When I first walked in, I immediately noticed what it was. Where Wilbur’s offices were pristine, decorated and neat, this was Wilbur’s personal room. It was smelly, dirty and messy. There was clothing everywhere, and on a small wooden desk besides his massive, king sized bed was a plastic tray with a line of cocaine on it. Wilbur made his way towards his bed, and on the way stumbled over some clothing, which produced the

sound of glass bottles smashing into each other. It was weird to see, but not entirely surprising. Wilbur laid down on his bed. I wasn't sure exactly what he wanted me to do for him. Wilbur's eyes were closed from the time he exited his office, and with his mouth gaping, and his sweaty head resting on his pillow, he seemed to fall deeper and deeper into a slumber. I surveyed his room for a while, before closing his door. When I did, I noticed it locking itself. I walked down the stairs, and down to the basement section, where I entered my own room. As I opened my closet, my unopened pack of cigarettes fell to the ground, right in front of my feet. I picked it up, and walked out again. With no one else, and completely on my own the entire walk, I went outside. I enjoyed the breeze. The sun was blaring, and the warm sands could be felt through my shoes. I opened my pack of cigarettes, took one out, and went to pick up a box of matches, which lied conveniently at the steps of the door. I lit my smoke, and sat down on the stone stairs leading into the house. Through blood and tears, I completed my therapy, and in some way, I felt I had finally reached the goal of my journey.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MATHIAS L. MAGNUSSEN was born in Svendborg, Denmark on the 24th of April 1996. In an early age, he was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Mathias has always been an avid reader, especially in his early teens. Mathias studied web-development in Odense for three years, and afterwards moved back to Svendborg. He currently resides in a caravan, and spends most of his time writing and reading. His inspirations vary, but he attributes his love for writing to authors like J.D. Sallinger, David Foster Wallace, Ayn Rand, Klaus Rifbjerg and L. Ron Hubbard.

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