

The iDod

by Bill Meikle



## Introduction

As I start on my third book in 3 years I'm aware that time to polish is a main key. That's why in january of 2012 Im roughing out the iDod book quickly, so it can be polished for 3 months before next christmas.

I would like to hear from anyone who has thoughts about this project. [bcmeikle@shaw.ca](mailto:bcmeikle@shaw.ca)

february1st 2012 and 30 pages in to iDod.  
Febuary 23 2012 and 70 pages in to iDod  
February 27 and 79 pages done kinda  
March 4 2012 and 84 pages done.

Febuary 27 2012

I don't know what my big hurry is. Part of me wants to press 'publish' right now. At least I should read through it once. 10 months to polish it now before I print up a bunch and give them away for christmas.

March 4 2012

Maybe that's kinda finished. I may print up a few on lulu because I like marking it with red pen to fix the errors.

March 13 2012

still reading it over smoothing it out.

April 18 second printing. The first was 4 copies formatted totally wrong.

December 6 2012 just finished narratia now a quick rewrite of iDod.

## Chapter 1

### *At a police briefing:*

"So the designer of this new iDevice went rogue," says sergeant Kelly. "There's kind of a tradition to leave a new phone in a bar. Leak that new device to the press, but this guy, Clarence Litmore, used his credit card to fly all over the place, and drop gear on kids. We have the credit card records."

"Went rogue in lots of other ways too," says Bryce looking up from a laptop.

"Says here he was supposed to deliver the first mature handheld expert system. There's so much room in the iDod that a ton of processors could be piled up and make a super computer. They had access to the 'Watson' code that won jeopardy, and they were supposed to make a truly smart handheld device that could pick stocks and make middle class people rich," says Bryce.

"But Litmore took his team away and they lived in a fancy house up one of the valleys behind Berkley for 3 months. When they emerged they had a mature hand held expert system all right, but it didn't pick stocks for middle class Americans, it was dedicated to making the poorest people in the world survive and thrive."

"That's all well and good," says Kelly, "and we can see why Litmore had to act out his little Mother Theresa gig, but now they're going missing. Three of the first five users have disappeared."

"Who would do that?" says Brogue.

"Dunno," says Kelley "I guess it's our job to find out."

## Chapter 2

### *At a shareholders meeting for The Manzana corporation*

Charlie Evans took the floor.

"You've got to admit Litmore has huevos. He got all Robin Hood on us and stole the iDod. Gave it to the poor."

"Put it on the tax sheet as PR," said Nimbly.

"Might have to," said the Boss.

"Well, only five of the poor," said Snarky.

"Should have known six months ago when he insisted on that horrible cloth screen," Clara Thorn offered.

"It's a sheet of plastic, wrapped around, but it makes the iDod fairly affordable for the low end market," said Snarky.

"That thing is a machine that prints money," murmured the boss.

"Look at these numbers...He gave it to 5 kids that he remembered from his travels. Peru, Tanzania, a native up in Canada, some Chinese kids.

"The five iDods set to work earning their owners cash. The bootstrapping is still fairly random. Google ads, iPhone apps, a little freelancing as a coder, but in a few days all 5 machines had earned \$500 that they put into the markets. The thing has processor power to run 5 billion portfolios in simulation and choose the best. They all doubled their money in a week. In 3 months our 5 little beggars have become millionaires. Which isn't saying much these days but it points to some good things for a year from now..."

"If there's anyone left," said Sarah

"Yes, we do have a security disaster on our hands," said the boss.

"Little detail," Charlie Evans said.

## Chapter 3.

### *A TV News Anchor:*

So the big story in high tech this week is the Manzana Corporation's new handheld device the iDod. It's a little crystal ball dodecahedron you hold in your hand to watch video, surf the web, talk like it's a cellphone, and apparently lots of extraordinary new things... like automatically earning money on the stock market!

To give his thoughts here's our high tech correspondent Malt Crosswords.

Malt what's so special about the iDod?

Malt Crosswords: I guess this thing is going to boost the amount of processing speed we expect from a handheld device about 1000 times. I mean most people, given the job of building this, would just take a bunch of the circuit boards from a cellphone, and stack them inside the iDod. But the manzana engineers are weird. They created pentagonal circuit boards and made a dodecahedron out of those...then they did the same thing smaller, in several layers like the skin of an onion. At the core they put a bunch of housekeeping items like the battery, but they also figured out a really innovative hub that allows this thing to send signal from anyplace to anyplace really efficiently. Central Station if you will.

Anchor : So it goes really fast, what does that mean?

Malt: Well computer scientists have evolved a number of new skills over the last few years using super computers that were impossible on a handheld device until now. I mean this thing is going to be able to talk really well, play the stock market for you, model the weather, win at jeopardy running the Watson program... It's going to be really cool.

Anchor: So we're talking about a little crystal ball that can be a magic friend for children!

Malt: Don't know the ethical implications of bonding children with devices but we already sit them in front of tv's...why not allow them to be friends with a crystal ball?

Anchor: And what about the other story where five of the iDods were leaked all over the world?

Malt: And three of the recipients have now gone missing...Looks like there was a big fight at the Manzana corporation. It's an interesting question: If you could make a machine that earns money automagically who would you give it to? The people who need some money the most at the very bottom of the food chain, or people who already have devices that can almost do this stuff anyway... Clarence Litmore who designed the iDod went with the poorest people...

## Chapter 4

*Bonk and Snarky meet in the bathroom at the Hockey game*

Bonk while urinating: Seen the iDod?

Snarky is washing his hands: Ya, we're looking at it at work.

Bonk: Looks to me like Litmore taught the thing to hack on the user's behalf. I ran a trace on the black arts page where people who are working on black software put up bugs and offer bounty money to anyone who can kill em.

Snarky: Ya I know about it.

Bonk: Well that's how these Dods made their seed money, not like the official story which says something vague about writing apps and selling advertising. They were mercenaries on the dark market. Giving power to bad guys.

Snarky: So maybe that's another reason Litmore gave it to the poor. The thing does illegal actions on it's user's behalf. Auto Robin Hood mode.

Bonk: Ya, so our job at the office is to figure out how illegal.

Snarky: I guess I'll get someone to look at that too.

Bonk: Sharks got this game.

Snarky: We'll see. Good to see you man.

Bonk: Later.

## Chapter 5:

### *Yunnan*

Sook Yin stared at the photograph. It must have been 15 years ago. She was a little peasant girl around 3 or 4 in backless canvas pants like babies used to wear before diapers... Her bum was open to the air! And look at her parents! Standing in the yard in their old fashioned Mao Suits. Her dad working on a bicycle, as if there were any roads to ride on in those days!

The white man who took this shot was hiking up to chicken foot mountain back then, a bhuddist temple that marco polo visited centuries ago. Rested here for a few hours, played kites with some children. She remembered him.

I mean lots of white people walked by their farm in the valley across the lake from Dali but this one wrote letters. She still had his business card. In the mirror at the back washroom were dozens of cards left by tourists who borrowed the john. A primitive squat latrine really. This foreigner was special.

He came back with the pod.

The seed that changed everything.

There is an old Bei legend told in Dali, of a beanstalk and some seeds. This dod was some kind of magic seed too. It could speak the local dialect not just mandarin or Cantonese and that made it more fun to talk to than rich tourists and their translators from Beijing.

She was Bei not Chinese, a proud minority.

Daddy said to keep it quiet from the neighbors so she hid the iDod above the pig shed in the back yard. She'd go back and talk to it every once in a while. Friendly, it would ask her to put it in the sun sometimes so it could recharge it's batteries.

Other times it would tell her it was time to go to the post office and pick up papers. She liked it when she got mail. Sometimes it would be from her pen pals in Germany and Iowa and other times it would be paid credit cards and other treasures the pod ordered for her. Daddy said to not take candy from strangers so she wasn't saying much about the credit cards. He liked it when she bought him a new

tractor one day though. Now that she was 19 and a beautiful young lady who worked at the bar across the lake he didn't ask questions. He knew she hung around with tourists, he hoped she knew what she was doing.

That night the dod seemed to be dreaming, it's faces morphed through images it had seen the day before. Sook Yin felt warm in a thick wool sweater she had purchased with her new credit card.

“Good night magic seed,” she said

“Good night,” said the iDod.

## Chapter 6

### *At Laughing Cloud's Prison*

Laughing Cloud was locked in the back room of the Arab's house. He had walked the 140 miles to Dawson Creek, took him about a week. But he had the moose dropping to talk to and it even spoke Kwadacha, which was the language he grew up listening to his grandparents talk. It was pretty good.

I mean Dan his stepfather had tried to take it away when he first saw it. He figured out a way to hide the iDod in the big tent that was their house these days. Couple years back when his mom first got together with Dan they had been styling it up in a brand new house built by Indian and Northern Affairs , but Dan lost the house gambling ay, and they had to live in a canvas roofed shelter in the cold winter. Lucky they had a fire in the house or they'd be freezing.

The moose dropping got him an interac card and he took some money out to buy his brother drugs. His brother kicked the shit out of him most days, so getting on his good side was the first order of business.

Then he realized that he had enough money to buy real hockey equipment. That's when he hit the road for Dawson Creek. A spending spree followed, trying all the fast food places (3) and eating til he felt a little sick really. It was when he went down town to get hockey gear that the arab approached him.

"You are one of the 5 who got the orb," he said in a strange accent.

"I think you're talking about the iDod," said Laughing Cloud.

"Yes can I see it?" said the man.

Laughing Cloud gave it to the man. It didn't light up for him, didn't do a thing.

"So this surface. It's not only photovoltaic so it can charge itself in the light, but it must read fingerprints," said the man.

"The guy who gave it to me said it would only work for me," said Laughing Cloud.

That's when the Arab grabbed him and threw him in a car. He's been in this back room of the house, locked up ever since. There were kebabs and Falafels to eat passed through the door to him into his room cell.

Laughing Cloud had a few letters and a pictures with him from Litmore the guy who gave him the Dod. He took these out and looked at them to pass some time. That old picture was from when he was 5, met Litmore on the highway, blew some soap bubbles with him. Litmore liked his name and his 'delightful laugh' and wrote a few notes to him over the years.

Now he was in the Arab's prison thanks to that guy.

## Chapter 7

*The reporter is angry.*

Ritter: I'm not saying the cops are useless, but there's no way you would have even generated a case file to follow up on this if it wasn't for the press. We were the ones who actually flew around and tried to interview Litmore's five recipients.

Kelly: And for that we thank you, Miss er, Ritter, but we just wanted to flesh out our report a little ourselves. Get the details first hand so to speak.

Ritter: And so you dragged my butt down here in a patrol car. Some thanks I get.

Kelly: The little girl in Peru, was finding her home difficult??

Ritter: I mean, Litmore was a fairly strict follower of a group of guide books from a company in Australia called 'Lonely Planet'. Once I got those it wasn't hard to follow his routes. All 5 of the recipients were people he met in his travels years before, he has a web page where he keeps track of his travels. All I had to do is look it up and follow the guide books. I even found pictures of all 5 people up there on his site.

Kelly: But we aren't talking about the central cities in these countries.

Ritter: No, mostly on obscure hiking trails a few days out on chicken buses. Rosa for example lives on the Inca trail in Peru. The ancient city of Machu Pichu can be hiked to for a few days, through the mountains there, passing some very poor settlements that can't be accessed by car. That's where Rosa grew up.

Kelly: And this Sook Yin girl lives near Dali, in China...

Ritter: Litmore traveled the southern half of China. His other kid lives in the Tiger Leaping Gorge. Yunan again.

Kelly: So the native kid in Canada, he kind of breaks the mold.

Ritter: He's not from a hiking trail, the best guess I have is that Litmore met him during his summer job in the northeast of BC. He was doing surveying, I think..

Kelly: So many bugs up there..

Ritter: And that just leaves the African along the shores of lake Tanganyika. It's near where Jane Goodall does her work with chimpanzees at Ngombe stream. Took me days to get there, I should have hired a float plane.

Kelly: His name is Willox Nyinenda. He is one of the missing.

Ritter: As is Laughing Cloud in Canada and Chan Ye in China. This is not how it's supposed to go...

Kelly: Never is...

## Chapter 8

### *Litmore at Manzana*

Clarence Litmore drove a Tesla Roadster. A high end electric sports car. His girl friend Angela thought it was very cool. Electric and slick were the order of the day at the Manzana corporation, a parking lot full of Nissan Leafs and Toyota Priuses, so Clarence was just another average player. But cooler and richer. These things cost \$100,000.

Tesla Roadster.

He walked onto the campus with Angela and the receptionist waved at them. Angela was a beautiful woman and he was a handsome and powerful young executive. They looked good together.

It looked like it was going to be a good day. Then they were met by detective Botch the Interpol man, assigned the case from Germany.

"Mr Litmore, we'd like to ask you a few questions." Botch said.

"We could sit down over here," Litmore motioned them to a seating lounge. The Manzana campus was very user friendly. Angela excused herself and went to her work as a graphic artist in the video department. "We are trying to understand what's happening with these disappearances," said Botch. "To tell you the truth I took a couple of friends to a bar a couple of weeks ago and we brainstormed out all the disaster scenarios associated with me doing this crazy drop. Recipients going missing was discussed."

"So you saw it coming?"

"All 5 of the people live in primitive social structures. Anything powerful would naturally pass to the most powerful players in the little ecosystem they live in."

"But you put fingerprint controls on this," said Botch.

"So the 5 people were needed to go along with the device when it passed to the person who took control of it," said Clarence.

"But this seems to have pulse readouts too," said Botch. "It senses your blood flow. You couldn't say, kill the hostage and cut off their hand to drive the machine."

"Right, the nature of the design is that the users must be kept alive if the bad guy wants to get money from the Dod."

"Merciful design," said Botch

"Strong, dangerous, medicine really," said Litmore. "I hope it works."

..and some days went by and Litmore met with his old friends at a swank house in a ravine near Silicon Valley and it came forth:

"We think you built a device to have these kids kidnapped," Jaycee accused him. Litmore argued into the night and got very drunk. "It's unclear where the Dods have gone. I

wouldn't be surprised if we find one with a religious leader. We can't predict what mankind will do with such a Device," he mumbled.

"Why would a religious leader get one? "

"A device where technology is indistinguishable from magic," Litmore said.

It is programmed to speak obscure local dialects well. It is programmed to make suggestions to its owner on how to improve routine actions each day. Incremental tiny change in things like how you get water. It is programmed to use advanced logic to help work a way out of impossible tragic situations. It can't be operated without a child as an intermediary."

"Your children have grown up," said Lara Litmore's X.

"There were a few parts of the design that took longer than I thought," said Litmore.

"You've worked on this for decades," said Lara.

"It's not our job to predict what mankind will do with this technology," said Litmore drunkenly.

"Go to sleep," said Lara.

## Chapter 9.

### *Willox and the Very Black Men.*

Third escape. Running, leaping across small creeks, sliding in the mud... It is raining so hard you pick a huge leaf and fashion a hat out of it. Tie it on with some twine you make from a small tania hanging from a tree. They've caught you twice, they'll probably catch you again. Now in these Verunga hills of Zaire now Congo, the very black men rode into your village on the lakeshore a few days ago on a gunboat, and took you like a slave. You were stolen.

They call you the dung beetle and the iDod a piece of dung, and that is ok except when they hit you and whip you and tie you up in a shed.

Your name can be Willox. Willox Nyinenda and you were raised at the Christian Missionary on the shores of lake tanganyika, one of the deepest lakes in the world, where dinosaurs still dive for cover and weird birds call out from the jungle to the dry Serengeti close by.

The very black men come from Angola you think, or Namibia. Some place with a different language, different customs. The iDod won't make money without it's owner getting a cut, so if you escape you're styling... Bank accounts fat. This fugging river is a bit of an obstacle though, in getting away.

You ease in up to your waist. Perhaps that's a hippo you can see downstream a bit. You try not to think of crocodiles but about 20 ft from the bank you do see a pair of eyes floating above the water. Calmly and quickly you make for the bank. There is a moment when you don't know where the animal has gone, but it has turned downstream when you find it...

They catch you when you make it to the road on the other side. Beat you a bit. Burn you with cigarette butts. Take you back to your cell in the jungle.

And so it goes.

## Chapter 10

### *At a Police Briefing*

Bryce was at the laptop again.

“The Sunwatchers. They are an odd Asian charity group kind of like the Aga Kahn foundation. Their money seems to come from 6 Kuala Lumpur/Singapore billionaires, and that's it, quite small time really....”

“But they took the hostage. Some weird kind of hostage taking based on the idea of 'better us before others grab her,'" said Kelly. “We have surveillance footage of her, she seems to be having an enjoyable time at a beach resort south of Hong Kong,” said Brogue. “But a couple of weeks ago We had a trail that showed Chan ye in KunMing shopping for all the things that teenage girls wish for. Looks like she was having lots of fun with her new money . Then the trail drops off.”

“Well not completely, now she charges her meals and souvenirs to a credit card registered to the Sunwatchers,” said Bryce.

## Chapter 11

*Chan ye*

Robert was briefing Chan Ye on the foundation's game.

“We are the first 20 names on the waiting list. We will get the first 20 dods shipped to china. The dod's release date has been moved forward a week to 10 days from now. Manzana has decided that the best way to help the three hostages is to make them nothing special. Flood the world with iDods. Then everyone is a hostage and nobody is. Of course some of the software won't be there. The stuff that makes money. We have plans to download that stuff off Chan Ye's dod and mass produce millionaires. But it's unclear if we'll be able to do that.”

Chan Ye stretched out on the soft mattress.

“This isn't so bad,” she thought

“There are worse outcomes than being abducted by do-gooders.”

The suite in the hotel was plush and she could call room service whenever she wanted. I mean it was really lonely and a bit scary but she had the golden orb with her to light her way. Since it arrived the world had taken on a strange golden light, and it was hard for her to really be afraid of anything.

“I have purchased a number of very stable blue chip stocks on your behalf today. Their returns are low, about 3% but they will rarely waiver. You have lots of capital so it isn't so much a time of acquisition as a time of consolidation. These stocks have paid the same small return for decades through turbulent times and will provide you with a solid income..

“Thank You golden orb,” Chan Ye said, and she lifted the ball onto the couch where she was sitting.

“The man outside the door said that their head man was going to come and see me today,” she went on.

“That is Kwai Lee, the well known billionaire from Kuala Lumpur,” said the iDod. “It is important that you tell him about the worldwide release that has been moved up to ten days from now. Then everyone will have a ball like me and holding hostages will not be necessary.”

## Chapter 12

### *A TV News Anchor:*

Anchor: So the big story in high tech this week is the Manzana Corporation's new handheld device the iDod. It is set to be released in 3 days. For more on this, here's our high tech correspondent Malt Crosswords.

Malt: Hi Jerry, the air is abuzz today with talk of, and hopes for, the iDod. Manzana is really showing how good they've gotten at releasing new products. Apparently it was no problem for them to move things forward a full week, causing us all to rush to our local store and get our names on the waiting lists sooner.

Anchor: So this was to help the hostages?

Malt: The notion being that with iDod's everywhere there is nothing exclusive that will keep the five in custody.

Anchor: But the word on the street is that they'll be disabled...

Malt: It's not about the iDod, it's about the illegal software that Litmore packed onto it. The black market will have to try and supply the apps, which is tricky because other than their strong knowledge of viruses and security, thieves are stupid.

Anchor: The street will find a way.

Malt: Clearly, and time will show us the effects of this strange evolution...

## Chapter 13

*Bonk and Snarky meet in the bathroom at the Hockey game.*

Snarky while urinating: So the iDod is out. Gonna get one?

Bonk is washing his hands: I don't see how you're going to sell a device that won't fit in your pocket.

Snarky: Seen our ads? It's a magic crystal ball!

Bonk: Can't drink the Koolaid on this one. I've already got enough e-waste.

Snarky: Preorders are huge. Let's face it people just want to be seen using our latest shit.

Bonk: Device as fashion.

Snarky: Only two hostages left. The chinese girl was taken by sunwatchers for her own good.

Bonk: We suck at international investigation.

Snarky: Interpol's got a guy on it. Manzana security is moving quietly too.

Bonk: Sharks are stinking it up tonight.

Snarky: Maybe a miracle will happen and they'll get a goal.

## Chapter 14

### *At a shareholders meeting for The Manzana corporation*

Charlie Evans took the floor.

"Well, after 1 month of sales we're making lots of money on the iDod."

"Best sales month since the phone," said Nimbley.

"The iDod 2 is just around the corner," said the Boss.

"So is a law suit over the two kids who are still hostages," said Snarky.

"I don't think we should be celebrating good sales when those awful pictures of that african boy being tortured are in the news," Clara Thorn said.

"Torture isn't exactly the corporate image we want to project," said Sarah.

"The thing is a machine that prints money," murmured the boss." Look at these numbers...The 2 kids that are being forced to work it have made over 3 million dollars each...

"Why so little?" asked dodd.

"The machines spend most of their time doing backflips to outsmart security," said Sarah "I guess they need fake id and paperwork for each of their 'clients' and they're hiding lots of things..."

"So far they've outsmarted any attempts to track them and shut them down, they've used 100s of assumed identities," said the boss.

"Shape shifters," Charlie Evans said.

## Chapter 15 :

*Sue Ritter, reporter:*

Ritter: Im here in Peru at the home of Rosa Pisco, a first 5 iDod recipient and the success story that Litmore probably hoped for, for all his 5 young people, when he handed the iDod's out.

While the shots of Willox in Africa after torture horrify us, we must take hope from these images from Machu Pichu and Rosa's uplifting tale.

*We cut to a montage with sappy music. We see rosa's iDod teaching the villagers about clean water and paying to drill a well and install piping to the huts these people live in.*

Ritter: This project actually failed as the well-diggers couldn't find water way up here in the Peruvian mountains, and the iDod then paid for mortar to repair the 14<sup>th</sup> century aquaduct angling across the hillsides, that brought water to the area in Incan times..

A parade of new material possessions strikes one when they enter this andean village. A new tractor, a solar panel, a dishwasher, a colour tv. A motorcycle. A shiny new car.

Clearly the iDod has invested well for this tiny settlement and seen to it that the distribution of money is fair.

*Then as the uplifting music soars we cut to the potato fields -sloped not terraced- that rosa's family farms. A meeting of farmers and a shot of the iDod's new research garden where the local potato varieties are catalogued and bred.*

*Then we cut to a bar where Pisco sours are being swilled and Rosa is dancing with her iDod and several villagers have joined her in a ring. People look prosperous if a little awkward in their new clothes. Idod clothes.*

## CHAPTER 16

*Willox Escapes*

Running, jumping across small creeks, sliding in the mud down chutes towards a river. It seems like you've made a clean getaway this time, early in the morning, when the very black men are sleeping off the drunken feast you bought for them last night. It stretched into the drumming dark hours after midnight when you packed your bag to go..

You come to a road and catch a lift in the back of a truckload of goats. It's customary to pay for rides when hitchhiking in most of Africa. You've folded a few crisp notes into your belt ,that you sneakily got with your credit card when the men took you to a gas station, and you pay with those. Your geography is screwed up even with the google earth guesses you've been making each night while you lie in bed. The glow of the volcano is 180 degrees from where you thought it would be. You don't speak the language they are talking up in the cab ( maybe French?) so you can't ask where you are. It looks like this truck may be headed for Burundi.

You fall asleep and when you awake you are outside Bujumbura Burundi and your truck has pulled off into a rustic rest stop to pause for a moment and water the goats. Trouble is the truck is now tragically stuck in the mud. Thick, enveloping mud that takes large truck tires and swallows them whole. It looks like it could be hours before it is free.

Sook Yin talks across the idods like everyone is next door. Turns out the 5 originals were set up with a private communications app that allowed them to talk and see each other whenever they wanted. It's just nobody figured out how to use it til now. Just had to press the little icon for 5chat.

When the call came in Willox took the opportunity to get out of the way of flying mud in Bujumbura and ditched under a tree to talk. Laughing cloud was still locked in the bedroom somewhere in Dawson Creek, he answered hanging upside down off the bed. Chang Ye was heading home to Tiger Leaping Gorge to see her family and she found wifi in a web Cafe in the last town before she took the boat

across the Yangtze and walked to her parent's house. Rosa had the sketchiest signal hacked together by a tech all the way from Lima (hired by her i'Dod) who built a tower for the antennae on the mountaintop above her home.

Sook Yin: So Willox are you really free?

Willox: They will hunt me down, they are bad men.

The device does the best real time auto translation that Laughing cloud has ever seen. I mean the video consoles some people on the reserve used were pretty high tech, but he could talk in Kwadacha and Sook Yin would hear it in Bei!

"I am still locked in this room, but I have learned that the man they call 'the arab' isn't Arabian at all. He is from Rajistan a desert province of India.

"Small town people everywhere make stupid assumptions on race" said Sook Yin.

"So many people think I'm Chinese when I go to small towns," she said.

"I had never even heard of the Bei peoples" said Laughing Cloud.

"I suppose you've never heard of the Kwadacha."

"The majority are minorities" said Rosa who was a native Peruvian (Amerindian) with very little Spanish blood in her.

Then days would go by and the iDods were silent and then you'd hear rosa "what time is it?"

And of course every one spread out all over the world would have a different answer, but Chan Ye would do the math and figure out what time it was at Rosa's place in Peru. There was video too...so it was like there was an open window connecting the 5 people. They were still special and now they needed to make something of it.

## Chapter 17:

### *Kinsky and Ritter fly to Africa*

Kinsky was an operative for Manzana security. She sat on the jet liner to Africa next to a handsome banker.

“It's an unusual position, running security in a non military operation” she said.

“Must get a tad frustrating,” said the banker.

“Well, it's always been a contradictory quest. Manzana dates back to the hippies from the 1960's, so there is a definite pacifist streak running through the company's culture and ideology. But when you look at computer viruses and the clear supremacy Manzana has in that area of 'security' you see it's not a clear cut case. So here I am crossing the world trying to defeat a kidnapping in the jungles of Africa. I don't even carry a gun.”

A pause where noone says anything for five minutes.

“I Imagine the press has a pretty close watch on you,” said the banker.

“I think I saw Ritter on this same flight,” said Kinsky.

Ritter was sitting in coach trying to save a little budget for the next leg of her journey. In her notebook she was trying to piece together what she knew about the whereabouts of Willox Nyineda. She formulated a list.

Land in Nairobi.

Rent car, drive to Tanzania.

Head up to Berundi.

Find willox somehow.

Head down lake tanganyika to Willox's village.

It was lucky she got a budget out of her editor at all. People had compassion fatigue in regards to the last 2 iDod hostage story was getting stale. Ritter took out her swahili phrase book and did some

memorization. Moja, mbili, tatu, nne she counted out loud. A little black boy in the seat in front of her heard her lesson and sang along.

Back in business class Kinsky's flirtation with the businessman reached a peak.

"My husband and I are going to Europe this summer," she said.

"Oh you're married," he said.

And then the pauses were most of the time. They landed and parted company.

"Jambo," said Ritter to her contact.

"Habari" he said back...

## Chapter 18:

### *a skype Ritter/Litmore interview*

Ritter: I thought this was a story about a new gadget from the Manzana corporation, but it's turning into something bigger than that: Mankind and supercomputers reach a new turning point in evolution. Will we survive it?

Litmore: I think since a super computer won at Jeopardy people have been thinking "What other games might this computer help win?" Games that pay money? Doing science, doing art? Making war?

Ritter: And now it's in a device you can hold in your hands...magic.

Litmore: ...and we see some excellent software for helping gamble, play the real estate market, and of course the app I demoed with the first five iDod kids which is playing the stock market.

Ritter: Which was illegal. So computers can not only win at jeopardy they can win at money making?

Litmore: What worries me is these can be programmed to win wars too.

Ritter: Definitely computers give competitive advantage even right now..in all fields that use them with skill. The question is, will this leap in abilities make a more pronounced gap appear between haves and have-nots?

Will it become have an iDod or be a have not an iDod?

Litmore: Manzana shipped about a million dods in the first run out the door.. I think with pre-orders and expanding global sales they're looking at five million iDodecahedrons by the end of the month.

Ritter: Probably the knock-offs aren't too far behind. And software?

Litmore: There have always been financial planning apps. I stepped over the line a bit when I demoed how autonomous these things can be with the iDod, but there are serious rules prohibiting machines from buying and selling over the web...now it will just be software making good suggestions to humans.

Ritter: Like get out of the house and go for a walk, you need some exercise.

Litmore: The device is image acquisitive. It will always vote in favour of any trips outdoors being considered. Each night it spends a few hours in an integrative state where it sorts all it's new images into categories.

Ritter: Dreaming.

Litmore: More like filing really but people love the idea...

## Chapter 19

### *Last time we heard from Laughing Cloud*

Laughing Cloud: I think the cloud that I was named after was pot smoke.

Barnaby: Laughing gas. That's what they should have called you.

Laughing Cloud: The name of my farts.

Smith: Hey LC you have the same name as that kid up in Canada's been kidnapped.

Laughing Cloud: Probably because it's me. I'm typing to you from one of the first five iDods, locked up but still activated.

Barnaby: Cool a hostage. That's a good thing to put on your resume.

Smith: I figure you can't really type into those things but they have some kind of Super-Siri that types for you.

Laughing Cloud: Actually it has a cool wrap around keyboard graphic that is surprisingly good. It gets most things you say if you ask it to do the typing but I like this old school keyboard too.

Barnaby: So what, are they feeding you enough?

Laughing Cloud: More like Greece than Arabia, I think. His wife is from Greece, the daughter of a shipping magnate.

Barnaby: Why haven't they just arrested this guy if you can just call the cops.

Laughing Cloud: We've been moving for the last little while. I am locked in the back of a pretty comfortable RV and for a couple of weeks, we've been on the road.

Barnaby: Should make you easy to pickup:

Laughing Cloud: I think for the last couple days they've just been driving in circles on a farm that's offroad, trying to confuse me.

Smith: Are you confused?

Laughing Cloud: Not. This grass is green. We didn't cross a border. The only place with green grass in Canada, in winter, is Vancouver and the Fraser Valley that's connected to it. We're probably in Abbotsford.

Barnaby: Or up highway 7 with Willy Pickton.

Laughing Cloud: These guys seem like businessmen. Not killers.

Smith: That's the good news. Keep us posted.

## Chapter 20

### *Tanzania*

A narrow paved strip runs through the savannah in northwest Tanzania and Ritter had rented a car to drive it.. People said she was better off getting a local driver and sure enough, like in most poorer countries, it was cheaper to get a car and driver than a car alone. She contracted with Jomo at the Nairobi airport, and they headed off on their adventure the next morning.

Less than an hour after leaving Nairobi they crossed the border into Tanzania. Then they drove all day to the west through elephant herds and Masai villages. In the afternoon, Jomo stopped at a strange sight. A white woman was walking beside the road with a huge jerry can in her arms.

Ritter: Kinsky! What an odd place to find you.

Kinsky: I'm not out of gas, it seems to be an overheated radiator that's giving me troubles.

A single hyena watched from a hundred metres back.

Ritter: You paid extra to do it without a driver didn't you?

Kinsky: I wanted to be by myself for a few hours.

The hyena took a few steps towards them.

Ritter: You'd better ride with us, it's looking a little wild out here.

They drove onwards to Kinsky's car and Jomo took a look.

Jomo: Mbaya sana mama. There is a hole in your radiator as big as my thumb.

So Kinsky called the rental company to come pick up their beater and they became the three musketeers, entering Burundi as tourists on Safari.

Ritter knew from experience that mentioning journalism at the border would add a lot of time to the process. Ritter got a cell phone call as soon as they came into service range around Bujumbura. Willox had gone silent but the last word from him was that his captors had made a deal to sell him to bigger criminals. The handoff was at 7 o'clock on the lakeshore in Bujumbura.

Now they had to find out exactly where.

## Chapter 21:

### *YouTube Comments*

Stacy Grin was not interested in computers. She was one of several cleavage strong females who were in the comments section under the iDod5 movie on Youtube. Litmore was a hunk. Laughing Cloud was like Jacob on Twilite. That Girl Sook Yin in China played some pretty songs on her synthesizer... It was a nice thread to hang out in. She had 6 or 7 comment videos up there already.

It was a great effect the first time they tried it. The five iDod kids in a five way split screen on Youtube. Interviewing each other, telling jokes. The movies got tons of hits. It was Willox who generated the app to allow these movies to get made easily. The iDods could assemble software for you if you asked correctly...Small apps that do specific things well.

Today there were only 3 faces in the 5 boxes and there were two glaring empty spots... text over those boxes said "taken hostage" Stacy made a comment about how sad it was that 2 of the folks were missing. In truth she thought they were just on vacation or something, she didn't really follow the details of hostage incidents. It was a dusty 3<sup>rd</sup> world story that she couldn't really think about. Her imagination didn't include images to make the story real. She liked things that were bright and modern and clean. Shiny, not like Rosa's place. She could see the wooden shack where the Peruvian girl was broadcasting from.. Totally alien. Don't know why she hung out with such rifraf but she wanted people to think she was interesting. Not just another pretty cleavage to look at.

She wrote: "come back boxes 4 and 5...! NMJC."

## Chapter 22.

### *A TV News Anchor:*

Anchor: So the big story in high tech this week is the Manzana Corporation's new handheld device the iDod. It's a little crystal ball dodecahedron you hold in your hand to watch video, surf the web, talk like it's a cellphone, and apparently lots of extraordinary new things....it's the first handheld supercomputer. Today is it's three month birthday since introduction. To give his thought here's our high tech correspondent Malt Crosswords. I just saw the little Youtube clip on Rosa Pisco's village in Peru, and all the excellent work that's been done in that difficult, mountainous country with the help of the iDod.

Malt: well at three months we're seeing the wonderful power for good and also the power it can give to evil. The iDod has empowered both. I just hope there's some common sense human progress that comes out of all this too.

Anchor: So Rosa's village is turning into Switzerland, and Sook Yin in Dali,China is making that region into something new too.

Malt: Well Chang Ye at Tiger Leaping gorge in China has been picked up by the Sunwatchers again. They have 20 dods now and they need hers to inform the others using the not so legal means that the first 5 got. I wouldn't say she's a hostage, more like a forced employee of a firm.

Anchor: And the two boys: Willox and Laughing Cloud what's their status?

Malt: Dark times. Turns out some of the Manzana engineers put some stuff on the iDods that Litmore didn't know about. War games, and simulations in military intelligence. They probably couldn't help

themselves since those programs use hundreds of variables. The kind of thing this multi parallel iDod system does well. It screams... These first five iDods suddenly became very desirable for warlords the world over, and very dangerous things to be in charge of.

Anchor: So it's building schools and housing in Peru but it's causing violence and anguish elsewhere in the world. I wonder how Mr. Litmore would feel about it.

Malt: As a matter of fact I've arranged for Mr. Litmore to Join us this evening.

Anchor: Thanks for taking the time Clarence.

Litmore: Well thanks for having me, there is always an incentive for me to get my side of the story out at any time.

Malt: Are you happy with the iDod's success?

Litmore: A huge sales success but we were fairly sure that would happen. We dared to reach for more

Malt: Like feeding the poor.

Litmore: The group to keep your eye on is the Sunwatchers. They are the ones working with mass producing wealth for the poor, and the viral agents such an undertaking would involve.

Malt: So Chang Ye is with good people?

Litmore: I knew Kwai when we were in college together. He is watching everything we do and making moves accordingly.

Malt: Otherwise, are America's teenagers having fun with the iDod?

Litmore: There are some great new video games reaching the market as we speak.

Malt: Sounds good.

## Chapter 23

### *Angela speaks out*

Stan: Our guest today is Angela Litmore the wife of well known Manzana engineer Clarence Litmore, who designed the iDod, and uh, unleashed it on the world.

Angela: Actually I'm just his fiancée. And even that is only since last weekend (*she holds up a ring on her finger*)

Stan: Well congratulations. I hear that this is not your main agenda today though, but you're here to launch a counter-offensive.

Angela: That's right Stan, you see I work partly at Manzana and partly at the advertising company that works for them. I'm a video editor. I make those pristine, emotionally manipulative, ads that we are famous for.

Stan: And today you have one to help sell the iDod.

Angela: Not exactly. You see the news is that four out of the five original children that clare gave the Dods to have now been kidnapped. With the recent disclosure that those first five contained military software, a month came upon us where the most powerful and defence minded men on the planet, feel at a disadvantage without that code. The iDod is out and it will only be a month until third parties make that and other software available to all. But for now we have to deal with the fact that four out of five original users are hostages, because only they can currently run the state of the art military software ..

Stan: And news is in this morning that the Sendero Luminoso, a revolutionary group in Peru is 'in talks' with Rosa Pisco down in Peru.

Angela: So five out of five. Maybe we should roll the video. Remember this is not paid for by Manzana, but a collection that was taken up amongst the employees.

*The video starts. Emotional music, but perhaps less manipulative than usual, cuts in.*

*A montage of iDod users:*

*A small boy creates what looks like a finger painting on the dod.*

*An old man photographs a pelican in a bird sanctuary.*

*Hundreds of iDod users tie their devices to colorful balloons and float them into the sky (on strings). They create a primitive wifi network across the globe for a day. And also a great colorful shot.*

*A poor village gets its first clean water. Children splash it around and play.*

*A doctor takes the dod into a patients room to help explain a diagnosis..*

*An old Chinese man talks to his grandson in America in Chinese. The young slick grandson hears the message in English and smiles.*

*Rosa's village has 10 or 12 new cars and a new hardware store. Three or four elders with magnificent weather worn faces sit outside it telling jokes.*

*A stock trader runs the floor with his iDod in hand.*

*Two young lovers build their first house with architectural drawings from the iDod,*

Stan:( Weeping) A little manipulative isn't it?

Angela: That's my job. There's going to be a lot of ugly reports this week and I think we have to show the good part of Clare's intentions.

Stan: You want the world to know...

Angela: There's more to the story..

## Chapter 24

### *Bujambura.*

Bats fly in great waves of life across the sky in the evening in Bujambura. A patisserie, strange transplant from Paris, fills the night air with aromas, and the glow of sunset paints the buildings in orange and pink pastel. Afro pop is screaming out from an apartment a block away. This is where boom boxes went to die, where music from a cassette isn't unheard of, and CD's are the latest thing.

Ritter, Kinsky and their driver, Jomo, mooch along the waterfront, into warehouses and empty yards, with sleeping guards in the booth.

There are riverboats on the lake... transported from Kentucky or Hong Kong, the fresh water navigation is global, nautical pride universal. It's strange to see Chinese letters on some signs. Everybody's here.

And then in an industrial yard with a huge crane to lift its loads, they find Willox.

"You're under citizen's arrest," says Kinski as she approaches his captors.

"What the hell does that mean?" answers one of the very black men named Paul.

"I've got a budget to rent a good conference room and have a meeting with you people. I provide food and..." Kinski is interrupted.

Suddenly 3 cars pull into the yard driving very fast. 3 Angry looking men step out and walk towards the others. "White, perhaps slavik," you hear Kinsky say into her cell phone. "Chechnyans," you hear Ritter say into her cell phone, as if she was receiving information.

"Paul it's good to see you," says one of the white men as he shakes Paul's hand.

“Have you got the cargo?” he asks.

“The boy is right here but these ladies seem to think they have something to say in this matter,” Answers Paul.

The Chechnyans have a thug who brandishes a sub machine gun at this point.

“Ladies?” says the leader in his Chechnyan drawl...

“No further questions,” says Kinski and a hippo snorts nearby.

## Chapter 25

### *Stacy makes a drop*

That morning Stacy got an old school email from Laughing Cloud. His captors were in trouble and needed to pay some guys in Pittsburgh \$100,000. Stacy is from a trailer park an hour and a half North of Pittsburgh.

He was asking if he could Fedex the money in a cardboard box to a station in Pittsburgh and she would go pick it up. She'd drop it off at a house in the suburbs and continue back to her place. Stacy had a 1976 VW Beetle that she could use on this errand, and it could work out fine. Laughing Cloud was in trouble and she needed to help. It's not like she had a life. This was cool and different.

As she drove she listened to music on her mp3 player. She had gotten a bunch of new tracks off a guy she knew from Facebook. Youtube wasn't Facebook, it was more like cleavagebook, and so it suited her better. At the gas station some trucker guys whistled at her. She was fat. That was the truth of it, but she wore it well. Besides it was Cleavagebook not assbook.. So what was this mission again? Oh ya to drop off that money in the box. Good thing it didn't get ripped off, sending cash through a courier. Just asking for it. Dumbshits.

Her bug sputtered on a hill and she hoped it would make it. Because criminal one couldn't get criminal two to sign the form himself. Because it was so much easier to get Stacy to drive fuggin 3 hours to drop the box off. Because her bug is not a piece of shit that can hardly make it. Because we're assholes and we might kill Laughing Cloud if we don't get our business done.

Stacy was pretty pissed off thinking this all through when she picked up the hitchhiker. He was an Okie from Muskogee, and he smelled bad.

“You had a shower lately?” she said.

“Been on the road about 5 weeks,” he said.

“Shit,” she mumbled.

At the drop-off she got her hitchhiker to take the box up and put it on the porch. Like she told him, he rang the doorbell and left. It went perfect. No one ran out with shot guns like she was afraid of.

She dropped him off on the highway a little while later. She used her cellphone to send a confirmation to LC. She got back an E-ticket for 10 days from now... He'd managed to get out of the hole that they were keeping him in and use his Dad for a moment. He'd bought 2 tickets to Hawaii. He'd meet her in San Fran.

“Don't worry' his audio message said. “ These guys are stupid... I'll meet you!”

Stacy wasn't sure but it sounded pretty cool. She'd never been to Hawaii.

## Chapter 26

### *Sook Yin's Trip*

All was looking prosperous in the village near Dali that Sook yin lived in called ShuangLangXiang. A new cobblestone road had been built back towards chicken foot mountain and the iDod was running an excellent research garden that all the farmer's in the area were learning from.

Strange Spanish style ceramic roofing tiles were showing up on some of the houses in the village. There was at least 1 shiny new pickup truck on this side of the lake now. And Sook Yin had the first Solar panels in town on her dad's place.

There was a new school, being built with iDod money too. She hoped it was going to be great.

She lived on the web, tracking Willox and Laughing Cloud, trying to keep track of Rosa and Chan Ye. There were reporters who contacted her on the internet that asked her for interviews, and to take part in conference calls. The village was just getting services now that allowed her to take part in a hectic global life even in her peaceful village.

To get away she would go for walks with her iDod... Back to where the trail grew thin, and climbed into the foothills. The foliage here is beaten back like the scottish moors. You way mistake it for a scrub brush foilage, but in truth, it is a forest, heavily harvested for firewood by a dense population of locals.

If Sook Yin was lucky she might see Tibetan hunters on horseback as she got higher up, closer to the temple.

She liked to talk to her iDod about plans she had for the future...In this case she was playing the dod like a keyboard as she walked.

On the day in question she saw the three men across the valley coming towards her. She thought it was a little odd to see these

guys two of them in suits and ties, way up here in the foothills. When they met she assembled a few details for when she would talk to the cops later..

One of them was wearing a t shirt that said "Tamil Tigers" , another of them was carrying a briefcase that said "Kurdistan" on it. The third guy, the burly one who spoke some english , had a tattoo that read 'NWS'

Sook Yin had heard of NWS, She knew it stood for 'nations without states' but she didn't know anything about them.

"You're coming with us. "said the thin head guy with the t shirt.

"You're taking me hostage?" "Sook Yin asked. When she awoke it was dark and she was in a strange place. There were electric fringes on objects that she had never seen before but she'd heard about it from the travellers at the hotel where she worked. LSD. This was the way she would see if she took the drugs that some of those backpackers had with them.

And what a place! Clearly the bad guys had walked away from the lake instead of back towards Dali. This was inside the temples at Chickenfoot mountain! She recognized the dozens of statues. Marco Polo came to see this amazing sight on his long walk from Europe a few hundred years back. Hundreds of hand painted statues were built into the roof of this amazing place.

Sook Yin awoke to hundreds of pairs of glass eyes starting down at her from above. Representing Buddhist characters and legends, the roof was one of the wonders of the world when Marco Polo laid eyes upon it in the 1700's.

Now it was just plain surreal as Sook Yin lay in the dark tripping for the first time, with hundreds of midget sized gods hanging over her in colourful garments, and then the bodies moved back, and a field of stars opened up. And there was a scepter or a streetlight and it was shining weakly in the sky and some characters could move! At first Sook Yin thought they were the ones on the roof, from legends that were told by the Buddhists. But then as 5 gathered around the light she saw she was looking at laughing cloud! And there was willow and rose. Sook Yin and Chang Ye were there too reaching out for the light scepter. They were all gathered around the light and reaching out

towards it and then... Flash ! A huge and very bright light takes over the sky.

Sook Yin watched wisps of light dance around for a little while longer and then she fell asleep. It was all a bit much to take. She had a dream and the big burly guy who was her captor had the sceptre in his hand and he was running with it. Just before she awoke he came in for an extreme close up so we could read the NWS tattooed on his skin. Sook Yin woke up in shock.

## Chapter 27

*Bonk and Snarky meet at the hockey game.*

Snarky: Yo Bonk, we meet again at the place of peeing.

Bonk: But this time it's just the lineup for the actual urinals where we meet.

Snarky: Funny how drinking 2 large beers during a first period motivates one to empty one's bladder for the second.

Bonk: So one can drink a couple more.. Hey, what about your hostages aren't, they running 5 for 5 this week.?

Snarky: It's kind of trendy. Everybody's a hostage.

Bonk: I'm obsessed with this case. In fact, I'm taking a couple of weeks off work. Wanna do some looking around for myself.

Snarky: Not that you're mired in red tape trying to run through normal channels.

Bonk: No

Snarky: We got a guy working with the pirates right now. They're 2 weeks away from having an app for every iD<sub>od</sub> that can do all this military intelligence stuff.

Bonk: Then the problem goes away.

Snarky: Ya, it's not creating super powers that causes imbalance. It's distributing them unevenly. Right now the tables are strangely slanted.

Bonk: Ya. Hope we all live to tell the tale. NWS has one of the hostages.

Snarky: Maybe that holiday isn't such a bad idea.

*Chapter 28:*

*Rosa meets the Sendero Luminso.*

Rosa needed to get away. Her fellow peasants along the Inca trail were using their iDod money to create cafes and bed and breakfasts along the valley bottom. Even a camera store. It was too touristy for her, and she didn't like it.

She hiked above her village, where the ancient Incan aqueducts still brought water to the potato fields. She walked to a place where she knew the trail would lead along the ridge-tops until Chiau came into site. Older than Machu Pichu, it was a ruin that not many people visited.

The site was empty when she got there. She could be alone. And she found an ancient room to sit in, or some rocks in a square the shape of a room at least. Her iDod had been talking all the way in about global news events, which looked quite important. She touched a screen and a number of processes awoke. It didn't seem odd to Rosa to be using an iDod in a ruin built by Incan or pre-incan civilizations hundreds of years before.

Chan Ye didn't think so either. She sent a link to a Youtube movie for NWS. Rosa sat quietly and watched...

*A very corporate presentation with electronic music and 3d graphic logos wooshing in.*

*Narrator* : NWS stands for Nations Without States, a non-governmental organization operating in dozens of countries around the world... NWS represents 10's of millions of members, and participates in all levels of the economy.

When you think of conflicts today, be it the Kurds in Iraq, or the Basques in Spain, it inevitably ties to National Identities that were not represented when the current State system arose. Languages. Ways of knowing. Unique cultural traits. Family. Those are the things that make up a nation.

The word state is tied to the word 'static, and implies an organization that doesn't change that much, but our world has many

unresolved states, with different groups vying for power. In some cases like the u.s., there is a fairly healthy dynamic equilibrium that is reached through democracy. In other places, like northern ireland, or palestine, there is violence and death.

So we live in a world with nations, usually defined by language, and states, defined by statesmen. In Canada, for example, the Quebecois are a nation and they sometimes seek to be a state. Other times they are powerful members of Nations Without States. The Palestinians of Israel, some native tribes in America, Kurds...

Rosa took a break and walked around a bit. There was an old woman in a bowler hat and a hooped skirt walking a trail on the other side of the valley. She looked for the cow that she would inevitably be herding but found nothing...Rosa was despondent.

"So Sook Yin's been taken by these NWS people and all the other groups seem to be linked in with them," she said to Chang Ye over her Dod.

"I see a nasty conflict occurring when they all get linked up," said Chang.

"But Sook Yin is Bei. She is from a nation without a state herself," said Rosa.

"I wonder what she thinks?"

...and then on the trail back just as it was getting dark she encountered the Sendero Luminoso. Active in Peru for the last 40 or 50 years, they were Maoist terrorists. Rosa was easily picked up by them and taken to a hut they seemed to have commandeered.

The leader was Juan Carlos.

"It's important that you understand who we're working for, In this case the Sendero Luminoso are simply doing a job for cash. It's the Palestinians and they are giving us 100,000 to send you and your Dod over to them."

"So Im being sold like a common slave," said Rosa.

"No, common slaves cost way less than 100,000," said Juan Carlos.

And she was gassed to sleep and woke up in a desert far away.

## Chapter 29

### *Willox in the Forest*

Another escape. Running, leaping across small creeks, sliding in the mud.. It is snowing so hard you try to pick a huge leaf and fashion a hat out of it. There are no broadleaves here. This is Russia.

Sub arctic forest now, all is snow and sharp ice spears that bite you if you're not careful. You cut your knuckles trying to break through the top of a small pond for a drink. It is patchy and windblown this snow. You find a pile of leaves that has no snow covering it.

At home they taught you to snuggle down in a pile of leaves to stay warm at night. The only trick was making sure there were no ants at work in the pile or it could be an itchy business!

"Hm," you think, "No ants here. In fact it's too cold for anything alive to even go outside."

You run quickly on the spot to try and warm up..It's getting dark, you keep moving, maybe you'll find a road. Then, when the light fails, you decide to try the leaf trick. You bury yourself deeply and fall asleep. 3 hours later you wake up. It's midnight.

"FUCK,"you yell.

A voice in the back of your head says "Africans don't swear. You're a little more polite than most people"

- "Fuck off, Im freezing!" you answer, and the voice falls silent.

Your fingers and toes are numb. Desperately you fumble through your pockets and you find it! A book of matches with 4 strikes left. This is important and could mean the difference between life and death.

With the first match you start the leaves ablaze. They're a little bit dry you've found a fairly sheltered area and the blaze continues for 5 or 10 minutes. Your pant leg was frozen from getting wet at the pond. You manage to thaw it out.

With the second match you try to light a bundle of sticks that you gather. The fire quickly goes out. When you break a stick you see that it is green wood.

"Fuck," you shiver.

The third match you are serious and it's gotta work. You find some dry dead wood and gather together a lot.

"I have no axe," you say out loud

"...so my fire has to be a huge pile of kindling."

You want it known that the 3<sup>rd</sup> fire worked. A bit. You were stumbling through the dark looking for yet another bundle of kindling when you struck your head on a branch.

You were unconscious for some time and then as if it was on an iPod, you saw Laughing Cloud.

"Hey Willox, looks like you're having some troubles with our northern winters."

"Fuck you," you say out loud to nobody at all if you're even conscious.

"One more match?" asks Laughing Cloud.

"Ya it's gotta work this time," says Willox.

- "To build a fire," says LC.

"You passed through an evergreen forest, You want to go back to the evergreen forest and collect all the lowest dead branches off the trees. They will be dry even in a snowstorm and they'll have a wispy moss on them I hope. That's great fire starter."

Willox slept for the last couple of hours before sunup. When it was light he traced his path back for an hour or so 'til he came to a wood that had green needles on the trees even in winter. He brought some bark from the deciduous forest but mostly this fire was made of the dry dead branches he broke off at the bottom of the trees.

"Thanks Laughing Cloud," Willox said to the wilderness.

## Chapter 30

### *At a shareholders meeting for The Manzana corporation*

Charlie Evans takes the floor.

"It has been our most profitable quarter ever, but I'm starting to have nightmares about Litmore's gadget," he said.

"The global situation leaves us exposed to litigation," said Nimbly.

"exposed? The whole world is going to blame us," said the Boss.

"Well, let's blame Litmore," said Snarky.

"I mean we're not the ones who gave ultimate power to those kids, we just sell hardware," Clara Thorn offered.

"It's only ultimate power for a few more days," said Snarky.

"This NWS group is sending us private ransom notes" said the Boss "Making some wild claims about having a presence in outer space."

"There are records that they have been putting private payloads into near space for years," said Kinsky.

"They seemed to be harmless parts for a future experiment. We found a base in Chechnya that they operate out of."

"Maybe a few days is all they need," said Charlie Evans.

## Chapter 31

### *Laughing cloud in a hole in New West.*

I write to you all today as a prisoner. This bulk email will go out the first chance my iDod has to find signal. Some of you are family and friends, others are police officers and detainees who have asked to be kept in touch.

My theory is that I am deep in a hole in New Westminster, under a family's home. I have reason to believe that my captors only access the home when the family is out, on weekends when they go to Keats Island. I've just overheard a few snippets. I don't know where that is but that's a big clue.

They're treating me fairly well. I get fast food brought to me regularly always from a different place so they are being careful, and I'm holding up ok. There is only one guard in the hole with me from Monday to Friday. He has a separate 8\*8 box that he lives in, and there is a hallway linking to my 8\*8 box. On the weekend 3 or 4 people may drop by and the door to the hole is thrown open, I can see a bit of the basement at the top of the hole. Looks like a painter's ladder.

It's risky for me to write this here but I have a plan to get this to you. So far there have been 3 different guards, and I want to put my plan into place the next time guard #2, a female, is on shift. I'll slip the iDod into her food bag on Saturday, and hopefully by the time she notices as she heads off to the food store, and sounds alarms, the iDod will have silently found some cell phone signal or wifi and this message will be sent to you. If it captures some useful pictures too I'll tell it to send them on.

*Chapter 32.*

*Angela's next ad on tv*

To whom it may concern:

My name is Clarence Litmore, I am an engineer at the Manzana Corporation in Silicon Valley, California. I made an arrogant move when we were releasing our last product, the iDod. I illegally gave out 5 copies of the machine to people I remembered from my travels.

Now, because I also made it so the machines would only work for the 5, these 5 have been taken hostage and are being made to play war games on powerful men's behalf.

There is a threat to destroy the united nations which you say should be renamed the United States. I can't believe it's real. I mean in the 1980s there was talk of 'Star Wars' defense systems that would blast moving targets out of thin air, and I suppose it was imagined that some day there would be satellites that could destroy targets. But those didn't work. What has really changed in the last 30 years?

A video that shows up on youtube.

Mr Litmore:

Thank you for your thoughts regarding the NWS and our verifiable threat towards the united nations organization.

There will be a demonstration of the technology soon. After that we will demonstrate it by destroying one target on each continent.

What has changed since the 1980 is nanotechnology. Lenses made of nanotubes with exquisite ability to focus coherent light on distant targets,  
wait and see.



### Chapter 33

*The Sunwatchers mass produce millionaires in Kuala Lumpur.*

Kwai: Do the math. We bought 20 iPods. We gave them to 20 people with specific instructions that they would earn enough money to buy 20 more iPods and distribute them. This has now happened 7 times. There are thousands of recipients involved in this. It's viral..

Ritter; My name is Susan Ritter and I'm a reporter following the stories that have sprung up around the world with the new Manzana product, the iPod. Today I'm in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and I am talking to Kwai, the founder of a group called the Sunwatchers, here.

Kwai: 'So we end up with this horde of rich peasants, and it's spreading to China, to those relatives in Bangladesh. This is going to have a real impact on the poorer nations of the world.'

Ritter: There is a lot of good work being done, Schools, bridges. Is there much corruption?

Kwai: Of course with every new wealth goes a spending spree that includes a lot of waste.. But there is some mature and intelligent work that is being done too...Investment in agriculture, business. We have a lot of information videos that we ship with the iPod that encourage the new user to be a good citizen and continue the chain. People are doing it! Poor man's honour runs deep. Distribution from Manzana is sometimes a problem though. We wait months sometimes to get our product.

Ritter: The viewers will wonder about your perfect American accent.

Kwai" I went to college in the states with an oddball engineering student called Clarence Litmore.

Ritter: So this goes back a long time.

Kwai: To the dorm rooms and seminars...

*Chapter 34.*

*Bonk meets Stacy*

*she is waiting in a seating area in the North wing of the San Francisco airport.*

Bonk: He's not going to show up.

Stacy: Who?

Bonk: Laughing Cloud, the guy you met on the internet and were going to go to Hawaii with.

Stacy: How do you know?

Bonk: I read your emails... let me introduce myself. I'm lieutenant Bonque of the Silicon Valley Civic Police.

Stacy: Self appointed spy guy too.

Bonk: This is turning into something very important Stacy.

Stacy: You even know my name.

Bonk: Im following every lead I can.. We're talking about global implications.

Stacy: So what do I do now? He sent me tickets to keep going.

Bonk: You could keep going to Oahu, or you could fly with me.

Stacy: And where are you off to.?

Bonk: I'm heading up to Vancouver to look for Laughing Cloud.

Stacy: count me in.



Chapter 35.

*A TV News Anchor:*

Anchor: So the big story this week is the actions of a terrorist group called NWS who have destroyed a city block in Boston with their weapon in outer space. Our man on location is Norm Normanson. Norm, what does the scene look like?

Norm: Pro stuff, this was an extremely well executed and apparently safe operation.

Anchor: How can you eradicate a city block in Boston and do no harm?

Norm: It was condemned and slated for demolition. NWS helped out in that way, which is weird.

Anchor: Well they certainly got our attention, let's hope that their intentions remain honorable.

Norm: It will be interesting to see the counter-strikes that will go into place. Clearly they have hacked our imaging systems to hide their operation.

Anchor: Because this must be solar energy trapped by a huge solar sail in outer space.

Norm: Which our systems should be able to see. But they've compromised it somehow.

Anchor: Interesting.. Keep us posted.

*Chapter 36.*

*Litmore and the Anchorman discuss the situation.*

Litmore: It's a decaying orbit. That's the most important piece of information I have today.

Anchor: Nice to see you too Mr. Litmore.

Litmore: What they've managed to attain is an extremely weak decaying orbit for the hardware they've been sending up for years. The scientists I was talking with earlier today thought the system would fall in less than a week.

Anchor: Some comfort in that.

Litmore: And we can see their solar sails now, we've cleaned up the security hole that allowed them to "erase" them for the last few years.

Anchor: And it is years, isn't it? That's how long it takes to build up such an immense force using solar that can destroy buildings.

Litmore: And how do you store the energy? We were imagining some kind of battery or capacitor.

Anchor: I suppose it is a weightless atmosphere, so lead acid batteries would work.

Litmore: Not when you're paying a huge sum for each piece of payload you ship up there.

Anchor: So NWS is behind a whole new technology.

Litmore: We think they're using the fact that they're in a vacuum to cycle the energy in a kind of coil. Kind of like using a mirror to shine a light all the way around the world.

Anchor: And then beam it at targets on earth.

Litmore: Using the nanotechnology Lens that Snarquis is known for. That's who we think is behind this, is Jaques Snarquis, the Quebecois inventor.

Anchor: But he's not alone.

Litmore: He has connections all over the world.

Anchor: Huh.

Litmore It's more like a bunch of radio stations in a circular landscape than a coil this thing. The energy signal gets passed from station to station with no friction because it's a vacuum, and stores up for the big day.

Anchor: And tomorrow's another demo.

Litmore: I think we'll find they have a limited number of targets, and a limited time in space.

Anchor: But will they have enough time to do their dirty work? We find out their plans tomorrow after the demo.

## *Chapter 37*

### *Rosa in Palestine*

Rosa and her iDod are doing some solid financial work on behalf of the Palestinians. She works in the ministry in Ramallah with her iDod behind a hand-carved wooden door in a dusty hallway. She has a badge on that says 'Lewahadi inchilla' and the men seem to leave her alone. 'I walk alone, god be willing.' Poor horny bastards and some of them are so cute! Hombre.

Rosa has come out of herself in the time since the iDod showed up. The quiet peasant girl in the picture is now replaced by a firey young lady, and she doesn't like being a hostage. The worst is in the evenings when the generals come and they play military simulations together.

It is kind of scary how the iDod always wins, in simulation. Defeating the best military minds around.

On one of these evenings a general uses her iDod to communicate with the Tamil Tigers. It turns into a conference call and the Kurds and the Bosnians jump in. Then it turns into a brawl, with everyone fighting. Clearly some of the members are ok with human casualties in their actions, while others aren't.

Rosa knows her iDod will record it all. She imagines the report that she will assemble later that evening.:

Crack in the NWS Wall. There is an internal power struggle going on. Some of the members are OK with casualties but Snarquis the Quebecois pacifist refuses to do harm to human life.

*Chapter 38**Bonk calls snarky on the phone*

Bonk: Hey sup

Snarky: Just the world exploding from a death ray from outer space, nothing much.

Bonk: I'm in Vancouver, with Laughing Cloud's girlfriend, Stacy.

Snarky: Hope you find him.

Bonk: No my feeling is that this site is going to be tough to solve, When I look at picking up one of the five, I think Willox in Chechnya is the guy to try. But I need a budget to fly over there.

Snarky: I wonder if I could get some Manzana money.

Bonk: You know I was thinking, it would be good for these NWS guys to have someone on the inside at Manzana.

Snarky: Interesting.

Bonk: The whole thing being so sensitive to timing, you would really need to know about release dates, and shipping schedules, to sych up your, uh mass destruction.

Snarky: Huh.

Bonk: Your name Snarky sure sound like this Snarquis character up in Quebec it's almost like you're related.

Snarky: He's my uncle actually. You know I can give you free travel right now! Ill just call my travel agent, and set it up, so you can put everything on my tab.

Bonk: Excellent idea. I'll call you from Russia.

Snarky: Don't bother.

## Chapter 38

### *The second demonstration of the ray.*

Anchor: In a stunning display of power the revolutionary group called NWS have destroyed 5 city blocks, on 5 different continents.

For more on this we go to Norm Normanson in the control room.

Norm: What I've got assembled around me are five video screens, and each of them has a live video feed from one of the sites. NWS made these live streams possible and there are highlight collages all over youtube. Buildings blowing up in slow motion gets a lot of hits.

Anchor: And what's your impression compared to the first demo?

Norm: Much of the same fare. Demolition sites and condemned properties, I think the interesting thing to note is that it didn't go off without a hitch. The site in Italy was apparently a hundred feet off target and a street and a neighbour's lawn were singed, with a pet animal dying as well.

Anchor: and that's where the picture we see time and time again came from.

Norm: The singed bones. What was apparently a pet cat that got fried by the energy pulse?

Anchor :Yuck. Have the NWS made their demands?

Norm: We'll go to that press conference live in just a minute.

Anchor: So australia, italy, Rio di janeiro, quebec, where else?

Norm: India. A block of Calcutta was leveled and nobody noticed.

Anchorman: Looked the same.

Norm: Perhaps a small improvement.

Anchorman: I know some blocks here that could use this treatment too.

Norm: We're trying to maintain our levity in times of great stress.

Anchor: Telling jokes with a gun to my head..

Norm: out.

Anchor: out.

*Chapter 39**The village of Frontenac , France 1604**scene 1: in the enclosure at the chapel.*

Cardinal Snarquis: Rome has ordered that our lands be delivered to the local people.

Minion: Including the vineyards around the monastery?

Cardinal Snarquis: Well not those I hope, but the decisions are all made by other people than me.

\*\*\*\*

*scene 2: At the vineyard.*

Cardinal Snarquis (rides up on a horse)

Cardinal Snarquis: Hey there, a beautiful day isn't it?

Gerome Bonque: Yes it is sir, and you're welcome on our new property, to ride and hunt.

Cardinal Snarquis: Very kind, so you're the new owners of the vineyard. ?

Bonque:The church gave back all the land that they stole during the war...

Cardinal Snarquis: so that's how you see it.

Bonque:I see it how it is.

Cardinal Snarquis: not how it shall be.

\*\*\*\*\*

*scene 3 (2 years later)at the vineyard*

Emily Bonque:Repossessed! !how could that be.

Emile Bonque:the notice says by order of Cardinal Snarquis the vineyard is to be turned over to the church.

Gerome Bonque: We'll challenge it in court.

*scene 4 (in the street) a few weeks later*

Cardinal Snarquis:(on horseback)

to Gerome Bonque (who is on foot): Sir who is the rightful owner of yon vineyard?

Gerome Bonque: some say it belongs to the church now, but I've heard otherwise.

Cardinal Snarquis: It belongs to the church.

200 years go by and the bonque family finally wins the case in court. The vineyard is turned over to them again.

200 years later in outer space another drama unfolds between the 2 families.

## Chapter 40

### *The Big Fight*

In BC Laughing cloud has a gun to his head.

Thousands of miles away in Chechnya, Willox has a gun to his head also.

They are being forced to play a video war game together, on the internet. To the death. On their iDods. With expert artificial intelligence assistance.

NWS has a deadly fracture. Kpinski and the hawks are committed to using the space weapon to destroy state administrative centers all over the world. The white house, and most houses of parliament are targeted. Snarquis and his followers are against this. It comes down to a duel. iDods across the sky.

Willox is at the old farmer's place that he came to after his nights in the Russian forest last week. Feasting on black bread and yogurt until the old farmer alerts the authorities, and Willox and his iDod are under arrest. It is the police officer, Field Marshal Charinof, who has the gun to Willox's head now, taking orders from the military.

Meanwhile, across the planet in BC Laughing Cloud has been taken to a deserted ranch somewhere up the Fraser Valley. It is set back in the woods on the hillside and has a view over the lights of a small town. Chilliwack perhaps. Like Willox, he has a gun to his head, and is being forced to do battle. To the death.

At the two ends of the battlefield there is a target, like the flag in capture the flag. Except in this case the flag is Willox or Laughing Cloud. Around it are perimeters, a band of lines to cross as your army penetrates the enemy's territory. Along each perimeter are bases, where groups of soldiers congregate. Often progress is made by taking bases...but other times it's a more spread out and individualized combat.

Willox commands his men to move to perimeter two and they are attacked and sent back by LC's men .

"It's odd", thinks Laughing Cloud," but when I shoot a gun off in the video game I hear shots outside a few hundred metres away?"

In Chechnya Willox is noticing the same thing. Sounds of gunfire and battle outside the door of the old farmer's hut. Willox shoots a text message to LC.

"This is real, Cloud. There really are soldiers directed by you and me, trying to reach the targets and kill the enemy. I can hear them shooting outside the fucking door. This isn't a video game it's a murder ritual. "

Willox wrote back:

"NWS has split into factions and these guys are at war with each other. We are trying to eliminate each other because these iDods are only special for a couple more days and these guys have to work out their disagreements and get their work done."

The iDods make all the calls. Willox gets detailed advice on where to send his men. Who they should attack, what order they should do things in...Strategy in this battle has a lot to do with attacking from more than one angle at once, with multiple coordinated teams. The iDods are masterfull quarterbacks, calling the plays and seeking their targets.

Each of them is in charge of 60 soldiers and there are 60 defenders at each site too. The iDod moves soldiers like chess pieces trying to outsmart it's opponent.

Each of the soldiers can hear the computer calling orders to them through an earpiece. A voice like HAL directing men towards killing.

Bonk and Stacy caught a flight into Moscow yesterday and spent today on connections to Chechnya. Now they are approaching the old man's farm and they are in contact with Willox. He is a prisoner. There is a roadblock at the farm's gates and they are turned back.

They park on a dirt track nearby to think it over.

Then they sneak in, through the woods and find themselves in the middle of a gun battle. Willox said he thought the game he was playing had a direct effect on the gunfire he heard in the actual world. Now was the time to test this. They contacted him and asked for a diversion and all the action suddenly moved to the other side of the field. Excellent.

Then they were able to get to Willox. He was deep into his game with Laughing cloud and in fact he has broken through the final perimeter and was about to reach him. He had a gun to his head and if he didn't kill Laughing cloud he would be killed.

"Stop " shouts Stacy, as Bonque wrestles with the Field Marshal and removes his weapon. "Wilcox, you were about to kill Laughing Cloud." says Stacy.

"Forced to do battle," Wilcox answered,ashamed.

"We're' gonna get you two out of this," she said.

"Stacy you got here in perfect time" said Laughing Cloud over the iDod.

Somewhere a bet got paid off. The native kid didnt kill the African..and the African didn't kill the Native kid. The bet had been over how to use the beam in outer space... It meant a lot.

## Chapter 41.

*The press conference takes place.*

Anchor: Welcome ladies and Gentlemen to today's historic press conference by Nations Without States the group that recently displayed their immense power by demolishing properties all over the world from outer space..

Today's Proceedings are linked together over satellite, as the NWS spokesmen are in remote parts of the world hidden away. I suppose if they were apprehendable, they would be apprehended.

*On the screen Snarquis enters the room and sits down.*

Snarquis :Good Evening citizens of Earth, it is a great honour to address you today. I apologize for the crude display we used to get your attention, but you are paying attention aren't you?

Let me begin by putting your minds at ease, today is not Armageddon or even anything close. Our ray is in a decaying orbit and will soon fall from the sky, and life will go back to normal. We take our relationship with the public very seriously and we don't want to scare you or inconvenience you in any way.

Of course we do need to show that we are powerful and that we have literally been waiting for centuries trying to find justice.

Of course there was a faction of our group that had some more aggressive targets in mind, but what we are proposing is some harmless demolition in one week's time.

We propose to demolish the UN buildings.

We also propose to donate 200 million dollars for the creation of two new buildings: The assembly of Nations and the Assembly of States.

*He plays a slick video on the assembly of nations:*

“A place where cherokee and basques have a chair, where eskimos and maoris talk as equals”

The UN is evacuated the next day

It is revealed on the news that expert analyses has proven conclusively: the reason the shot in Italy was a little off, was that there was a physical struggle at the console...

Internal conflict in NWS is publicized hopefully.

## Chapter 42

*Kelly had been promoted.*

Kelly had been promoted. The new international bureau, as if North America had just realized there were other countries. He had a new shiny desk and a big office way up on the 33rd floor of a government building. On the wall he'd pasted photographs of the 5 iDod kids. He had a line connecting the pictures and leading up to another picture. He got to bring along 2 of his flunkies so he was up there with Bryce and Brogue trying to save the world.

"I've contacted the military and they're sending someone over for a meeting," says Bryce looking up from a laptop.

"At least we asked," says Brogue

"Just thought I'd mention. There are bad guys with a laser beam up in outer space, trying to blow up the world, and I was kind of just, uh wondering if there were any counter measures being mounted," says Kelley.

"A plan other than we could all just die," says Brogue.

"That would take intelligence," sergeant Striker of the 10th division enters the room.

"military intelligence," says Brogue.

"I think that's an oxymoron isn't it?" says Striker.

"Some kind of moron," says Kelly.

"So what do you guys know?" says Striker getting down to business.

"It wasn't a surprise to us when NWS demoed the ray," says Kelly.

"We've been tracking the iDod devices from the very beginning and there were some signatures on a few web pages, some small traces that led us to believe that NWS was using the iDod for planning its moves in some kind of huge scheme.

"We got to the same place as you but not by tracking iDods. By putting together the 20 year trail that NWS left in getting parts into outer space."

"Seems like an obvious place for tight regulation," says Brogue and Striker rolls his eyes.

"Unclear whose job that was, to keep track of all the parts going up into space."

"Snarquis probably hid it brilliantly," says Kelly

"Well regulations would have been nice, but now we have to deal with the fact that these guys are going to take down the UN buildings."

'We do have a counter measure in preparation,' says Striker.

"What could shoot down a satellite?" asks Bryce.

"We're looking at a variation on one of our unmanned drones" says Strker.

"Space drones," says Brogue.

"Ya, that sort of thing," says Striker.

*Chapter 43:*

*A TV news anchor.*

Anchor: So Malt what are we to make of that news conference.?

Malt: If we were to listen to Fox tv like I just was, we might think the sky is falling...

Anchor: I thought the sky was falling.

Malt: We're talking about terrorists with public relations videos. It's a new kind of clean and professional terrorist.

Anchor: Unless the other guy grabs the wheel again.

Malt: The expert analysis is that in Italy when the target was missed there was a struggle going on..

Anchor: Can the pacifists hold out?

Malt: Snarquis is a smart guy. But Kpinski, the other guy is harsh and dangerous. It's all going to fall out of the sky next week anyways.

Anchor: Right after they demo the UN.

Malt: Probably, unless the military shoots them out of the sky.

Anchor: That would be cool..

Malt: Probably won't happen. I hear it's doable but it would take 6 months to put it together.

Anchor: We have uh, 6 hours.

Malt: The sky isn't falling

Anchor: But probably one of the largest institutions on earth will have its concrete basis blown off the earth.

Malt: I never liked that building anyways.

Anchor: But we'll never build his design. We're not to be held hostage.

Malt: I think it's foolish to believe that there wouldn't be repercussions if we failed to build the assembly of nations and the assembly of states design.

Anchor: Wimp.

Malt: I like Eskimos.

## *Chapter 44*

### *Wartech released for iDodecahedrons*

Any advantage held by the first 5 users of the iDod in strategic matters has now been lost.

Today marked the release of the industry standard Wartech app which does all the artificial intelligence command decision making that the first 5 i'Dod users enjoyed. Perhaps those hostages will be set free now, that anyone with an iDod can pretty automatically acquire these skills.

I t's speculated that NWS used this app on the iDod to orchestrate their current reign of terror over the world. Today those tables are once again balanced.

## Chapter 45

### *Stacy in Hawaii:*

Stacy was doing like Laughing cloud said and staying at the Hilton in Waikiki. Fancy clean room with a view out over the beach. Maid service. Room service. Awesome.

In the evening she'd sit in the bar by the pool and let men try to hit on her for fun.

"Ya he should be here today or tomorrow. I talked to him last night" she would tell the guys.

"His name is Laughing Cloud, you might have seen him on the news in the last few weeks. "

They all knew who he was, and about his epic battle with Willox.

"This is the opposite of fighting to the death" one of the guys said about the beach life.

They knew who she was too. How she fit into the huge story that had just happened on the news. The guys were really cute and the atmosphere was really sexual . Laughing Cloud arrived just in the nick of time.

Stacy was glad to see him.

## Chapter 46

### *Sook yin was captured*

Sook yin was captured that first night and given LSD and shown the statues in the roof at chicken foot mountain. It was there that she saw the five reaching for the light that flashes. In her dream later, she saw the burly man with the nws tattoo carrying the light scepter away....

I In the weeks that followed she was taken on a weird odyssey through Burma, Cambodia, and Nepal...a kind of search for the Asian revolutionary spirit, for the counter culture of the Khmer rouge, the Tamil tigers, the Viet Cong .A study of non conformity in that most conformist of continents.

And in China the producer, that's what she called the fat guy who took her around, took her to a rock concert. And she met the band and she felt the international teen spirit that the young, long-haired europeans back at the hotel in dali used to project.

The producer was trying to sell her on rebellion in general. As an aesthetic. Sure she had to use the iDod for a few hours every night with their friend the banker, but for the most part The Producer was exposing her to rebel lifestyles. Building up her rebel spirit. He wanted a wild animal that was difficult to tame.

He introduced her to the notion of NWS and they looked at how the Bei people fit into their work. Then after a short flight she met Chan Ye, and the Sunwatchers.

There was a man called Kwaii there.

"Tell Kpinski there was not enough time. We have created thousands of wealthy mobile peasants , but they are not ready to act against the central forces."

Sook Yin thought that there hadn't been enough time to brainwash her either. She wasn't a rebel yet.

*Chapter 47**Kpinski and Snarquis are out for a walk*

Kpinski and Snarquis are out for a walk on the dock on the island that they are living on in the Caribbean.

Kpinski: Just got the message that there was not enough time. There is a faction in NWS that was going to put a large plan into effect. I work with the sunwatchers, and we were going to spread change over the planet like a virus.

Snarquis: I was aware of your plot to overthrow my power, But no, plan A will go ahead as scheduled, the non-violent demolition of the UN.

Kpinski: That's enough that I'm still proud.

Snarquis: Me too.

## *Chapter 48*

### *A TV News Anchor*

Anchor: What we're witnessing through the long distance lens on the Swedish skar satellite is extraordinary. For a few days NASA or someone else has been trying to remove the NWS satellite from orbit, sending doomed drones that were inadequately retrofitted for outer space, and then yesterdays a small 1 man craft that got close enough to touch the beam and under normal circumstances knock it out of orbit.

Dr Raminof: The NWS satellite demonstrated an unusual elasticity to it's orbit, that is when we knocked it three meters one way it auto corrected to three meters back. Also when we tried to open it, we found it was locked up very tightly in a manner that was going to be non trivial to crack.

Anchor: So the plan is to mount another mission and take good safecracking gear.

Raminof:It could be more difficult than that. Snarquis is a very clever fellow.

Anchor: Yes I wouldn't want to engage him in a battle of wits.

Raminof: That's exactly what we're doing. And we have 23 hours to save the UN buildings

## Chapter 49

### *A job interview*

Bonk: I'm just back from Russia where I was doing a little uh, freelance work on this case.

Kelly: Glad we could reach you then, we've got an unusual position we're looking to fill and because of your history we thought you might be our man

Bonk:I've been following the story on the news. You're interested in my history with Snarquis?

Kelley: Our scientists say we're not going to be able to crack that bird all that easily. They say Snarquis has the best knowledge of the nanotechnology involved in making a really light really hard alloy. They say it could take weeks to crack and I should put as much energy as possible into the semantic solution. Trying to figure out the combination to the lock that opens it up..

Bonk: Our families both had land in France 400 years ago.I am a Bonque, proud keepers of the vineyards at Frontenac. There was a feud that went on for a couple hundred years between our families. Then my Grandmother married a Snarquis. So now, relations are better. I meet one of the sons at the hockey game all the time.Say hello. Don't know how this could help come up with a combination.

Kelly:We're not even sure what the input is. It's a video input of some sort.

Bonk: Hand signals I bet. They have a secret handshake and a bunch of other stuff passed down from their days in the castles. I know a bit of it.

Kelly: It's a long shot but you might be our next man in outer space.

## Chapter 50

### *Bonque in Space*

Bonque: So at first I was talking to an ai version of you Snarquis but now you seem to be realtime on the radio.

Pause.

Snarquis: Well with a few seconds delay it is realtime.

Pause.

Bonque: I guess it's a satellite feed.

Pause.

Snarquis: literally yes.

Pause.

Bonque: I meant a cellphone satellite.

Pause.

Snarquis: I know you did but you are overhead now so we go direct to you no middlemen.

Pause.

Bonque: So what do you want?

pause.

Snarquis; Deniability, you see as an orbit decays there is more and more turbulence

Pause.

Bonque: So you can't even be sure you're going to hit the UN buildings

Pause.

Snarquis: That's why I'm giving you the option to save the world yourself.

Pause.

Bonque: What you're giving me the right to redirect this weapon? Take out some harmless ocean, or maybe a slice of the Hudson river.?

Pause.

Snarquis: You will be supplied with a button. If you choose to push it the weapon will be redirected.

Pause.

Bonque: Saving the un but destroying some helpless strangers.

Pause.

Snarquis: It's your decision you have 5 minutes of oxygen left to think..

Pause.

Bonque thinks about it for only 30 seconds. Then as far as he knows, he presses the button.

## Chapter 51

### *A Harmless Demolition.*

And then on the date it was advertised to occur, the city block containing the main U.N. buildings was demolished. The aim was off by 30 ft which was really very good considering the turbulence involved in shooting from a decaying orbit. Bonque's button press to change the targetting apparently had no effect. Perhaps that's why it was 30 ft. Off.

No one was hurt. It was a violence only against property and the \$200 million was going to help pay for the damages. The media called it happy terrorism, and that's how it was supposed to be remembered.

Stacy and Laughing Cloud were honeymooning on Waikiki beach when it happened . They'd been married by a native hawaiian shaman and they broadcast it on the iDod. They contacted Litmore. The blast was on the tv behind every bar, every hotel lobby when they walked up to Dennys. The pictures of the buildings blowing up in slow motion. Iconic like 911 this was history in the making.

Laughing /Cloud: I think the iDod should launch a counteroffensive.

Stacy: I mean it looks bad for Manzana all this global news making that's been going on .

Litmore:VAre you kidding? There' no publicity like free publicity.

Rosa was on a flight back from Palestine when the airplane enterainment system picked up the breaking news story. Willox was on a plane too home from Moscow. It was Aeroflot and it didn't have news but some of the Russians turned their cell phones on mid flight in blatent disregard of the rules and got the news. Sook Yin was home in

Dali and Chang Ye also was hiking to her family's home on tiger leaping gorge.

Litmore and Angela were at their house up the gorge.

All of a sudden everyone knew that this was real and something really terrible had happened. I mean no one was hurt but the iDod had thrown the whole world out of balance for some days, and it was going to take a while to recover from it.

## Chapter 51

### *Across the land children wept*

Across the land children wept. Grown men with memories of the fallen edifice took heart in the fact that new seeds had been sewn for a more peaceful future for everyone. In the tragic crater a double flower bloomed that spring, and plans were laid out for new structures. An idea took root and it was drawn out and considered. The Assembly.

"The Assembly of nations should be built because it's a good idea not because they tell us to," said the politicians. And UN letterheads and business was directly transferred over to the new Assembly of States. Really it was exactly the same but with a new name.

Beurocracy at the new Assembly of Nations was a problem. And 3<sup>rd</sup> world gurus who thought they might take over the world. But it prospered and did some important work. Culture. That was their thing.

So, that was the story of the beam from space and the dung beetle that fought the cloud.

It was how Sook Yin dreamed of the man who stole the light, and how Rosa found the crack in the NWS wall. It was an iDod story. How Litmore gave away 5 magic seeds and the wonderful and frightening things that grew.

Across the land the iDods had troubled dreams as the darkness fell that night. The hopes were still there, but there were shadows too. A plus and minus equation.

They all sorted through the day's images efficiently and dreamed of a world that they hoped would arrive. Also they worried about the world they now knew could arrive. Whatever the case, the iDods would be there.

*Chapter 52*

*The 5 meet in a restaurant in California, flown in for a Manzana meeting.*

Rosa: All these iDods in the middle of the table . We could use them as some kind of bricks.

Willox: Build a wall.

Cloud: If we let them all go to sleep their dreams will sync up.

Stacy: I like it when they flash pictures at night before they go to sleep.

Sook Yin: You can watch the images that it caught for the day and compare them to the images that you remember.

Litmore: Who would have thought that watching sorting would be so interesting.

Cloud: The point of view from the bookshelf.

Chan Ye: from the straw above the pig shed.

Willox: From he cupboard by the door in my new swank apartment.

Sook Yin: Nice, finally some iDod money paying for some luxury.

Chan Ye: We put running water and internet into every house along the gorge.

Rosa: We got running water, internet,cable tv,tractors,automatic wheat grinder thingamajigs...

Willox: In the new town I live in down the lake Im paying for a new sewer system. And a music festival.

Cloud: Ya we're putting on a music festival.

Litmore: Have you guys seen the 'artist's response' web site?

Rosa: Ya, some nice stuff.

Chan ye: I liked the song about the UN blowing up by Shester.

Cloud: She's playing at our festival.

Stacy: You just think she's hot.

Willox: I think she's hot.

Litmore: I think she looks like one of my friend's daughters.

Stacy: You gotta meet that girl Willox.

Willox: (*looks at Litmore*): Sounds like I'm gonna come over for dinner.

Litmore:Ya I can set it up...

Willox: Excellent.

Rosa: On another topic i like Angela's new ad.

Chan Ye: iDod peace offensive.

Cloud: kind of hippy stuff.

Willox: Hope it works.

Cloud: The iDod index is only earning extraordinary returns.

Sook yin: well when everything is done legally and with taxation in mind, the profits decrease.

Litmore: It's kind of cool that it makes money at all.

Chan Ye: Keeps the whole Sunwatchers crowd afloat.

Litmore: and that's a lot of people.

Sook Yin: The iDods are doing good.

Litmore: Ya maybe...

*The End.*