

America's Reparation

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America's Reparation

Sometimes the bad guys wear white hats. Sometimes the good guys wear black hats. Sometimes the bad guys wear black hats, and the good guys wear white hats. Sometimes bad people do good deeds. Sometimes good people do terrible deeds. Sometimes bad people do terrible deeds, and good people do good deeds. But for the most part, people are neither good nor bad. They wear gray hats and do whatever it takes to survive.

Henry White is a thirty-year-old man. He is a product of our society's moral compass as nobody else. Orphaned from the day of his birth, Henry has become thoroughly acquainted with the workings of our social programs. From a state run orphanage attending public school, to graduating from community college to landing a government job at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (E.E.O.C.), Henry White knows the system.

Henry White's intimacy with the system has elevated him into a position, which hasn't been held by a caucasian since the last Bush Presidency. He is what is commonly referred to as a 'roving enforcer'. When a protected 'minority' is discriminated against, Henry brings down the sledgehammer of justice upon the accused and rights the wrong. The inalienable rights of the protected 'minority' rely on his ability to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong.

As of 7:30 AM on this Sunday morning, Henry White lies in bed staring at the alarm clock on the nightstand. Common sense tells him that he should get up and ready himself for church. It's not a job requirement that a prominent member of the E.E.O.C. attend church, but his boss, Ms. Laquita Jones, keeps an unofficial attendance record and Henry has the worst attendance in the entire department.

"Hell," mumbles Henry as he gets out of a comfortable bed and steps onto a cold concrete floor.

Henry has never been big on church. Even as a child, he resented losing a free Sunday morning to sit on a hard backed, church bench and listen to the, 'I'm ok, you're ok' drivel that flowed so swiftly and forcefully from the spiritualist leader's mouth. Most often, he would drown out the speaker's incessant babbling by daydreaming about riding the outlaw trail with Jesse James or exploring the Northwest with Lewis and Clark. On a good day, he could sit through a church service without recalling a single word of the sermon.

Uneventful as this morning had been, somehow, Henry still manages to be running late. Against his better judgment, he takes the additional time required to set his digital recorder to record an old cowboy movie off the TV that he'd only seen three or four times before.

As he is about to leave the apartment, he looks into a full length mirror to make sure that his dashikis is wrinkle free and his kente fez is on straight.

"Looking good," he speaks to his reflection. "Say what you will, but this sure as hell beats wearing a suit and tie any day of the week."

The United World Church is packed as usual, which compounds Henry's awkward attempt to make his way upfront to sit near Ms. Laquita. Eventually, he squeezes into a spot between two people on the bench directly behind his boss. All this Herculean effort gets him is a disappointed look from Ms. Laquita as she glances behind her and shakes her head back and forth.

Damn, shit in hell! thinks Henry White as he settles in for the hour-long spiritual pep rally. I should have stayed home and watched TV. This pissed her off worse than not coming at all. Oh well, what the hell.

As the spiritual leader continues on and on with her goodness sermon intertwined with wishes of happiness and blessings, Henry takes the time to study some of the faces in the audience. There are Asians, Indians originally from India, caucasians, Hispanics, Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, and every mixture of race (humanly possible) on the faces of most of the young.

Truly, Saint King's dream has become a reality, thinks Henry. Within a couple of more generations it will be one world both figuratively and literally. Already the notion of different denominations and religions are fading from the public's memory. The United World Church was an absolute stroke of genius. Sure the sermons suck, but that's better than Christians persecuting the Muslims or the Hindus discriminating against the Buddhist. 'I'm going to heaven. You're going to heaven.' What kind of loony would want to argue with that? Matter of fact, the only people that I've heard a preacher say were in hell are Adolf Hitler and Timothy McVeigh.

Finally, the spiritual leader brings the Sunday feel good meeting to a close with an invitation for the audience to stand up and give applause for worldwide enlightenment. The congregation gradually heads for the exits with various people loitering and talking with friends. Henry and Ms. Laquita Jones are the last to exit the end of their respective rows where they stop to chat.

Ms. Laquita Jones says, "Henry, some of us come to church because of a spiritual need or because of the love in our hearts. You go to church for the brownie points, but to get those points you must arrive on time. Understand?"

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones," replies Henry.

"And Henry....," continues Ms. Laquita Jones.

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones," says Henry.

“Be in my office first thing Monday morning. Now you didn’t hear this from me, but your last date filed a sexual harassment complaint against you.”

A stunned Henry White slams both his fists into the back of the bench in front of him and yells, “Fuck!!” at the top of his lungs. The church parishioners who haven’t fully vacated the church building turn toward Henry in shocked silence as his curse echoes off the ceiling and walls. Henry looks all around, throws up his hands and cries, “Forgive me brothers and sisters for I have sinned. Woe is me. Woe is me.”

Ms. Laquita puts her arm out straight to block Henry’s path and says, “You stay here until I’m gone. I don’t want to see your face or hear your voice until Monday morning. Understand? No, don’t speak; just nod your head yes.”

Henry nods yes and Ms. Laquita filters out of the church with the rest of the stragglers. Leaving Henry standing by his lonesome.

After a few minutes of quiet self-introspection Henry causally walks to his electric car and decides which restaurant to dine in. Crazy J’s Waffles and Imitation Chicken is the eatery he finally ends up at. If you drown the soy chicken in ketchup, hold your breath, and close your eyes, it almost tastes like real chicken.

As Henry sits alone in a booth, eating a soy chicken leg, his mind drifts to the serious trouble he is in. Sexual harassment is a dangerous charge. A career threatening charge, but worrying never helps solve a problem so he tries to think about something else.

I wonder if I’ll ever taste real meat again, thinks Henry. I must have been seven or eight years old when I last ate real meat. Chicken, I believe it was. Then the ethical animal treatment people got their wildest dream fulfilled. The animal rights amendment was voted on by congress and signed into law by President Keenan Moore. Now the willful slaughter of an animal for food or sport was considered murder by the courts and punishable with a maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole. Yeah, that’s the way it is, and part of my job is to make sure people obey the laws of the United States of America under W.T.O. (World Trade Organization). It’s all for the best anyway. Animals are living creatures just like people so it’s morally wrong to kill them. We’re an advanced society that is so enlightened and kind till we even protect the rights of the noble chicken. Yea, that’s the way I have to explain it to the public, but those birds sure did taste good battered and deep-fried.

After Henry’s stomach is full, he drives toward home to his own apartment in his very own government issued, zero-emissions, electric car. He cannot help but feel better about everything. He has a relatively high paying job, at least, compared with other caucasian people. Even after federal and state taxes, social security, and reparations are taken out of his paycheck, he still has enough money left to live comfortably. Best yet, there is a cowboy show already recorded and awaiting his return home. Yes, life is good.

Life is shit and then you die, thinks Henry White as he sits in the waiting room outside his boss’s office. 8:30 AM and already he is wiping fear sweat from his forehead. If anybody should know how to avoid problems with the law, it should be Henry. That is part of his job. But there are certain unpleasant realities in life, which bring unavoidable conflict with the agencies of the government. Dating is a minefield in the best of times. Throw in a healthy dose of government intervention and mandatory ethnic diversity then you’ve got one potentially explosive situation.

“Why couldn’t I have just kept to myself?” mumbles Henry who has his face buried in his hands. “Great, now I’m talking to myself. I’m freaking out. I’m...”

“OK, Ms. Jones will see you now,” announces the secretary.

Henry slowly gets to his feet and shuffles into Ms. Laquita’s office. So this is what ‘dead man walking’ must have felt like, thinks Henry. At least in the old days, executed prisoners got a quick death. This will have repercussions that will linger for a lifetime.

“Have a seat, Henry. Would you like a cup of coffee? My secretary will be more than happy to get it for you.”

“No ma’am, Ms. Jones,” says Henry as he sits himself down in a chair in front of Ms. Laquita’s desk. The fake leather seat sinks several centimeters from his weight; creating the illusion that Ms. Laquita Jones is taller than Henry and therefore has to look down upon him. This type of psychological warfare can always be expected from Ms. Laquita. Ms. Laquita has risen to the top of her profession by being smarter, tougher, and just plain meaner than everyone else.

“Henry, we’ve got a major problem here. I’ve been reviewing your files, and it would appear that you’ve been reprimanded for sexual harassment before. Is this correct?”

“Yes ma’am, Ms. Jones,” replies Henry looking at the floor.

“Would you care to elaborate on this first incident?” asks Ms. Laquita staring over the top of her eyeglasses, which she has just put on. Oddly enough, Ms. Laquita often brags of her better than perfect eyesight to anyone who will listen.

“Yes ma’am, Ms. Jones,” answers Henry rubbing the back of his neck, which has become stiff. “Her name was Ms. Yvonne Wooten. The U.S. Agency for Dating Diversity had matched us for a possible couple. This was around seven years ago. Anyway, we made an appointment to meet at the mall. We met; she seemed to like me, or at least, I thought she did. We had lunch and went to see a matinee. She seemed to not find me particularly offensive, so I asked for another date

and she agreed. We saw each other three or four times a week for the next couple of months. I always picked up the check, opened doors for her, always trying to be a gentleman. Then one evening as we were sitting on the couch, we started to kiss and well..." Henry struggles to find the proper words.

Ms. Laquita coaxes, "Go on. We're both adults here. I'm not trying to embarrass you, but I do need to hear your side of the story to impose a proper judgment."

Henry wipes his sweaty palms on his pants and continues, "Well, we... that is to say L... went to second base."

"You groped her breasts?" asks Ms. Laquita.

"Yes ma'am."

"Did she object?"

"Wow, did she ever object," responds Henry who becomes animated for the first time during the interrogation.

"She pushed me away from her and slapped my face with all her might. She started screaming how I was a racist pig and that she wasn't my property and that I had no right to touch her person without permission. Then she stormed out the door and said I would hear from the Dating Diversity Agency about this. And she sure enough filed a complaint. My boss at the time let me off with just a warning that there would be a mark against me on my permanent record and you're only allowed two more before a mandatory enrollment in a sexual reorientation course. And that's about all I know about that unpleasant experience."

Ms. Laquita leans back in her chair, places her fingertips under her chin, and strikes a contemplative pose. After about half of a minute she says, "Do you understand why you were in the wrong in that situation?"

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones," says Henry.

"Henry White, explain to me how you committed sexual harassment in that case," orders Ms. Laquita as she levels her gaze directly on Henry.

"I assumed that she would be open to my advances after the extended period of time we spent dating. I failed to take into account that my being a caucasian would cause her mental distress. My race is guilty of enslavement, discrimination, and genocide against every people of the world. As a caucasian, I must recognize my inalienable guilt and try to atone for it in every way possible."

"Excellent, Henry, you can recite the politically correct answer verbatim and with feeling. But here's the stickler; do you really believe what you say?" asks Ms. Laquita staring Henry right in the eyes.

A puzzled Henry responds, "Believe what I say?"

"Yes, Henry. It's one thing to say what you know I want to hear. It's another to say what you really believe," lectures Ms. Laquita.

Henry leans his head backward as if he were trying to read a paper stuck to the ceiling tiles and thinks about Ms. Laquita's line of questioning. There is no immediate correct answer to this question. If he answers no, he doesn't believe the company line, then there is mandatory sensitivity training school in his future. If he answers yes, she will perceive it as insincerity on his part.

After two solid minutes of Henry's pondering the question, Ms. Laquita is becoming impatient. "Look, I didn't ask you the meaning of life. It's a straightforward question. Do you truly believe in what you've just told me?"

Henry looks Ms. Jones in the eyes and says, "I have never even considered that I could have my own personal beliefs, and that such personal beliefs could differ from governmental policy, and that when questioned about my personal thoughts, I could simply lie. Excuse me for lacking a suitable answer, but I'm blown away by your line of questioning. You've opened my eyes to a totally new way of thinking."

"Whoa! whoa, stop right there." Ms. Laquita waves her arms as if she were trying to stop traffic. "Let's pretend that I never questioned your loyalty. Of course, you believe. You're a good man, Henry White.... Now then, what do you say I go ahead and rule that you were punished sufficiently on this first little misunderstanding? After all, it happened ages ago, and you're sorry, right?"

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones," nods Henry smiling. Bullet number one dodged, he thinks.

"Alright, now let's move on to the situation at hand," says Ms. Laquita shuffling some papers on her desk. "Tell me what transpired with Ms. Sakinah Row."

Henry takes a deep breath and begins his defense, "I'm a fairly solitary person. I don't need to be surrounded by people to feel happy. To me, a sandwich in front of the TV is equal to or better than a gourmet dinner in a fancy restaurant followed by a musical. But there are those nights when minutes seem to last for hours, and the bed seems way too big for one person. When those nights come, you feel lonely, and you wonder how it would feel to sleep beside someone you care for, maybe even love. It was on one of those nights that I decided to try to find a soul mate. So I went down to the US Agency for Dating Diversity to apply for my second date in seven years. Complying with law, I provided them with a copy of the first sexual harassment complaint filed against me and waited for a response. To my surprise, I got a call the next day from the agency saying there was a young lady who would like to meet me."

"Her name was Ms. Sakinah Row. She was twenty-four years old and employed at the World Bank of the W.T.O. as an asset manager. Her mother and father were partners in a successful clothing import business. Ms. Sakinah was anxious to marry and start a family. She also had a strong belief in the United World Movement so she definitely was going to marry a person of a different race than herself. In the larger scheme of things, that was really commendable. Especially, considering she was a Queen, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, and entitled by her 'minority' status could marry a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, if she so chose. But Ms. Sakinah was determined to add to diversity and thus help to unite the world.

We dated for the last ten months. Everything seemed to be going fine. She was sweet natured, i.e. she laughed at my jokes. I'll happily admit Ms. Sakinah was far more intelligent than I was. Still, she wouldn't talk over my head and in my opinion was the sweetest girlfriend in the whole world."

Ms. Laquita interrupts him, "So if things were going so well then why did she file a complaint against you? Did you force yourself on her like you did Yvonne?"

"No! No way, no how.... no," exclaims Henry. "I didn't lay a hand on her. After what I'd been through there is no way under the sun that I'd try anything. Not that she hadn't sent me some clear signals she'd be open for some hanky-panky. But I told her, 'thanks but no thanks, not till I'm married.'"

Ms. Laquita listening intently and leaning forward, her arms folded on her desk asks, "So if you wouldn't do it, and she wanted to give it to you, then why is there a sexual harassment complaint straight from the Agency for Dating Diversity on my desk?"

"I believe," cautiously responds Henry, "that the complainant who signed that paper isn't Ms. Sakinah Row but Mr. Wrenroy Row, her father."

"Spank my ass and call me, Fanny!" laughs Ms. Laquita. "You freak! You date the daughter to pound her old daddy's wrinkled ass?"

Once Ms. Laquita stops laughing, Henry says, "No, Ms. Jones. That is not what happened. Ms. Row invited me to have supper at her parents' house, but she failed to tell them that she was dating a white guy. The second we walked through their door, her father yelled, 'What the hell is that honky doing in my house!?' Ms. Sakinah was speechless, so I said that I was her boyfriend and she invited me to supper. Then Mr. Row turned his full wrath on me. He yelled, 'Have you fucking, white piece of shit done got my daughter pregnant with a mulatto, bastard baby?' I assured him that I had no intention of having relations with his daughter until after we were married. That is when he really lost it. He screamed, 'It'll be a cold day in hell before you ever, and I mean ever, marry my daughter! I know the game you're playing, cracker. That's how Sakinah's maw got me to marry her. I'll tell you what honky motherfucker. I'll be in my cold, dead grave before you marry my baby girl. Matter of fact, you'll be in your cold, dead grave if you don't get the fuck out of my house.... Right now, honky motherfucker.' Ms. Sakinah wouldn't leave with me. She wouldn't even look at me. So, I left alone. I called her house and left message after message, but she never returned my calls. So, I called her office and asked for her on a phony pretext. I begged her to ignore her father. We could get along just fine without him or his money. She had just four words for me, 'never contact me again'. That was about two weeks ago, and I've respected her wishes and left her alone. Why Mr. Wrenroy Row filed that complaint, two weeks after the fact, I have no idea."

Now it was Ms. Laquita's turn to remain silent while she weighed her options. After a minute or two, she pronounces her judgment. "Henry, if there has ever been somebody born under an unlucky star, it's you. The two complaints, which you've accumulated within a space of seven years, don't really add up to any kind of antisocial behavior, as I would define it. For three filed complaints, the law is quite clear on mandatory enrollment in a sexual reorientation program. However, I have a fair amount of leeway on passing judgment on a second complaint. I am tempted to issue you another reprimand and let the whole matter drop. But if you were sometime in the future to have another complaint filed against you, it would make me look bad. Now I'm not saying that you'll have another complaint filed against you in the future, but with your bad luck, it's a real possibility whether you are guilty or not."

"Ms. Jones," interrupts Henry as politely as he can. "May I state for the record that I will never, ever go on another date again?"

"Yes, you may, Henry," says Ms. Laquita. "You may make up all the excuses you like, but that doesn't change the fact that you still can be the object of a complaint whether you are dating or not."

Ms. Laquita browses through Henry's file until she finds the paper that she is looking for. She reads silently to herself then confronts Henry with some facts. "It says here that you frequent prostitutes. Is this not correct?"

Henry is thrown aback. "What? That.... That is in my file!?"

"Of course, there are surveillance disks and brothels keep tax records. Surely, you were aware of this?" says Ms. Laquita looking down her nose at him.

"I guess I should have, but evidently I'm one ignorant s-o-b."

"Well," pauses Ms. Laquita reading the report, "it says here you have sex with only white hookers."

“Excuse me, but I’ve never even heard of a Queen, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, being a woman for hire,” says Henry getting frustrated. “With the government monthly stipend payment plus the one time lump sum government reparation payment of three million dollars, why would any Queen, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, want to lower herself into that sort of disreputable line of work?”

“The inherent right to reparation is not the issue here,” responds Ms. Laquita starting to get irritated. “The issue is that you seem to get along with white prostitutes well enough, but dating out of your race seems to be impossible for you. I’m not going to insinuate for the record that you have racist tendencies. Although, it would appear to me to be the case. So what I’m going to do for you is this, I am passing judgment that you see a government-approved psychologist.”

“A psychologist!” exclaims Henry.

“Yes, let me finish,” says Ms. Laquita who is back in full control of her emotions. “Perhaps, a trained, mental health professional can help you squeeze that last little bit of prejudice out of your heart. That sickness called ‘hate’ may not be big right now, but trust me, it’s there. And if you don’t stomp it out soon, it’ll begin to grow and grow. And before you know it, you’ll be damned for all eternity in the devil’s hell.” Ms. Laquita gets up, walks around her desk, and puts her hand on Henry’s shoulder. “So you see, I’m not really punishing you; I’m helping you.”

“Yes ma’am, Ms. Jones,” answers Henry looking up into the sympathetic eyes of Ms. Laquita who stands over him. “I understand.”

“Good,” says Ms. Laquita who goes back to her chair behind her desk. “Henry, I’ve just had a flash of insight. Maybe, you secretly want to enter a sexual reorientation program.”

“No, I don’t!” responds Henry shaking his head, no.

“Just hear me out,” speaks Ms. Laquita with a look of inspiration on her face. “What if it’s not prejudice that’s sabotaging your dating, but a subconscious longing to try something different?”

“I’m not following, Ms. Jones,” says a confused Henry.

“It’s clear as day. You’re an open-minded young man with raging hormones. Sexual reorientation programs are notorious for the guilt free orgy scenes. It would be abnormal for you not to want to ‘experiment’.”

“No, Ms. Jones,” pleads Henry. “I can guarantee you that I don’t want to ‘experiment’.”

“Be that as it may, I’ll bet money the psychologist will reach the same conclusion that I have reached,” says a smug Ms. Laquita. “Anyway, I think we both win. Any possible future repercussions that a third complaint will bring won’t put a blemish on my spotless record. I can always blame it on the psychologist. And you can get the psychiatric help you need for free, courtesy of the good old US of A. Everybody wins.”

“If you say so, Ms. Jones,” replies Henry rising from his seat.

Ms. Laquita reaches for her phone. “I’ll set up your first appointment with the psychologist for this afternoon. Oh, Henry?”

“Yes ma’am, Ms. Jones,” says Henry as he is almost out the door.

“Aren’t you forgetting something?” asks Ms. Laquita.

“Of course, Thank you, Ms. Jones.”

“You’re welcome, Henry. I’ll call you with the address and time as soon as I make your appointment,” says Ms. Jones as she focuses her attention on a computer screen.

“Yes ma’am, Ms. Jones,” mumbles Henry as he closes the door behind him.

Henry White has an office with four walls, a window with a view of the parking garage, and a door with his name on it, although, he cannot shut it except at the end of the day. A shut door conveys a certain amount of prestige and aloofness, and if there was one thing that Henry cannot have, it is an appearance of conceit. His position, his livelihood, and to a degree his very life depends upon an appearance of humble gratitude.

There are filing cabinets spread around the room, and loose files piled on the floor, and video disks everywhere. It isn’t an efficient system, but it works well for Henry. He is the only person who can find any particular thing at any given time. The real organizational problem is keeping the small pathways clean enough to walk through: one from the door to his desk; another from his desk to the window; one from the window to the video viewing equipment in front of his desk; and finally, one from the video stuff back to the door.

Henry has more work to do than anyone else in the building could handle, but he likes it this way. The harder you work, the less time you have to feel sorry for yourself that’s Henry’s philosophy. But right now all he can do is stare blankly at the top paper on a stack of papers on his desk. To be sentenced to therapy under a psychologist’s care isn’t

exactly the harshest of punishments, but it could definitely have lasting consequences. Henry knows of one case where a man who had been arrested for shoplifting was placed under a psychologist's supervision and ended up having a sex-change operation. It was the psychologist's professional opinion that his patient stole a lady's wristwatch not because of its value, but because he subconsciously yearned to be a woman. The police had to forcefully drag the kicking and screaming man to the hospital where he was sedated and transformed into a 'she'. Yes, a psychologist is the most dangerous type of government employee. They're too smart to do manual labor yet too stupid to become a real psychiatrist.

Henry thinks, this is going to be tricky. I have to appear remorseful but not too distraught. I have to appear masculine but not too manly. Else, he might think I'm homophobic and prescribe sexual reorientation therapy. But if I'm too sensitive, he may interpret that as femininity trapped in a male body then it's 'whack whack' just call me Henrietta. Damn, I'd rather have to walk across burning coals than play this psychological chess.

The telephone on Henry's desk rings thus bringing him out of his trance. "Hello," he says.

"Yes, Henry, I've made an appointment for you with a psychologist named Michelle Lawrence," speaks Ms. Laquita from her office phone. "It's for 1:30 PM today. She works out of the Goldberger Building just two blocks from here. Do you know where that's at?"

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones," replies Henry.

"Good, the way I figure it, you can eat lunch at twelve o'clock noon then stroll down to her office for your first session. How does that sound?" asks Ms. Laquita.

"Just fine, Ms. Jones," says Henry as he hears a click on the other end of the line.

Well, this throws a monkey wrench into the machinery, thinks Henry as he hangs up the phone. A woman psychologist... a white woman psychologist on top of that. This may be worse or better, he isn't sure yet. So, he decides to think about it until lunch.

At precisely twelve o'clock sharp, Henry holds a tray of food, which he has been served in the cafeteria line and looks for a friendly face in the midst of an ocean of tables and chairs and government employees. Finding none, he sits alone at a table in the corner of the room. He looks down at the bountiful feast of which he was about to partake: collard greens; dark-eyed peas with rice; imitation hog ears; and a slice of watermelon for dessert. Years ago, this meal would have been considered a racial stereotype, worthy of the charge of slander, but now it's just heritage. And a mighty tasty one at that, thinks Henry. The only problem he has is with the imitation hog ears; they taste exactly like the imitation chicken, or imitation roast beef, or imitation mutton, or imitation whatever.

Suddenly, Henry feels a hand upon his shoulder and looks backward to see his only real friend, Montumbo. Montumbo and he started working for the E.E.O.C. at the same time. They were in the same enforcement division and shared the same job title until recently when Montumbo was promoted to a supervisory position.

"May I sit down?" asks Montumbo.

"Of course, you can," says Henry welcoming his old friend.

"I've got something for you," sings Montumbo as he waves a small brown paper bag back and forth in front of Henry's face.

"What is it? What did you get me?" asks Henry.

"Open it up and you'll see, Henry my pal."

Henry looks inside the bag and finds two old paperback novels, both westerns. "Wow, I don't have either one of these. How did you get them?"

"I cannot take any of the credit. My wife, Zandra, found them while antiquing, and she thought of your obsession with all things cowboy and bought them for you."

"These are awesome, Montumbo. How much do I owe you?"

"Nonsense, they are a gift. You are not going to pay me anything," says Montumbo as he eats his lunch.

"Thank you. These are really great gifts. I can hardly wait to get home and read them."

"You may not enjoy those books as much as you think," speaks Montumbo. "I thumbed through them earlier, on a whim, and one is missing pages 205 through 208."

"That won't bother me any. I'll just imagine what I think happened and possibly write it down and stick it in there. I have this western book called 'Riders on Moonroad' that I didn't want to end so I started writing where it ended. That book now has five thousand four hundred and sixty-eight pages." Henry says as he spoons down some dark-eyed peas and rice.

"You know there is no market for westerns. The whole genre is dead," states Montumbo. "And speaking of dead,

I've heard a rumor that you just received strike number two. Is this true?"

Henry, who has just lost his appetite, pushes his tray away and says, "Bad news travels fast. Yes, it's true, but it's also settled. I have to see a psychologist after lunch. All things considered, I got off easy."

"Yes, you did," says Montumbo. "Laquita must like you. For a second sexual harassment complaint, I would normally sentence the offender to two weeks jail time. You should worship the ground that woman walks on."

"I do... I do." Henry says as he stares down at the tabletop.

"Third offense is mandatory enrollment in a sexual reorientation program. So she will have no choice but to pass that judgment if it occurs again. You do understand this, Henry?" asks Montumbo.

"Of course, I do," mumbles Henry.

"Hey, I'm not trying to rub it in," consoles Montumbo. "I am giving you some good advice. I do not believe that you would fair well in that particular program. Although, if that's your bag then more power to you."

"That's not my bag. And I will not have to go into that program because I will never, ever date again," says Henry looking directly at Montumbo.

"Brilliant idea, Henry," says Montumbo. "You just stick with the whores, and you will come to no harm. Trust me. Although, ... if you did want to enter the sexual reorientation program, I would not object. It is my understanding that you basically fuck and get fucked by every other man and woman in the program plus there are 'special teachers' for the really kinky stuff. I have even heard rumors of bestiality. That is what really upsets me. You can legally screw a cow, but if you eat that same cow on a hamburger bun, then it's murder. What a messed up world we live in."

"I'll second that," agrees Henry.

"On a lighter note, would you like to accompany me to a basketball game this Sunday?" asks Montumbo.

"Thanks for asking, but I'm just not into sports. Before I'd want to see sweaty men chasing each other over a ball, I'd rather watch paint dry on a wall. Now, if the cheerleaders were to play basketball and the men wore skirts and cheered, that I would watch."

"You are one sick bastard, Henry," laughs Montumbo. "You stay away from those cheerleaders before you get strike number three. OK?"

"Alright, I've got to go see my shrink now. So I guess I'll see you around."

"OK, Henry, take care of yourself," says Montumbo as Henry walks away with his bag of books in one hand and tray of half-eaten food in the other.

It is a sunny day and his appointment is only two blocks away so Henry decides to walk. The streets are nice and clean. There are no homeless people begging for a handout. Several police officers are walking their beats, but no more than usual. The abundance of cops serves a twofold purpose. One, they give people confidence that they are protected. Secondly, they remind people that there will be consequences if they cause any trouble for the system.

Between the sidewalk and buildings is a perpetual manicured lawn with trees roped off and spaced evenly apart. Every now and then a squirrel or two will scamper across the grass and run up a tree. Lucky squirrels, thinks Henry. They do what they want, whenever they want. Squirrels don't have to fit neatly into a pigeonhole where society says they have to fit. Squirrels have real freedom. Freedom that wasn't paid for with squirrel lives lost on battlefields. No, their freedom is unrestricted and unquestionable. Live or die, they rely completely on their instincts. Never has a squirrel sat and pondered about the meaning of life. They already know what life is all about: eat, sleep, play, have sex, and die. Now that is an existence to be envied. OK, maybe you get squashed flatter than a pancake by a car as you cross the street, but no life is perfect.

And the birds flying across the clear blue sky. They had the life, thinks Henry as he walks down the street toward his punishment. Birds get to fly. Fly without air traffic controllers telling them where they can fly and how high and when. Yes, the bird can look down on the world with contempt. The mighty sparrow can poop on the head of any man, no matter how important society thinks he is. Man considers himself the pinnacle of creation, but Henry knows the truth. The bird is more free than man can ever hope to be.

Henry stops on the sidewalk in front of the Goldberger Building. It is ritzy and eight stories tall. The lowest floor has a brick facade reminiscent of old New York and even has a doorman. The rent must be astronomical, thinks Henry. Well, at least I'm bringing in some business for them. I bet that psychologist charges the government two hundred dollars an hour for her services. If they were really smart, they would take that money and pay some hooker to give me stress release therapy. But I guess psychologists are prostitutes in a way, only they get paid to screw with people's minds.

The doorman gives Henry directions to Michelle Lawrence's office and after a ride on the elevator and a turn down the left hallway, he is there. Her receptionist informs Henry that Michelle is taking a longer than usual lunch break and

that he should go ahead into her inner office and relax until she arrived.

The first thing that Henry notices is the absence of a couch, he will have to sit across the desk from her. Her desk chair is an imitation leather chair just like every other executive's chair in the country. His visitor's chair is evidently going to be a cloth recliner such as one finds in a living room in front of a television. Let the mind games begin, thinks Henry.

One side of her office walls are covered with the mandatory leather bound books neatly in their place on their shelves. The wall on the opposite side of the room contains rows and rows of wine bottles. Some are unopened; others are corked half-empty. On a small coffee table next to the wine racks sits an old-fashioned cigar box. This is definitely out of place since the tobacco companies went bankrupt years ago. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but Henry cannot resist checking the box for illegal tobacco products. As he cautiously lifts its lid, he finds neither tobacco cigarettes nor cigars only white powdered opium.

Opium is the drug of choice for the wealthy. When mingled with wine, it has a calming, slightly hallucinogenic effect. Opium as well as wine are both legal drugs as long as a tax is paid upon their purchase. Marijuana, heroin, cocaine, speed, crack, and almost every drug imaginable are one hundred percent legal as long as taxes are paid to the government. But tobacco is a different story. Tobacco had deliberately been marketed to Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, and other now protected 'minorities'. The white executives of the tobacco industry tried to commit a form of genocide against 'minorities', but the people had their revenge. Every single member of management in the ranks of big tobacco and certain large stockholders were arrested for crimes against the human race and convicted of genocide. They were the last people to be openly executed by the government.

The same argument for the destructive nature of all drugs could have been made for each and every type of narcotic. But, against all odds, some bureaucrat had an original idea. If drugs were legalized, the government could tax them or even better, the government could grow and manufacture brain-altering drugs. There would be a huge surge in revenues, and a decrease in expenses associated with fighting a drug war that only hurt the poor, addicted 'minorities'. The government's level of control over the general public would increase, and the secret white brotherhood of crooked police and bought judges and white drug lords would have the carpet yanked from underneath them. It worked.

Psychologist Michelle Lawrence enters her office abruptly and finds Henry White in the cloth recliner all reclined, relaxed, and almost asleep. Henry gets to his feet only to be told to sit back down and relax. Michelle takes her chair and begins the session.

Michelle: How are you doing, today, Mr. White? Henry: Just fine, and you can call me Henry. Michelle: OK, Henry, and you may call me, Michelle. I have looked over your case file, and it says that you just received your second sexual harassment complaint. Is this correct? Henry: Yes, would you like to have a drink before you get too deep in your psychoanalyzing me? Michelle: I'm sorry. How rude of me, would you care for some wine or wine and opium? Henry: No thanks, I don't drink or do any drugs. I thought you might like to have a drink since there is so much here. Michelle: No, I had a glass of wine with my pasta salad for lunch. I wouldn't want to get tipsy on the job. Henry: Of course. Michelle: I'm not a drunk or an addict, either. My fiance and I travel the world, and we collect exotic wines from our journeys. Henry: Who is your fiancée? Michelle: Moses Goldberger. Henry: As in this building, Goldberger? Michelle: Yes, his family is big in real estate, and they do happen to own this building. Henry: Wow, his family doesn't object to him marrying a heathen, or did you convert to Judaism? Michelle: Yes, I converted to the Jewish faith. Do you have a problem with that? Henry: No, not at all, I protect the rights of the Jewish 'minority'. That's part of my job. As one of the last legal religions, I believe that the Jewish faith has grown by leaps in the last few decades. Still, it's my understanding that full-blooded Jewish people don't really like their children to marry outsiders. Michelle: I love Moses' family, and they love me, too. Henry: Well, good for you. Michelle: We are not here to discuss me, anyhow. You are the patient. I'm the psychologist. Henry: I apologize. I just wanted to know about the lucky man who's going to make you his bride. Michelle: That's sweet. Now, let's get down to business. Your file says that you are an orphan, correct? Henry: Yes Michelle: Have you ever tried to find out who your birth parents are? Henry: No Michelle: Why not? Henry: The way I see it is they didn't want me for whatever reasons so why should I care about them? Michelle: That's a cold-blooded way of looking at the situation, isn't it? Henry: I only see it as practical. Michelle: There may have been a legitimate reason, you were put up for adoption. They could have been killed in an accident. How would that make you feel? Henry: If my parents are dead, kidnapped by aliens in a flying saucer, or just didn't want to raise another kid in their dilapidated, white-trash trailer, it doesn't change the fact that I spent my entire childhood in various orphanages and state run institutions. Michelle: So you hate your parents? Henry: No, I don't hate anybody or anything. That's one of the basic pillars, which supports this fine society that we live in. Don't hate; it's bad, that's rule number one. Michelle: OK, maybe hate is too strong a term. Let's just say you have feelings of hurt associated with your parents. Henry: You can call it whatever you want, but I have no feelings whatsoever for my birth mother and father. Michelle: Fascinating, do you mind if I record this conversation with my

audio recorder? Henry: Sure, do what you want, but I could get you audio and video from the E.E.O.C.'s security surveillance. That is, if you want it. Michelle: You mean they have cameras in this very room? Henry: Of course, you didn't know? Michelle: No, I didn't know! Where are they? Henry: Hang on a second.

(Henry stands up, reaches inside his pants' pocket, and pulls out a device roughly the size of a beeper. It performs the chores of a beeper and does other tasks as well. Henry pushes a couple of numbers on the tiny screen, and the screen changes to show the location of the surveillance devices in the room. He walks around the room and points out their locations to Michelle.)

"There are four devices located in this room," says Henry. "Basically, one surveillance device in each corner of the room's ceiling. Each one has audio and video capability. They permit a panoramic view of the entire room. Each one sends a signal through the buildings communication wiring to one of our offices where it gets stored for a period of time then it's either erased or kept for further review."

"How is this even possible? I don't see any cameras," exclaims Michelle who is standing upon her chair and staring at the ceiling.

"In one word, microfiberoptics," says Henry as he sits back down in the recliner and puts his feet up. "We could put a camera on the tip of a needle if we needed to. You'll never be able to see them so you might as well not even bother looking. And on the remote chance that you do find one, it's a twenty-year maximum prison term for removing or destroying one or purposely obstructing its view or listening capacities. That's per device, mind you, so if you were to take all four of them down, that would add up to a maximum eighty-year prison term."

Stunned, Michelle gets off her chair and walks over to her wine rack. "I thought surveillance devices were only to be used in racists and criminals' houses."

"No, the E.E.O.C. can put surveillance equipment anywhere there exists a chance of a criminal act taking place," informs Henry. "If you think about it, is there any place a crime could not take place?"

"Oh my, So there could be somebody looking into my bedroom? Oh no, ...What about the bathroom; the gynecologist's office?" asks the scared, shaky psychologist.

"Yes, yes, and yes," calmly replies Henry. "Now don't let it get you down. I know some of the employees in the surveillance department, and for the most part, they're pretty ethical fellows." Henry waves at the hidden camera in one of the corners and loudly says, "Yo, guys what's up? I think I'm gonna take the rest of the day off after this session, so if you'd tell Ms. Jones' secretary, I'd really appreciate it."

"If it's still OK with you, I think I'll have that drink now." Michelle says as she pours herself a tall glass of wine and spoons in two small scoops of opium for good measure.

"You're taking this way too hard," smiles Henry. "You're not going to be starring in any porno videos. At least, not while you're alive. And once you die, the government has the right to release any of the surveillance of you that it sees fit to raise money, which will help keep taxes under control. But just between you and me, unless you're super kinky and I mean chain sawing a beehive wearing a honey bikini kinky, you have nothing to worry about. You are certainly beautiful, but the competition is super models and movie stars. So, the odds of you starring posthumously in a government porn video are very slim, indeed. Plus, if you're dead, you'll never know about it. Am I right, or am I right? Hey, after a while, you'll forget they're even there. I work every day with surveillance and sometimes I even forget I'm constantly being filmed."

"I guess so. Now let's Let's get back to your therapy, shall we? What....What was the last thing we discussed?" asks Michelle as she sits in her chair, grasping her wineglass with both hands, and takes a long deep sip.

Henry: I believe you were surprised to discover that I had no feelings for my birth parents, and then you wanted to record our session with your audio recorder. If you still want to use it, that'll be fine with me. Michelle: No, I'm certain that I'll remember today for a long, long time. So,.... I take it that you were never in a long-term family environment?

Henry: That's correct. Michelle: What about foster homes? You had to have been placed in foster homes.

Henry: Yes, twice, I really didn't care to be taken out of my settings at the orphanage to be thrust into a make believe family. I would completely shut down my emotions and become a zombie. This was enough to dissuade the foster parents as well as get the caretakers at the orphanages to leave me alone. Michelle: How sad, and you said that you were never adopted, either?

Henry: No, the monthly check given to the guardians of an adopted caucasian child is approximately one tenth of that given for a 'minority' child. It just doesn't make financial sense to adopt a white kid.

Michelle: Perhaps, you developed a subconscious jealousy of the 'minority' children who were adopted so readily. It would explain why you have such a hard time nurturing relationships with women outside your race. Henry: Well, that sounds logical, but the truth is I don't envy anyone. I was glad to see the other kids get adopted. So I pay the price for what my ancestors did to the other peoples of the world, big deal. I don't care. Life happens, big whoop. Michelle: But you must admit your life would have been easier if you had parents.

Henry: Not necessarily, my real parents might have been abusive. Things could always be worse. Why look at the way things might have been? Life gives you whatever circumstances it decides whether good or bad, and you just have to live with them. Michelle: Would you say that you

are basically a fatalist? Henry: Yes, absolutely. Michelle: OK that's good. We are making some progress. Now, let's delve a little deeper into your past relationships. Did you have many friends growing up? Henry: Not really, I got along with most of the other children, and I certainly had friendly acquaintances with some. But I can't honestly say I had real, meaningful, lasting friendships, no. At least, not like the ones you see on TV. Michelle: Would you classify yourself as a loner? Henry: Yes, I suppose so, yes. Michelle: That has to be a lonely, sad existence. Henry: No, not really, I have always loved the old cowboy movies that would come on TV. I would play cowboys and Native Americans for hours and hours. The other children would tire of this make believe game and quit, but not me. I could play with my imaginary friends just as easily as real ones. Imaginary friends cooperated better, and they played as long as I wanted to play. Most children grow out of silly cowboy dreams, but I didn't. As I got older, old western novels replaced playtime. An adventurous imagination can supplement a boring reality. Michelle: All right then, I think we've established your tendencies for escapism to avoid the real world. But surely, you must have had a girlfriend in high school or college? Henry: Unless that wine has the kick of a mule, you can see that I'm not exactly Casanova. If you were to assemble a hundred people at random on the street and line them up in order of most handsome to ugliest, I may not be dead last, but I'd definitely be closer to the end of the line than at the beginning. Michelle: You have a low self-esteem regarding your appearance. Henry: No, I have it on good authority that I'm ugly, but I accept it. Hey, at least kids don't flee in terror at the sight of me and that's something, right? Michelle: I wish you had sought psychological counseling twenty years ago. You might have been spared a lot of mental anguish, but you're here right now and it's a start. So, I take it that you're still a virgin? Henry: No way, the day I turned eighteen, I went to a legal cathouse. And I'd like to add that I thoroughly enjoy female companionship. There should be a paper in my file documenting my frequenting houses of ill repute. I believe that file knows more about me than I do. Michelle: Yes, here it is. I just got caught up in your story. But there seems to be a contradiction between what you say and how you live. Henry: How's that? Michelle: If you are so pleased with your solitary lifestyle then why would you enroll at the US Agency for Dating Diversity? Henry: Good question, professionally speaking, I am fairly high in the power structure at the E.E.O.C., however, to advance any higher in the organization I need to be married with children. It's not a written rule or premise for advancement, but then again a lot of things in this world are known but not openly spoken of. My first attempt at dating, roughly seven years ago, was entirely motivated by career advancement. My horrific sexual harassment was due primarily to a lack of social skills. I just assumed after so many dates that she would be open to shifting our relationship to a more physical level. I was wrong. My latest attempt at dating was a combination of lust for career advancement and an aching for long-term companionship. However, I failed to take into account the feelings of her father. That was another mistake. So now, I zealously proclaim myself a life long hermit. Never, ever will I date again, so I promise. Michelle: May, I make a suggestion? Henry: Sure, that's your job. Michelle: What would you say to dating a woman of your own race? Henry: What would be the point of that? Michelle: A cure for loneliness, Henry. You may find the barriers to love not quite so high with a caucasian woman. You would have to get a vasectomy, but that's a small price to pay for happiness. Henry: You're not hearing what I'm saying. The purpose of getting married would be to advance my position at the E.E.O.C. If anything, a marriage to a white woman would sink my career. We fight racism at the E.E.O.C., not promote it. Part of my job is to promote a United World. How can I possibly convince a white couple that they need to separate and date exclusively out of their race when I, a white man, am married to a white woman? It's impossible! Michelle: I would rather have love than money. Henry: Spoken like a person who has never been poor. I'm not wishing anything bad to befall you, but if by some catastrophe, Mr. Goldberger were to lose all his money and his protected 'minority' status, you'd dump him like a three week old, rotten fish. Michelle: I feel so sorry for you. You are beyond jaded. You'll never know love. Henry: I've seen love, and it doesn't impress me. I've been present when the police had to drag a pregnant white woman out of her house and take her to an abortion clinic. In her prejudiced love for her aryan man, she intended on birthing a pure, white devil child. I've seen a man douse himself with gasoline and light himself on fire in front of the courthouse because his beloved daughter was sentenced to a sexual reorientation program. Love is something I don't care to personally experience. Michelle: Henry, I have studied serial murderers that were less psychotic than you. Now what I propose is that I consult with my colleagues about your case, and at our next session I will prescribe you some antidepressants or whatever you need. That is unless you plan on ending your life before then? Henry: No, I don't believe in suicide. You only get one chance at life so why not see it through to its logical conclusion? Besides with my luck, I'd probably win the lottery the day after I died. Michelle: I only suggest it because it might be the best way out of your miserable existence. You can walk into any pharmacy and get a lethal dose of cyanide. Just swallow one pill, and it's all over. No more pain and suffering, it would be easy and it's legal. Or they will sell you some strong sleeping pills if you had rather go to sleep and never wake up. Or how about entering a government sponsored drug den? Ride the slow horse to oblivion. The government will even pick up the tab, so how about it? Henry: Thanks, but if it's all the same to you, I'll just keep on living until I die. Michelle: OK, then I'll do some consultation and set up another appointment with you through Ms. Jones. See you next time, Henry.

Henry gets out of the recliner and leaves without saying another word or looking behind him. He flags down a taxi and heads for the not so clean side of town. The part of town with tacky neon signs that advertise booze and boobs. There is a particular sleazy joint called simply 'the brothel' that is his destination. A certain lady of the evening works there that resembles Ms. Michelle Lawrence. She has the same short brown hair and chunky build of his new favorite psychologist, except she is slightly taller and has blue eyes instead of green. She calls herself, Trixie, but this evening she will call herself, Michelle, and she will call Henry, crazyboy.

Henry sits back and wonders what Michelle would think about this rendezvous. Would she think of this as some form of flattery? Would she think of this as acting out primitive aggression the only way he knows how? Will he tell her about this excursion at the next session? Definitely not, at least if she decides to screw him over, he can always say he screwed her too, if only by proxy.

The next day at work in his office, Henry is reviewing a charge of prejudice against one, Mary Maddox, a sixteen-year-old caucasian girl in the tenth grade of high school. She has been accused of acting prejudiced against one, Mr. Grandmaster Piercey, a fifteen year old, King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, young man in the ninth grade of high school. He has filed a complaint with the school's equality counselor which claims Mary would not date him because he is a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. He has included an audio recording of their conversation in which she declines his invitation. Henry puts the disk in a player and listens.

Mr. Piercey: Hello, is this Mary? Mary: Yes, who's this? Mr. Piercey: This is Grandmaster Piercey. We have the same drivers' education class. Mary: Oh yea, hey, how are you doing, Mr. Piercey? Mr. Piercey: I'm fine. You know it ain't nothin but a G thang. I was just thinking that you and I should go together to that silly moonlight dance at the high school this weekend. So what time do you want me to pick you up at? Mary: I wasn't planning on going to the dance. I have a hard algebra test on Monday that I really need to study for. I don't think that I can go with you, Mr. Piercey. Mr. Piercey: What you're trying to say is that you don't want to go with a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, isn't that right? Mary: No! I Mr. Piercey: If I was a white guy, I bet you would go. You prejudiced honky cunt! Mary: Wait, wait I'll go with you. Mr. Piercey: No, it's too late. You had your chance. Now, you've shown your true feelings. You are a racist whore, and I hope you squeal like a stuck hog when you get banged in a sexual reorientation program! Mary: (crying) No, no, let me go with you, Mr. Piercey. Mr. Piercey: Go fuck yourself, bitch. (phone sounds 'click')

Henry blankly stares at the wall in front of him. This is his least favorite part of his job. At times like this, the ditch digger and the septic tank cleaner have the enviable, fun work. He thinks that a cowboy with a white hat would ride to the rescue of this damsel in distress not sentence her to punishment. But this is America, damn it, where racism is a worse crime than killing newborn babies with a hammer. It is clear that Mr. Piercey will not let this drop with just a warning to the girl. No, he took the time, effort, and energy to record his solicitation so there would be dire repercussions for the girl if she declined his invitation. The real injustice of this, thinks Henry, is this girl doesn't sound like a racist. She probably makes it a point to date exclusively outside of her race. She is just naive as to how the world really works. If left alone, she would eventually marry a 'minority' man and bear him children that would help bring the world together as one people, of one color, of one religion, of one nation, of one world.

Henry knows that his options are limited in the judgment, which he must make against Mary. She is guilty. Mr. Piercey has undeniable proof of Mary turning down his advances. Henry has to side with Mr. Piercey, if not, then he would find himself faced with a charge of racism. But even if Mr. Piercey didn't have any physical evidence, his word would probably be enough to force a harsh judgment against Mary. Henry has to find a punishment terrible enough to please Mr. Grandmaster Piercey, yet lenient enough as to allow Henry's conscious to let him sleep at night. There is no way he is going to enroll Mary in a sexual reorientation program for her first documented offense. Finally, Henry decides the answer to his dilemma is a professionally supervised intimate encounter. Mary will have to report to the local Department of Interracial Relations at a specified time. She will be given a Valium, told to undress, lie spread-eagle on a bed, and await a 'minority' stud to ravage her. If she fully cooperates then it proves she is not prejudiced, at least until another complaint arises against her.

Ms. Laquita bursts through Henry's doorway and catches him off guard. "What the hell is this crap that you just sent to my office?"

"What exactly are you referring to Ms. Jones?" asks a perplexed Henry.

"Hold that thought, Henry," says Ms. Laquita as she turns and looks up toward the ceiling. "Mohammed, you cut off all surveillance in this office for the next thirty minutes. I don't think it will take that long but better safe than sorry.

.... If you're still watching or listening, your ass is grass." She turns her attention back to Henry and says, "What were we talking about?"

"You were upset about some judgment that I sent to you for final authorization. I think."

"Yes, now I remember," says Ms. Laquita as she makes her way over to Henry's video equipment and puts in a disk. "I want you to explain what's wrong here."

The video screen shows a scene from a surveillance camera in a fast food restaurant. Two white males approach the cashier from opposite sides of the room and arrive in front of the register at exactly the same time. The cashier looks at both of them and proceeds to wait on the man to her left first.

After watching the incident again, Henry says, "It appears that the fast food worker, a white female, has taken it upon herself to take the order of a white man in front of the Jewish man. The man on her right and to our left has on a kippah and a Star of David symbol hanging from his neck. A Dr. Saul Glass filed a complaint, so the surveillance records were pulled. It appeared to be an open and shut case to me, so I prepared the standard punishment of mandatory sensitivity classes for the cashier, Judy Walker. Now, I know that there has to be an error in my judgment or else you wouldn't be here."

Ms. Laquita pulls the disk from the machine and hands it to Henry. "I cannot say that you had a lapse in judgment based on our old standards of 'minority' protection from persecution which includes Jewish people. But there is soon to be a change in policy about the Jewish right to 'minority' status. This information is to be held in strict confidence. I wouldn't even mention it to you, were it not for this judgment that you sent me to sign. It would be a waste of time for the E.E.O.C. to punish this girl when shortly there will be no law against this crime. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"I believe so, Ms. Jones," answers Henry. "So, I should just erase this disk and bury the case, right?"

"Yes, that would be prudent at this juncture. Just stall this Saul fellow for awhile. I have it on good authority that the official end to the Jewish 'minority' status will occur within a month or two. You are the only person in this precinct besides Montumbo and myself who knows this. So if it leaks to the public, there will be hell to pay. Got it?"

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones," replies Henry. "But there is something you should know. In my mental health session with the psychologist, I kidded Ms. Lawrence about her fiancée Mr. Goldberger losing his money and 'minority' status. I had no idea that it would really happen."

Ms. Laquita rubs her chin as she thinks about this situation. "I do not see a problem, Henry. She will not put two and two together before it actually becomes official and then it will be too late. No harm done."

"Ms. Jones," asks Henry. "May I ask you a question?"

"You just did, but feel free to ask another."

"Well, I don't understand why the Jewish people are losing their 'minority' status. Did something happen that I don't know about?"

Ms. Laquita checks her watch to make sure the surveillance is still off. "Yes, I guess I have time to explain it to you. What harm could it do? Even if you wanted to cause trouble, the only people you know are hookers and degenerates. In the beginning of the Great Movement for Justice and Equality, we had to compromise with certain 'extreme' groups to move this titanic barge of a democracy onto the correct course. Hence, the animal rights nuts would vote with our 'dark caucus' on issues important to us as long as we voted to protect their silly, little puppy dogs and kitties. The abortion rights people had to vote in line with our policies for us to back them on certain bills before congress. Each and every special interest group was more than happy to trade its very soul to get what it wanted most. And of all the groups, the Jewish constituency was the greatest catalyst of change. They flooded the airwaves with our propaganda. Although propaganda is probably not the right word to use to describe our efforts. Propaganda has the ring of lies and deceit to it, and we only broadcast 'the truth'. Anyway, they were brilliant allies, masters of the subliminal. We pushed our views on the general public, and they gobbled up like starving beasts. When people agreed with what we taught as correct thinking, they were rewarded with media praise as being 'open-minded' and 'enlightened'. When evil people would question our society's new moral standards, they were branded by the media as 'racist' and 'prejudiced', and shown to be the cold hearted, baby killing Hitlers that they were. If the racist scum would cite the fact that Jews controlled the media, well that was anti-Semitic. Didn't they remember 'the holocaust'? Nazi bastards."

Henry raises his hand, as if in school, to get Ms. Laquita's attention.

"What is it, Henry?" asks Ms. Laquita who is obviously disturbed at this rude interruption of her dissertation.

"I don't understand. It seems like the Jewish people have helped reform the old, unfair democracy into the new, fair, liberal democratic government that exists today. So why would the government strip the patriotic Jewish citizens of their 'minority' status?"

"I was getting to that, Henry. You need to be quiet and listen, so you can learn. As many atrocities that you white devils committed, they pale in comparison to those committed by the Jews. The Jews cried foul because they were forced to wear armbands with a yellow star on them in Nazi Germany, yet Israel won't allow Palestinians to walk in certain parts of

Israel. The Israeli cry 'holocaust', yet they use tanks and machineguns to slaughter Palestinian children for throwing rocks. I mean you white devils owned slaves, but who did you buy those Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, from in the first place? Jews. And who controlled the world's monetary supply and smothered the African Motherland with debt and poverty? Jews. The Jews may have lost six million people in their much-publicized holocaust, but we've lost billions of human lives in the African Motherland. And did any of those media baron jews put that in one of their damn movies? Hell no! Four thousand movies about the jewish holocaust, but not one about the holocaust of Kings and Queens, taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, who died because of the jews. The jews think that they can use my people to advance their own political power and fatten their pocketbooks, but they are dead wrong. Thanks to the Affirmative Action Programs, we are now in control. We run the banks, not them. We control big business, not them. We dominate this government, not them. And we now control the media, not them. It's like the old saying goes, 'payback is a bitch'. Your people can testify to that, Henry. But you can take comfort to know that the white devils' payback was nothing compared to what lays in store for the jews. After we're finished with them, Auschwitz will compare like a spring time tea party.... That should bring you up to speed. Do you have any more questions, Henry?" asks Ms. Laquita as she checks her watch again.

"No ma'am, Ms. Jones," answers Henry. "I believe you clarified the situation for me."

"Oh, I have some good news for you. Remember you took the afternoon off from work after you psychologist appointment yesterday? Well, I am not going to dock your pay for the lost work hours," says Ms. Laquita.

"Thank you, Ms. Jones," replies Henry.

"You are welcome. I'll just take those two and a half hours off your timesheet next week because you're going on a field assignment."

"I am?"

"Yes, you are. There is this group of separatist nut jobs hole up in a camp in the mountains out west. You know the drill. Get as many to come back to civilization with you as possible. A Special Forces unit of the army will be standing by to exterminate the ones who will not listen to reason. We're really counting on you to get us some good p. r. on this field trip. Lots of tearful, I have sinned types. And there is also something special that I want you to do for us. A traitorous man with his wife are amongst the rabble. His name is Trellis Jackson. He has taken it upon himself to betray his people and his heritage. For that, his life is forfeit. What you need to do is get this Benedict Arnold to run away from the camp. I am giving you full authorization to do and say anything it takes to get him to run. When he separates from the herd, the army guys will capture him alive, and that's all you need to know. Got it?"

"Yes ma'am, Ms. Jones."

"We are all counting on you. You are the only one in the E.E.O.C. who can accomplish this mission.... Why am I getting a weird vibe from you? Is something wrong? Are you not feeling well?" asks Ms. Laquita with a genuine look of concern on her face.

Henry looks down at the papers scattered on his desk and says, "I don't know. It just seems like the whole world is sitting on my narrow shoulders. I don't know. I'm just tired, I guess. I'll be ready for the trip. I won't let you down."

"That's the Henry, I know," consoles Ms. Laquita. "I'll tell you what. What if I go ahead and OK whatever you're working on and you take the rest of the day off? I'll just take the hours off next week's time sheet. It doesn't look good for you to get so much overtime, anyway. What do you say?"

"Thank you, Ms. Jones, that would be nice," says Henry as he hands a file to Ms. Laquita for her signature. "I recommend a one time, interracial conjugal visit for Mary Maddox at the Department of Interracial Relations. She offended a Mr. Grandmaster Piercey by declining his invitation to a school dance. He seems determined to see her in a sexual reorientation program, but I think that's a little extreme for a first offense."

"You and your tender feelings," says Ms. Laquita as she shakes her head and signs the paperwork. "I would have sent her honky bitch ass to the program so fast that her head would spin. Your decision may stand, but only because I don't want to make you fill out more forms on your day off."

"Thank you, Ms. Jones."

A helicopter is flying low over the treetops. Henry looks out his window in wonder of it all. There are snow peaked mountains in the distance. Spring weather at the bottom and winter at the top thanks to the altitude. The seemingly endless forest breaks up every now and then to reveal pastures blooming with golden flowers, and the clear blue sky perfectly matches the color of the sparkling, clean rivers and streams. If it were any more beautiful, the sight of it would blind the beholder, thinks Henry.

A little over one third of America is owned by the federal government. It is left to grow wild for the spotted owls,

darting minnows, and dark bears. Normally, the only time an ordinary American sees any of this splendor is on the television. Roads are banned on public lands to ensure the conservation of the wilderness for future generations to enjoy. Ironically, with all roads being banned, future generations will have no more access than the current generation has to the woodlands.

The helicopter lands on a sandbar next to a river at the predetermined coordinates. The pilot helps Henry unload his gear from the chopper. "Are you sure you'll be alright out here by yourself?" asks the pilot.

"Yes, this is great," replies Henry. "I'm gonna set the tent up by the water and then have an old fashioned picnic. With any luck, I'll have a day or two of camping outdoors before those lunatics take me to their camp."

No sooner than the helicopter is up in the sky and out over the distant mountains that the bushes come to life and out pops two camouflaged men holding rifles. "Are you from the government?" asks the taller, thinner man.

"Hell's bells! What are you doing here so early? You're not supposed to be here until tomorrow." exclaims Henry.

"Gaining the element of surprise, just like you. I'm Charlie and he's Jake," says the shorter, heavysset man.

"I wasn't trying to do anything except have a nice day of camping and watching the fish swim in the river," says an aggravated Henry.

"So you're not with the government?" asks Jake lowering his rifle.

"Of course, I'm with the government, the E.E.O.C. to be precise. I'm Henry White, and I thought I'd get here early and enjoy the scenery. Hey, I've got an idea. What do you say the three of us camp out here tonight? I have more than enough food for all of us, and the tent is real big, too."

"No," says Charlie. "Jake, put the blindfold on him. I'll go crank up the four wheeler and drive it down here."

"I just want to say one thing," says Henry as a dark cloth is placed over his eyes and tied behind his head. "This is bullshit! There I said it, absolute, grade A, pure bullshit."

After an hour of riding in the wagon being yanked along by the four wheeler, Henry has his fill. "Hey, you guys haven't I had on this blindfold on long enough? There's no way in hell I'll ever be able to find your camp again. I'm not a woodsman. I'm a low-level bureaucrat, and I'm fixing to vomit all over the both of you if you don't take this blindfold off."

Charlie, who is driving, turns and loudly tells Jake, "Take off his blindfold, Jake. I'm tired of hearing him whine."

Jake removes Henry's blindfold. Henry says, "Well, it's about time. I was treated better by the O'Brians than you barbarians."

"You knew the O'Brians?" asks Jake.

"Yes, I knew the O'Brians. Who do you think went up in those Appalachian Mountains to negotiate with them?" responds Henry looking around, trying to absorb as much of the scenery as possible.

Charlie who is trying to listen to their conversation over the noisy engine says, "Is it true what they say about them? They were barefooted, illiterate, inbred, masochistic savages?"

"That's an awful thing to say about people, you never met," shouts Henry. "The press release on your merry little band of survivalists won't read any better. The O'Brians were good people, salt of the earth, even. They wore shoes and not store bought city shoes but hand crafted boots. Better shoes than any of us are wearing. I can't say they could all read, but the old Grandfather, patriarch of the family, could quote the Bible cover to cover. As far as being inbred that family had been in those inaccessible backwoods for so long that the gene pool couldn't have been too deep. Still, brothers didn't marry sisters so they didn't have three eyes or anything. The whole family worked hard from sun up to sunset. They were tough by necessity, and they weren't masochistic either. Nobody in his or her right mind enjoys pain. I couldn't convince any of them to come down from those mountains with me. When I came down, the Marines went up. Those O'Brians sure put up one hell of a fight though. Typical thinking was that the world's greatest killing machines would wipe out the O'Brians with few if any casualties. Wrong, the O'Brians gave as good as they got. An eye for an eye, a death for a death, right up to the very end. The last to fall was the Grandfather and one of his granddaughters. They shot each other dead at the count of three.... They all died rather than surrender. It doesn't look good on the TV when groups won't assimilate, so the legend of the masochistic O'Brians was born. Psychotic, inbred freaks who waged war on the good citizens of America. They drank human blood and worshipped Satan. But the truth is they were good people who treated me with kindness and respect. Way better than you assholes. They were people who deserve to be remembered like they really were, and that's more than I can say about either of you. So when you mention the name O'Brian, you show some respect, you bastard!"

The remainder of the ride to camp is quiet. Nobody says anything else. The only sounds are the engine and the tires smashing sticks and dry leaves on the forest floor.

The separatists' camp consists of a long log cabin and tents scattered nearby in a small clearing surrounded by dense forest. One lone man is standing in front of the cabin to greet Henry, Charlie, and Jake. The man is of average height, average build, totally unremarkable except for the six shooter in a holster beneath a gun-belt lined with bullets. The instant Henry sees it, he knows that he will possess it, one way or another. Fate has brought him to these people just so he can get an actual, working cowboy pistol.

Charlie and Jake walk with Henry toward the stranger. Jake introduces them, "This is Henry White the negotiator from the government. Henry, this is Bob Peters our unofficial leader."

Henry takes Bob's outstretched hand and shakes it. "Nice to meet you Mr. Peters."

"Same here, Mr. White, and you can call me Bob."

"I will if you'll do the same and call me Henry."

"OK, Henry, I trust your journey was pleasant?" asks Bob.

"It was OK, but it would have been better if your two henchmen would have let me camp out by the river. What would have one night mattered?"

"Bob, this guy's crazy," says Charlie. "He was going to camp overnight by a river teeming with fish, without a gun or any kind of weapon."

"Henry," exclaims Bob. "There are grizzly bears all in these woods. A bear could have torn you into a million little pieces out there. Jake and Charlie probably saved your life."

"Forgive me for not thanking you guys, but I would have just assumed to take the risk. That seems like the ultimate manly way to die, anyway. Face to face with an eight foot, thousand pound monster with claws and teeth. Anyhow, it's a lost cause now. Oh, speaking of lost causes, when do I get to see the rest of your tribe?"

Bob answers, "How about right now? Everyone is waiting to eat supper, except Buford. He's out standing watch. Would you like to eat with us, Henry?"

"Thank you, I'd like that very much," says Henry.

They walk inside the log cabin where approximately twenty people are sitting at a humongous table. It is cut lengthwise from the trunk of a tree and propped up on poles that serve as legs. The benches are similarly fashioned. A bountiful feast is set upon it, and Henry's mouth starts watering. Fried fish, grilled venison, black berry pie, corn on the cob, fresh peas, and hot biscuits adorn the tabletop. Henry gorges himself. He eats and eats. Long after everybody has finished their supper, Henry keeps on eating. As his stomach begins to ache and the urge to vomit hits him, he wills himself to feel better and eats a little more. I may never get another chance to eat like this with real meat and fresh vegetables, thinks Henry. Breaking his trance on the cornucopia in front of him, Henry finally finishes eating, and he is surprised to find everyone in the room staring at him with a mixture of awe and disgust. "I'm gonna need about an hour before we start the talks. You know.... to allow this glorious feast to digest."

An hour later the table is clear and the clan is sitting, looking at the head of the table where Henry stands to speak. "First thing I want to say is a hearty 'thank you' to everyone for the supper. I'm sure you could tell how much I liked it by the quantity of food, which I devoured."

Light laughter arises from the people and Charlie yells, "I seen Sunday preachers who eat less than you." More laughter from everyone including Henry.

"That's probably true. We eat well in our society but not these particular types of food," responds Henry who decides not to mention the illegal nature of real meat. Best not to hit them with that piece of info so early in the process. "Now, I want to get to the reason why I'm here. I don't consider you as authentic racists. The mere presence of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson in your number would seem to indicate a certain amount of liberalism and tolerance. On behalf of the United States of America under W.T.O., I applaud you. But I also need you to swear that no harm will come to the Jacksons, no matter what you may hear about them in the next few minutes. Do I have your word?"

All eyes turn to Mr. Trellis Jackson and his wife. Bob speaks up for his followers saying, "I swear on the precious life of my daughter, Shannon, that no harm will come to them by our hands." Bob puts his arm around his daughter who sits between he and his wife. They hug. Bob and his family sit on the right side of the table near where Henry stands.

"Fine," says Henry. "I'm going to hold you and everybody here to that promise. Mr. Jackson, why don't you take this opportunity to collect all of your possessions and run away? Head north and don't stop for anyone or anything."

"Why should I leave? We haven't done anything wrong," states Mr. Trellis.

"Oh, really?" asks Henry. "Do your friends here know that you and your wife, Delecia, both accepted lump-sum reparation payments from the government?"

"It's none of their business if we did, and I'm not saying that we did," angrily says Mr. Trellis.

"It may be none of their business, Mr. Jackson, but it's certainly my business. I'm officially with the E.E.O.C.. I'm only on loan to the Cultural Relations Council to negotiate a bloodless reintegration into society of these good people.... That does not include you and Mrs. Jackson. See, when you took that reparation payment, you agreed to abide by the laws of this great country. You agreed not to betray your people."

"We didn't betray, anyone!" shouts Delecia.

"Yes you did, Mrs. Jackson." lectures Henry. "Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, have finally reached the heights, which they so rightly deserve after millennia of persecution, discrimination, and segregation. And what do you do? You come out here and side with the white devils."

If that's not betrayal, then I don't know what is. And you did take the reparation payment because I have the paperwork to prove it. I can go get them out of my canvas bag and show them to you."

"OK, we did take the money," admits Mr. Trellis as a low muttering erupts from his companions. "But then we saw the light and had to get away from your Godless society. Your society doesn't tolerate our Christian beliefs, but we're free out here. These brothers in the faith accepted us with open arms."

"Blah, blah, blah," interrupts Henry. "You can justify what you did any way you want, but that doesn't change the fact that you're a traitor to your race. They want you taken alive, Trellis. Do you know why they want you alive, Trellis? Because they're going to kill you slow, real slow. The only chance you got is to run. Run away! Go so far that they'll never find you, and don't join up with any other separatists either. That's unless you want to destroy their way of life like you did these people. We don't usually go looking for fringe groups to make examples of. Every now and then it's necessary to trot some racist converts in front of the cameras, but for the most part, if groups are in remote locations and not converting the local populace, we leave them alone. You brought doom here. There were no plans to assimilate these people into society until you and your wife joined them.... I expect all of you to live by your promise and not hurt Mr. and Mrs. Jackson."

The table erupts in a fevered frenzy, and the Jacksons are forcefully taken from their seats. Bob jumps up and shouts, "Don't hurt them! I gave my word. Take them to collect their possessions, and then escort them to the edge of the woods. They can make their own way from there."

Henry sits down while order is being restored and wonders if a last piece of blackberry pie lingers in the kitchen nearby. No, I better keep my mind on the job at hand, he thinks. These people are about to lose everything they hold sacred and all I can think about is that delicious, scrumptious, flaky ambrosia called pie.

Once everyone is seated again, Henry stands at the head of the table. He looks out over his audience noticing the two empty places where the Jacksons had sat. "I'm sorry for that necessary but distasteful bit of business. The rest of you had better brace yourselves because it's not going to get much better. That being said let me give you the good news first. When you come back with me, the government will hook you up with monthly stipends, that's like a monthly allowance and free public housing. If you're so inclined, drugs and alcohol will be provided free at your request. Healthcare is totally free for everyone in America thanks to the socialization of medicine. Let's see, what else?.... Um, oh yeah, OK, now, normally if any of the ladies here were with child, they would have to abort the fetuses."

The relative calm atmosphere of the room explodes with angry jeers and a wave of almost palpable hatred directed solely at Henry and what he is saying. Bob speaks above the uproar, "Henry, what you just said goes against every religious belief we have. We cannot live in a society that's more wicked than Sodom and Gomorrah. I think I can speak for all of us when I say, we are not leaving here with you."

The room burst with cheers and applause, but Henry remains standing until things become more tranquil. He begins speaking again in his calmest voice. "I believe you all have the wrong interpretation of your situation. Staying here or running away is not an option. The 1st Division of the Marines are setting up a perimeter approximately two miles around your camp here. You are surrounded. Escape is not possible, and fighting is the same as committing suicide. You come with me, or you die. These are your only choices."

Jake raises his hand and asks, "How can that be? You just told Mr. and Mrs. Jackson to run away. If what you're saying is true then they just ran into a booby trap."

"Yes, they did. Impossible as the odds may be, they still stand a better chance of slipping through the soldiers' blockade than staying here and facing certain torture and execution. The way I look at it, I did them a favor. But you don't have to share their fate. You are destined to be stars on the TV. You'll renounce whatever they tell you to renounce and testify about your new, non-prejudiced life thanks to benevolent government intervention."

"I don't believe you, Henry," says Bob. "I think you are trying to trick us into going back with you. We are a hundred miles from the nearest town. There are no roads anywhere near our camp. Nobody can find us. You don't care about what happens to us. You only want to do a good job for your demon masters so they'll throw you a bone. If we stay, we live. If we go, we die."

"You people are living in the Stone Age. You have no idea how far technology has advanced. Every inch of the Earth has been mapped by satellite, and those same satellites can read the year off a dime sitting on a picnic table under an oak tree. Your secret little camp here gives off so much infrared heat, it lights up like a spotlight in infrared surveillance sweeps. You think you're safe and shut off from the world? Well, you're not."

Henry reaches into his pocket and pulls out the small, multifunctional device, which picks up signals from microfiberoptic surveillance. Its small screen picks up signals from several spots in the cabin. He touch adjusts the screen until a small picture appears of the entire room then it cycles through an entire series of different angles, all showing frames of the room. Henry walks to the center of the table and motions for all to gather around him. "This detects and decodes the signals which microfiberoptic surveillance transmit. I want every one of you to take a turn and watch the screen," says Henry as he leaves the detector on the table and goes back to the head of the table. "I'm not exactly sure how they got so

many cameras in this room, but my best guess is a stealth helicopter or glider dropped a bundle of them, and the wind scattered them all over your camp. The door to this cabin must have been open at an unfortunate time.

Shannon, Bob's daughter, is searching the room for cameras but cannot find any. "I can't find a single camera. Are they invisible?"

"No," says Henry shaking his head. "They're so small, the human eye has a hard time seeing them in the best of conditions. Come to think about it, they are translucent. So in a way, they could be considered invisible. Good observation, Shannon."

"Do you mean to say they know everything that we've been doing? For how long?" asks Charlie.

"Yes, and the microfiberoptics also have audio capability, so they also heard what you've said. My guess is you've been under close surveillance for, oh, two months give or take a month. You've inadvertently brought up a good point, which I've overlooked. Capital punishment was abolished long ago, but there are still offenses that cannot be forgiven. If anyone here has used the 'n' word or 'double a' word referring to Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, then you might as well make a run for it like the Jacksons. Technically, you still have the right of free speech, but in reality, free speech died on the day Rocker was forced to apologize for saying what he thought. This is America, damn it, and we don't tolerate intolerance!"

At this point, two men rise with their families from the table and exit the building. Looking devastated, Henry says, "Whoa, if this keeps on, I'm not going to have anybody left to take back with me. I don't want another O'Brian incident here. Please, tell me that the rest of you aren't suicidal."

Silence fills the room for what seems like forever until Bob speaks, "Suicide is a sin. If we die, we die fighting."

"But fighting the system is suicide," pleads Henry. "Even if you had yourselves a reinforced concrete bunker buried a hundred feet below ground, they'd nuke your ass. They learned a valuable lesson from the O'Brian fiasco. They won't risk the lives of their soldiers in hand-to-hand combat and why should they? They can kill you a million different ways: poison gas; tanks; rockets; germs; bombs; fire; mortars; starvation; dehydration; etcetera; etcetera..... Life in our society isn't so bad. If you think about it, you guys are only about forty years behind the times anyhow. Open your minds and hearts just a little more. Take that next step of faith."

"We're nothing like you," coldly states Bob.

"Oh really?" responds Henry who is starting to get agitated. "Your ancestors started the Civil War because it was the 'right' thing to do. Your grandfathers marched in Montgomery, Alabama for civil rights because it was the 'right' thing to do. Your hippie parents protested the Vietnam War because it was the 'right' thing to do. And now you want to back out of the world because your liberal democratic thinking is finally having some consequences for you, personally. Well, tough shit! Suck it up. You're all for affirmative action, as long as you're not the one passed over for promotion. You're all for reparation, as long as it isn't coming out of your paycheck. You're all for gun control, as long as thugs don't break down your door and rape you and your wife and your kids. Well, you know what? It's time to piss or get off the pot. You live in the world that you've created."

"It's not that simple," says Bob.

"Yes, it is! You know what?.... Fuck you! Fuck all of you! Fuck you and the horse you rode in on! I hope you all die like rabid dogs. Get me back my detector, asshole. The hell with you and your mamas. I'm sick of trying to reason with your sick attitudes. Die! Die horrible and painful and pointless deaths!" screams Henry as he walks toward the door. As he opens it, he looks backward and says, "Have a nice day, and I really do thank you for the food. Goodbye."

Before Henry can even pick up his camping gear, Bob runs to stop him, yelling, "Wait! Wait, please, come back inside and talk to us. I promise we'll act better. Please, it's fixing to get too dark to leave now, anyway.... Please?"

Without saying a word, Henry follows Bob back inside the long, log cabin where someone has lit some candles. Henry takes his place at the head of the table and begins again, "OK, what do you want to know?"

They look quizzically at one another until Jake raises his hand and asks, "What were you saying about we could keep our babies?"

"You know something, Jake?" asks Henry. "I'll tell you something. With that positive attitude and good manners of yours, you'll do just fine in the real world. Anyway, what I was saying was that normally caucasian women are not allowed to have white children. It's bad for world morale. But we in the E.E.O.C. are making a one-time exception for everyone in this clan. If any woman here is pregnant now or becomes pregnant before we get back to civilization, she will be allowed to keep the baby. It's just our way of saying 'welcome to a new and better life'. Also, all families get to keep all the children already in their family unit. No kids placed in equality camps. I'm bending over backwards for you people."

Bob raises his hand like Jake had done and asks, "What happens if one of our women were to become pregnant a year or two from now? Will the government force her to get an abortion?"

"That's impossible. Once you've had the physical from your assigned doctor upon your return to society, you men will get vasectomies, and the ladies will have their tubes tied. That is of course if you want to stay married. Now if you

want to separate and register with the Agency for Dating Diversity then you don't have to be sterilized. I'm sure it would make great press. The headlines might read 'Racist Couple Divorce to Propagate Non-Racist Children'. Hell, you might even become regulars on the college lecture circuit."

"What about the children? Will they be sterilized?" asks Bob's wife.

"Normally, they would have the same options as adults once they reach maturity. Either, they could register with the Agency for Dating Diversity or get sterilized and marry whomever they pleased. But this isn't a normal situation. In all probability, Shannon and the other children will be assigned a mate on their sixteenth birthday, and they will be required to bear children of mixed heritage to prove their absolute conversion to the right way of thinking."

"That's going too far! I won't stand for it," says Bob pounding his fist on the table.

"Now, now Mr. Peters," scolds Henry. "I thought we were past this point.... I know what your problem is. You really are a racist."

"No, I'm not!" storms Bob. "I believe what Jesus said 'that all men and women were created equal'. We should have the right to love, whoever we want, regardless of their skin color."

"OK, Bob, let's use your own logic," says Henry. "And by the way, Thomas Jefferson said 'all men were created equal, not Jesus. We should love, mate, and marry whomever we want, right?'"

"That's right." Bob says nodding his head.

"And if your daughter falls in love with a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, you wouldn't have a problem with that would you?"

"Not at all, Mr. White."

"Alright then, all I'm saying is that Shannon will just have to find love with a man of a different racial heritage than herself. You have a problem with that?"

"Yes sir, I have a problem with that!" says Bob loudly. "My daughter can marry whoever she falls in love with, and if he happens to be white then so be it."

"You know what, Bob?"

"No what, Henry?"

"Well, Bob, the only problem you got is that your mind can't accept the thought of your precious, little daughter growing up and wrapping her lips around a thick.... long.... dark.... dick."

Bob leaps from his seat and pummels Henry with a vicious series of lefts and rights. Henry drops to the floor and tries to cover his head with his arms to protect himself. It takes every man in the room to pry Bob off Henry. Once they physically have Bob under control, Henry, although beaten and starting to swell about the face, lunges at Bob's waist, unbuckles his gun-belt, and yanks it off of Bob. The leather strap holding the holster flush against Bob's leg breaks. All of Henry's pain suddenly vanishes as he feels the weapon in his hands. Henry now possesses the most forbidden object in the entire world, and there is only one force that can possibly take it away from him.... Death.

The men holding Bob don't know what to do. Their leader has attacked their only chance of making it out of the wilderness alive, and this stranger from the government is now strapping on a gun. Charlie who is holding onto one of Bob's legs asks, "What do you want us to do with him, Mr. Henry?"

Henry's upset that his new toy has a piece broken. Try as he may, he cannot get the holster to stay against his leg like it should. He looks at the men holding Bob, and Henry realizes that Bob has quit struggling and is now staring perplexed at him. "Oh yeah, I guess you can tie him up if there is any rope around here. Don't worry, I'm not going to shoot him. And does anybody here have a strip of leather that'll fit this holster. I'd sure appreciate it."

Bob is tied to a chair and placed near his family. One of the ladies has finished repairing Henry's new gun-belt, and he has a smile on his swollen face for the first time in a long time. Bob says to Henry, "We've made up our minds. We're going to fight to the bitter end."

Charlie speaks up, "No we are not. You can stay here if you want, but I'm going back with Mr. Henry."

"Me, too," softly speaks Jake. Then one after another, everyone makes their intentions of going with Henry perfectly clear.

A heartbroken Bob has to sit there as his entire congregation; his loyal followers turn against him. With tear filled eyes, Bob Peters testifies, "You Jezebels! Go on and sell your souls to the devil, but me and my family are staying right here. We'll take a mansion in glory over a sinful life with the likes of you people."

Slowly, Bob's wife raises her thin hand to her husband's tear stained cheek and says, "Dear, I love you so much, but I don't love you enough to die for you. I'm going with them."

"No! No, no, no, no don't leave me," cries Bob as he shakes his head (the only part of him that isn't tied down).

After crying like a baby for a good three minutes, he shifts his attention to his only child sitting by his now ex-wife.

"Shannon, baby, my little girl,.... Will you stay with me? I gave you life and now in death, we can have eternal life together. We'll live forever in splendor with the angels. What do you say my angel?"

Shannon's world has collapsed. All she can do is gently shake her head as she stares at the floor and whispers, "I don't know. I just don't know."

"Well, I do," says Shannon's mama as she looks Henry right in the eyes. "She's going with us if I have to hog-tie her. My baby's not going to die."

Henry won't fall asleep until late this night in his tent. How can he sleep when his deepest, wildest desire has come to fruition? He carefully studies his pistol. He memorizes its etchings, burns them into his brain. After he carefully unloads his six-shooter, he puts on his gun-belt with its newly acquired leg strap and practices his quick draw. Inadvertently, he puts on a shadow play for the camp's children. The electric lantern glowing in his tent casts a shadow of him practicing his cowboy moves, so the children enjoy this free show.

In the morning the smell of scrambled eggs and fried ham awakens Henry. He springs to life once the thought of missing out on what would probably be his last taste of real food for a long, long time if not forever. There is no cause for alarm, however, the entire camp, minus Bob, is patiently waiting for him outside their community dining hall.

They all go inside where the table is covered with platters piled high with scrambled eggs, ham, pancakes, sausages, biscuits, bowls heaping with grits and butter, and open jars of jams and jellies. Henry takes the chair, which has been placed at the head of the table where he had stood the day before. He sits in silence as everybody starts loading down their plates with food. A few people have already started eating when Henry asks, "You're not going to say a prayer before you eat?"

After a few moments of silence, Charlie as the new unofficial leader speaks up, "We didn't think that would be allowed under the circumstances."

"Well technically, you're right. But since this will be the last time you'll be together as a congregation, I won't stand in your way."

Barely loud as a whisper, Shannon says, "We're not all here."

Henry nods and asks that her father be brought in under guard. Somebody must have had an old pair of handcuffs because Bob walks in on his own power, shackled at the wrist. He loops his arms around his daughter and his woman hugs both of them. He bows his head and prays. Everyone bows their heads and closes their eyes, except Henry. He studies their faces and for the first time a horrific thought enters his mind. Maybe, just maybe, he should have let them die. They might adapt to the modern social climate, but should they? What awaits these people back in civilization is exactly what they had come out here to get away from. If he had approached this assignment differently, he could have convinced these sheep to think they were wolverines. They would've been euphoric martyrs instead of docile prisoners. Excessive pain and humiliation are now in their futures. A big part of the new enlightened society is easy access to euthanasia. So why not guide these people to an honorable end? But as Henry shifts his weight in the chair, his gun-belt rubs against the table, and now he thinks, screw 'em. They're getting what they deserve, plus I now have a pistol. I win; they lose, that seems fair.

After breakfast, Henry loads his pockets with biscuits and escorts Bob outside with Charlie and Jake. Henry asks, "Bob are you sure you won't come with us?"

Bob looks around at his little Garden of Eden and responds, "I'm staying. This is my home, and if I have to die, then this is where I want to die."

Henry agrees, "Yeah, it's probably best for you to stay behind. Like I said earlier, Jake and the rest of them will do pretty good back in civilization, but you wouldn't last a week. You're too proud. You are more comfortable giving orders than taking them. I don't want to leave you tied up out here for no telling how long, either. It's possible with some of your comrades wandering out there in the woods that the marines might just keep up their perimeter until they starve you out. And you would be a pile of bones long before they checked on you. I need a solution, any suggestions?"

Jake has an idea. "What if we lock him in the log cabin and leave him a butter knife? He'll be able to pry or dig his way out in seven or eight hours."

"That's great thinking, Jake," says Henry. "Let's do it. You're in charge of that." Henry stands beside Charlie as Jake leads Bob away. "Charlie, we also need to bury all the guns and ammunition in a deep hole. Round up a couple of fellows, and I'll look for a good spot to dig."

Henry finds the perfect spot beside a huge rock just outside of camp so he will be able to find it again on his own. He instructs the workers to put everything, including his pistol and gun-belt, in cloth wrapped in plastic, seal them in boxes, and bury them. Henry explains that the media might want to dig them up later and put them on TV as part of their story. Under Henry's orders, they camouflage the area with leaves, straw, and such so that Bob and the others won't be able to find it. Secretly, he plans on coming back here as soon as possible and reuniting with his souvenirs.

This time Henry drives the four wheeler that pulls the wagon holding an old lady and the smaller children who

cannot march. The caravan plods slowly along until it reaches the Marines' perimeter. A soldier motions for them to stop and Henry obeys.

"Who are you?" orders the Sergeant.

"I'm Henry White with the E.E.O.C., and these are my converts. We're headed to the rendezvous point where they're supposed to send helicopters to pick us up."

"Do you want a military police escort?" asks the Soldier as he looks over the rabble.

"No sir, that won't be necessary," answers Henry. "I've already disarmed them, and I intend to start their indoctrination on the trip to the rendezvous point."

"Intelligence says thirteen rebels are still loose within our perimeter. Is that your estimation as well?"

"Yes sir, I think so."

"All right, move along," motions the Soldier.

The procession slowly makes its way through the woods to the clearing where helicopters will take them to civilization. All this time, Charlie talks to Henry about outdoor survival strategy. As the trees begin to thin, Henry and the others abandon the four wheeler and carry its passengers upon their backs. The mere sight of a fossil fuel consuming vehicle would send the hardcore environmentalist into tantrums of self-righteous anger. And that's not a good way to start these people's integration into society.

A group of government officials and propaganda news people are lounging about the three helicopters in the clearing. They await the emergence of the racist hillbillies from the woods. Cameras flash and the video recorders hum as the media swarms toward the ragged procession headed their way. Henry stands off to the side to avoid stealing any of the spotlight from his group. A Queen, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, dressed in formal African attire, walks up beside Henry and says, "You, Henry White?"

"Yes ma'am, I am."

"Henry, I'm Mrs. Condoleza Foxx, and I'll be taking charge of these white devils from here on out. Headquarters thinks it would look better if a 'minority' person takes charge of their indoctrination. You understand, of course?"

"Of course, Mrs. Foxx," says Henry. "May, I have one last word with them before you officially take charge?"

"OK, just wait until I gather the press together, first. While I introduce myself and lay out the E.E.O.C.'s plans for the new citizens, you can quietly say goodbye to your honky brothers and sisters."

"Thank you, Mrs. Foxx," says Henry. At the appropriate time, he walks toward the group of scared, overwhelmed people. He knows that with this change in instructors the chances of their survival in society has plummeted. "I want to say a couple of things to you all while I have a chance. First, I have been replaced by the E.E.O.C. as your case advisor by Mrs. Condoleza Foxx." There is murmuring in the crowd but Henry keeps on talking. "I am just a cog in the machinery of justice, and I have no real say in how things are done. Know that I didn't dump you, I got a different assignment and now you must obey Mrs. Foxx. You must always call her Mrs. Foxx. That's a given in our society. All official 'minorities' must always be called either Mr. or Miss or Mrs. and whatever their last names are unless they say otherwise. It's just one of the many politically correct mannerisms which you'll learn and live by. Also, you must understand that Mrs. Foxx must be obeyed at all times without question. If she tells you to strip naked and jump on one leg then you'd better strip naked and jump on one leg. She has absolute authority over you, and you have no recourse against her. You can thank your liberal democrat voters of years past for that.... I shouldn't have said that, so please forget I said it. Anyway, you must never question authority. Mrs. Foxx has in her power to sentence you to various federally sponsored programs, many of which I would equate to Dante's lower levels of hell. Trust me; you don't want to be sentenced to a program. The one last bit of advice I can give you is this. Suicide pills are always there for your asking, so if you cannot go on, you don't have to." Henry turns and walks away leaving this group to their fate.

Immediately the next morning upon Henry's return to work, he is summoned to Ms. Laquita's office. There he finds Ms. Laquita and Montumbo waiting for him with coffee and hot doughnuts. They both clap their hands for Henry and congratulate him on a job well done. "Here, have a doughnut," says Montumbo as Henry sits down. "I got them fresh from the bakery this morning."

"It's our way of saying 'you accomplished the impossible again'. I paid for them and Montumbo came in early to pick them up," says Ms. Laquita.

"Thank you, Ms. Jones and you too, Montumbo," says Henry as he washes down a mouthful of pastry with a swig of coffee.

"It's our pleasure, Henry," replies Montumbo. "You're the only person we have who could've pulled that off. It takes a honky to catch a honky; that's what I always say."

"Now that's not nice," scolds Ms. Laquita. "Henry's more like one of us than one of them."

"I know that, Laquita. He knows I don't mean anything by it. Don't you, Henry?"

"Yeah, Montumbo," says Henry.

"I've got a big surprise for you, Henry. I know you've been having problems with the opposite sex recently, and so I started thinking on the subject for you. But the truth is, I couldn't figure out what to do about it. Then I mentioned your predicament to my wife, and she solved your problem in ten seconds flat."

"Thank you, Montumbo," says Henry. "But really don't bother on my account."

"Nonsense, no bother at all. But wait, I haven't got to the good part yet," says Montumbo smiling. "My wife, Zandra, has a sister named Aretha. Now Aretha's never been married, and I know she likes men because she always flirts with the male nurses at the hospital for the mentally challenged. Just follow our logic here if you can, Henry. The only way Aretha could file a complaint against you is if Zandra or I helped her. And I'll guarantee neither of us will ever do that if you'll agree to marry her."

Henry starts shaking his head and rising from his chair, but Mr. Montumbo Simpson puts his hand against Henry's chest and pushes him back down.

"Wait until you hear me out before you say or do anything," orders Mr. Simpson in a stern, deep voice. "As I was saying, Aretha has been under care of the state since she turned eighteen, and her reparation lump sum payment has been sitting in the bank drawing interest. Most of her monthly stipends have also been put in the bank. The man who marries her will get all that money in order to take care of her. That's a whole lot more money than you'd ever make in twenty lifetimes. But it even gets better. If you were to marry her, that glass ceiling which you've been bumping your head against for the last five years will shatter. Your loyalty to the system will be unquestionable. If anyone gives you any trouble, you just trot Aretha out and problem solved. And there's more, if you marry Aretha that will make us brothers-in-law. How could you possibly resist the thought of spending holidays with me? You'll be part of the family."

Henry sits for awhile with his hand propped under his chin, trying to think of how to best approach this subject. Finally, Henry answers, "I really don't know how to express how much your offer means to me. To accept me with open arms is more than anyone in my position could hope for. However, I've already got two strikes against me. One more strike and I'm off to a sexual reorientation program. Possibly, the most gruesome ordeal that the government can dish out. You say you would never file a complaint against me, and I don't doubt your word. Yet, you, Mrs. Zandra, and Ms. Aretha aren't the only ones who could file against me. I've had a lady's father file against me. Any member of Ms. Aretha's family could file a complaint, plus her doctors. I want to say thank you for all of this thought, energy, and effort on your part, but I have to respectfully decline your most generous invitation to marry Ms. Aretha."

Mr. Montumbo squints his eyes at Henry and says, "I know what your problem is. You have this mental image of a three hundred pound drooling Mongoloid. Let me assure you, Aretha looks good for a retard. If she could keep her mouth shut, you'd never even know she was a half-wit. She almost looks as pretty as my wife, and you know how beautiful Zandra is. Hell, if she weren't my wife's sister, I'd bang her."

"Montumbo," pleads Henry. "You don't understand. This isn't about looks, or race, or being mentally handicapped. I just don't want to be in a relationship, not today, not tomorrow, not ten years from now." Henry looks to Ms. Laquita for support, but she averts her eyes. Mr. Montumbo doesn't avert his eyes, however. He stares at Henry with a mixture of disappointment and hatred.

Mr. Montumbo talks to Ms. Laquita without taking his eyes off Henry. "Laquita, I do believe your employee, Henry here, has some prejudice in his heart. Wouldn't you agree?"

Ms. Laquita had wanted to stay out of this, but now she's in it. "I don't know if it's so much prejudice, as it is confusion caused from exhaustion. He has been on remote assignment, you know."

"True Laquita, but I have a report on my desk from surveillance that says Henry talked derogatorily about liberal democrats. I believe his exact words were 'you can thank liberal democratic voters for fucking up your lives'."

"What are you doing with that report? Henry is my employee, and I should be the one notified when he gets out of line!" angrily responds Ms. Laquita. She is agitated by this usurpation of her authority in the chain of command.

"Chill, baby girl," says Mr. Montumbo trying to soothe Ms. Laquita's ruffled feathers. "I'm not trying to 'dis' you, woman. I just know that when a bunch of crackers get together, things get said that are bound to have racist undertones. So, I got the guys in surveillance to watch Henry extra close. Just in case some of that honky bullshit infected him, we could purge it from his mind. And guess what? I was right. If I may be so bold as to make a suggestion, what do you say that we put Henry in a racial sensitivity program?"

Henry looks at the floor and listens unemotionally. Anything he says at this point will only get him in more trouble. Why did I try to help those separatists? thinks Henry. I was so close to the end of the assignment, but I just had to try and make their transition easier. That's the last time I ever help anybody.

Ms. Laquita paces around her office for awhile and says, "Henry's an excellent worker. The best I have. Who'll

take up his workload while he's gone? The work is already starting to pile up in his office, and sensitivity programs take two weeks. One for actual classes and training then there's one week mandatory paid vacation for him to celebrate his new found enlightenment."

"Look here, sugar, since Henry's going to be my soon to be brother-in-law, my department will take up the slack."

"How do you know he'll marry her anyway? You cannot make him."

"Oh yes, I can," booms Mr. Montumbo. "If he doesn't marry her when he completes the program then I'll send him back again and again until he begs me to let him marry Aretha. Henry's not that strong. He'll cave in after a day or two. You hear me, Henry? All you got to do is agree to marry Aretha, and I'll take you out of the program. Understand?"

"Yes sir, Mr. Simpson," mumbles Henry.

Mr. Montumbo picks up the phone and dials security. With lightning speed, two police officers are rousing Henry out of his chair. They push Henry hard into the wall and roughly search him for weapons. One of the cops twist Henry's arms behind his back and clinch handcuffs around his wrists so tight that blood drips from torn skin. Each officer grabs Henry around an elbow and drag him backwards out the doorway. Mr. Montumbo yells, "You change your mind, and we can drop this unpleasantness right now.... No? Well, enjoy your program.... asshole."

Five minutes into the program and already Henry's wrists hurt and his head aches from the shove into the roof of the police cruiser. As he looks out the window at the world rushing by, he considers his options. He could agree to marry Montumbo's retarded sister-in-law. What Montumbo said is true for the most part. The marriage would provide well for his future in the system; however, Henry has serious doubts whether he wants to be in the system any longer. Politically correct life is just too hard. He could always opt for an easy chemical exit out of life, but something inside him has always held him back from taking that road. Henry isn't about to quit now that life had suddenly become interesting. Today's events have been set in motion and cannot be stopped. Tonight is a different story. The sensitivity program for the day will end at around nine o'clock pm. All the attendees who are not officially under arrest will be sent home until tomorrow morning when classes will resume. Henry considers running away to the wilderness after class lets out for the evening, but he needs a gun with bullets to hunt wild game for survival if he runs. And if government forces were to catch him,.... Well, he doesn't want to think about that. No, his best bet is to wait until the Marines clear out the camp where he had just left, and then sneak back there to dig up his stash of weapons and then disappear. It will take another week in Henry's estimation for the Armed Forces to leave that wilderness area. So, he will have to first endure the program and turn fugitive during his mandatory enlightenment vacation celebration.

Once again, Henry watches a hallway pass by him backwards as he is dragged to a classroom where he has the handcuffs removed. He is then physically placed in a seat. The entire class stares at him as he gently rubs his bloody wrists. The program director is not amused by his new student's tardiness. His name is Judge Andre Evans, a semi-retired, ancient judge who views sensitivity training as his legacy to the world. He slowly makes his way by walker to Henry's desk and scrunches Henry's face with one shaky, wrinkled hand and says, "Boy, I don't accept tardiness in my class. It's inexcusable! If you are so much as one second late again, you'll pay for it in pain. Understand, boy?"

"Yes sir, I understand," mumbles Henry through his puckered lips.

Judge Andre pushes Henry's head backwards and releases his grip. With the aid of his walker, he makes his way back to his desk in front of the classroom and lectures, "Tardiness will not be tolerated. Talking out of turn will not be tolerated. Most importantly, racist ideologies and prejudiced thinking will not be tolerated."

"What about you sucking my dick? Will that be tolerated?" asks a blonde haired, dark eyed man, one row over from Henry's desk. He speaks with a slight Russian accent.

"You must be Vladimir Gorbachev. Your infamy precedes you," hisses Judge Andre. "Tell me this, you traitor to the human race. How does it feel to know you're going to die a slow, painful death? Cry like a baby or take it like a man, it makes no difference. Before you die, you will tell us the names of your contacts. Your comrades will curse your cowardice as your fate becomes theirs. But don't fret, we will eventually assimilate your entire racist country."

"You'll never conquer us. We, Russians, don't know the meaning of surrender," responds Vladimir as two guards jerk him up and pull him to an empty chair near Judge Andre's desk. Unlike Henry, Vladimir's shackles are not removed. His hands are cuffed in front of him and his feet are also chained.

"The Japanese people didn't know the meaning of surrender, either. Now look at them, or should I say look at where they used to be? They were as racist as the old German Nazis," snorts Judge Andre. "They are now extinct as a people. They died like rats, and do you know what for?.... They wouldn't integrate because of their racial pride. Well, dead men have no pride. A lesson you will soon learn, Vladimir, my boy."

Judge Andre nods his head toward Vladimir's position. The guards react to his signal. One pushes down on Vladimir's shoulders while the other pulls a stun gun from his belt. In unison the guard holding Vladimir down releases him as the other guard prods the electric gun against Vladimir's chest. Vladimir spasms and contorts until he foams at the mouth. The guard holding the stun gun stops just long enough for Vladimir to regain some of his composure before he

starts the whole process over again and again. Eventually, the guards stop torturing him and are about to drag Vladimir back to his desk when Judge Andre halts them. He slowly walks his way over to Vladimir while holding a cup of steaming hot coffee and asks, "Would you like a drink, boy?" The old man pours the hot liquid on Vladimir's crotch who writhes in pain. With an evil grin on his face, Judge Andre points at the wet spot and tells the guard, "Spark him right there."

Henry watches the horrifying scene. It's like a scary movie, only this isn't a picture show. He had heard the rumors that a Russian spy had been captured and here is the proof. The Russian wears a prison uniform, so Henry deduces that Vladimir's participation in the program is a means of softening him up for prison interrogators.

Only the first day into the program and already Henry's tempted to ask for the pill. But he doesn't. If this Russian can take so much physical pain then Henry can deal with the psychological part. The trick to surviving day one is to just sit still and be as attentive toward the speaker as possible without looking him directly in the eyes. Palms upward on the desk, shoulders bent in submission, eyes on the speaker's chest, these are the proper body signals, thinks Henry. Kind of like a dog that's been beaten daily for a couple of weeks.

Judge Andre lectures on how all the world's troubles were caused by the white devils. If only the white people had been subjugated in earlier times, the world would already be a paradise, a perfect utopian society. It was the white man's diseases that killed off the Native Americans. It was the white man's greed that brought war and famine to the African Motherland. It was the white man's prejudice, which kept the 'minorities' of the world impoverished. He goes on and on and on.....

Henry finds his mind wandering. A dangerous thing to let happen, but he cannot stop it. He thinks, why does this white judge hate white people so much? Henry knows for a fact that Judge Andre Evans is white. A seventeen-year-old Andre had been with Saint King when he marched in Montgomery Alabama. Andre Evans was the youngest man ever to be given a judgeship in the Federal Courts. Judge Andre Evans worked tirelessly to help forge the system into what it is today. But why? Why would he despise his own people so much? Was he sexually molested as a child by a white man? Did he not fit in with the cool kids at school, and this was his revenge? Or did he actually believe in what he was preaching?.... Yes, that has to be it, Henry thinks. People are at their most dangerous when they have a cause to believe in. They'll gladly lay down their lives so their ideology can go forward. Somehow, this Judge Evans believes that what he does is right. Right or wrong, all Henry believes in at the present is trying to make it through this program alive. Day one ends.

Day two is going to be a bitch, and Henry knows it. So the night before, he made a trip to the local pharmacy to stock up on a week's worth of supplies. Normally, Henry shuns drugs and alcohol. The relief from reality that drugs offer is more than offset by the loss of control and self-restraint which drugs take away. But this isn't normal circumstance. Henry bought morphine shots, cocaine in clear capsules, pain pills, sleeping pills, and just in case of emergency suicide pills. Today he puts a morphine shot in his pocket for later.

The class is all present and accounted for early in the classroom this morning. Everyone's attention is focused upon the fireman standing next to a pot of coals setting atop a large burner. Several rods protrude ominously from the black pot filled with coal. Thanks to his profession, Henry knows exactly what torments will come their way and the order in which they will occur. Who says the employee handbook serves no purpose?

Judge Andre begins his lecture on the topic of slavery and the marking of human property. He tells of how slaves who were Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, were branded with hot irons like cattle. He talks of how the Jews were tattooed with serial numbers by the demonic Germans. Most of the class calms down as Judge Andre's lecture veers from the subject of branding with hot irons, but Henry knows better. Henry glances over at Vladimir and in the instant their eyes meet, he knows that his Russian classmate knows the truth as well.

Hours later, just before lunchtime when everybody is lulled into a false sense of security, Judge Andre instructs the fireman to start up the burner. A collective gasp erupts from the class with the scent of fear hanging heavy in the air. Henry ventures another glance at Vladimir who is grinning the smile of the damned.

"It's impossible for you bigots to really empathize with the plight of those noble victims of your racist ancestors until you can actually 'feel their pain'. Whose man enough to be the first?"

Vladimir stands shackles and all. Two guards immediately jump on him and pull him to the smoking cauldron. Judge Andre announces, "I see the Russian likes his pain. I'm going to do you a favor since you're so brave. You're going to get branded twice while everyone else gets it only once. What do you say about that, Stalin?"

Vladimir spits in the old Judge's face. Judge Andre smiles, wipes off his face, and says, "I want to do this little piggy myself. Hold him tight, officers." The withered, old man hobbles over to the smoldering coals. The fireman places a thick glove on the Judge's wrinkled right hand. He pulls an iron from the pot that spells 'traitor', but puts it back in favor of a glowing iron that spells 'prejudiced', more letters more pain. "Open his shirt," growls the Judge. He thrusts the glowing hot brand near Vladimir's face to watch him flinch, but he doesn't move. This makes Judge Andre even angrier, and he sticks it on Vladimir's stomach. The pain has to be almost unbearable, yet Vladimir doesn't scream out in pain.

Only the involuntary tears flowing down his face tell of his agony.

The rest of the class doesn't hold up as well as Vladimir does to his own torture. Many vomit on the floor. Others defecate themselves. Some scream in fright. A few pass out unconscious beside their desks. The smell of burning flesh, charcoal smoke, and bodily waste quickly fill the classroom. Henry reaches into his pocket for the shot of morphine. It only contains a few c.c.'s, but being a novice to drugs, Henry doesn't think it will take much to get the job done. He waits until Judge Andre is administering the second brand, which spells 'intolerance'. Henry takes the opportunity which chaos has given him to inject himself in the stomach. He struggles to remain in charge of his mental faculties. It is of utmost importance that he remains lucid through his turn of being branded.

Judge Andre finally tires of his perverted thrill in torturing Vladimir. He walks himself back behind his desk and collapses into his chair, exhausted. He wipes his brow with a handkerchief and says to the class, "Don't rush, don't crowd, everyone gets a turn. Who's next?" Henry raises his hand, and Judge Andre calls aloud, "Henry White of the E.E.O.C., now you should know better than anyone, not to criticize your government. Well, what are you waiting for, come on and get your reward." Henry manages to stagger down the aisle to the front near the fire. "What word would best describe your transgression, Henry? Let me think.... Oh, I know, 'agitator'. Fire marshal, apply the brand to his thigh."

The fireman orders Henry to drop his pants. Henry is beginning to feel the full effects of the morphine. It is like Henry is watching this happen to someone else in slow motion. He lowers his pants but only after a three-second delay. Luckily for him, it appears that he is in mild shock. A normal reaction to the sort of trauma that is happening to him. The fireman presses the burning iron hard against Henry's left outer thigh as two guards hold him in place. Henry watches with fascination as smoke rises from his skin.

Judge Andre says, "You can scream, Henry. There's no shame in it."

Three seconds later Henry bellows a sickly, "Ouchee!"

Two guards drag him with his pants still around his ankles down the hall to the nurses' station. The nurse on duty is a Queen, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. As she applies some lotion to the wound on Henry's leg she tells Henry, "It's your own fault, you know? If you would just free your heart from evil, this kind of correction wouldn't be necessary. This ointment will help your leg to heal faster, but I cannot give you anything for the pain. It's part of your punishment. Maybe you'll think twice before you do whatever you did again, huh?" Henry doesn't respond to her question.

The security escorts drag Henry to the cafeteria on their way back to class. This is technically their lunch break so Henry gets an opportunity to eat before heading back to hell. To Henry's surprise Vladimir is also eating lunch with his two jailers. This man had just been branded twice on the abdomen, yet he still eats as if nothing has happened. Henry is impressed. Henry cannot taste the food, which he is eating. He tries to place into his memory the knowledge not to take so much morphine next time. As the guards place him back in the classroom, all traces of what had transpired are vanished with the notable exception of low moans from most of Henry's classmates. The rest of day two is a blur to Henry who manages to stay focused enough to avoid further punishment. Judge Andre even lets the program attendees out of class early to show what a good guy he really is.

After Henry goes home to his apartment, he wants only to collapse on his bed and sleep the sleep of the dead, but he knows better. Tomorrow is going to be even more physically draining than today, thinks an exhausted Henry. If I don't prepare for it, I won't get through it alive. He takes a hot shower, which steams up the entire bathroom. Henry reaches for the cocaine capsules behind a steamy, bathroom mirror in the medicine cabinet. Henry combs his hair to one side and proceeds to tie one of the capsules to his scalp using his own hair as string. He repeats this task a few more times. As he is just about to put down the comb and call the completed drug hair mission a success, he thinks about Vladimir and the extreme torture which lays in store for the proud Russian. And almost subconsciously, Henry pulls a fat, yellow suicide pill from the medicine cabinet and ties it towards the back of his scalp. He gives himself a quick once over after wiping off the steamy mirror to assure himself that all the dope is concealed. Thanks to Henry's full head of hair and the prevailing attitude that short hair is somehow racist, the drugs are almost undetectable to the naked eye. So ends day two.

Bright and early the next day, the sensitivity training class is horrified to see a privacy partition at the front of the classroom. What daytime nightmare is going to happen to them today? Notably, fewer attendees are present today than yesterday. Some have opted for the final exit from life. Others have entered government sponsored drug dens for a slower, higher way out. But everyone sitting at a desk in this room has some sort of buzz this morning along with pockets stuffed with narcotics. Though, Vladimir doesn't, no access. Henry doesn't either; his are concealed in his hair.

Judge Andre slowly enters the room and walks his way to his desk. He grunts from the effort of sitting down. "Good morning class, I trust everyone is well rested. I have a pleasant surprise for all of you. Today, we're going on a field trip. Fresh air, golden sunlight upon your skin, you'll love it. We, as the hosts for this program, are even supplying you with work clothes, so you won't get your own clothes dirty. So one by one, I want you to come up here and change into your new work clothes. Don't be shy, I've seen it all before."

Vladimir is first. He goes behind the partition escorted by two guards who cautiously unlock his restraints. Vladimir strips to his underwear. Judge Andre eyes the Russian and says, "Gentlemen, the underwear too, I want to see his little dinky wee-wee."

Vladimir smashes the closest guard in the face with an elbow, which sends blood spewing everywhere. The other guard stands frozen in disbelief, holding the prisoner's new work uniform. Vladimir gives Judge Andre a close up view of his genitals as he punches the old man all about the head. Out of the corner of his eye, the Russian sees a guard charging toward him. Vladimir yanks Judge Andre's head backwards by the hair of his scalp, exposing the old man's wattle ridden throat and chops as hard as he can with the edge of his hand. Simultaneously, a guard clubs his nightstick into the back of Vladimir's head. The Russian drops to the floor like a sack of flour. More guards and medical personnel flood into the room. The medics huddle around the gasping old judge.

Vladimir's deathblow was evidently off the mark because Judge Andre is able to wheeze out, "get.... away.... from.... me.... Help... the Russian.... fools!"

The medics find Vladimir to still be alive, just knocked unconscious. Still holding his nightstick, the guard tries to back out of the room unnoticed. But Judge Andre sees him and motions his to come closer. Judge Andre croaks out, "You cannot get information from a dead man.... Make sure all the.... guards understand this."

Once things settle down, Henry takes his turn to change into state supplied work clothes. He has to bite his lip to avoid smiling. Judge Andre's head is swollen in various spots, and he has to hold onto his throat to swallow. Henry thinks that on this day, Judge Andre got a little sensitivity training of his own.

Eventually, all the class walks outside to an awaiting bus. Their old clothes are in one pile and in another smaller pile are the drugs taken out of the clothes. Now in an electric wheelchair, Judge Andre rolls himself in front of the drugs and says, "I'm very disappointed in all of you. This is not a game. You are not here to play. This is not a vacation. You are here to readjust your thinking, to open your prejudiced minds, to experience what it was like to be wronged by the white man. So that the next time you're in a position to act antisocial, you will behave like open minded, enlightened, integrated members of society. There were only two of you who didn't bring any drugs to my program, and one of the two couldn't get his hands on any narcotics. I want to personally congratulate Henry White on his willingness to accept the responsibility for his hate crimes and suffering the consequences. Henry, I intend on putting a letter of recommendation in your file. Let's give Henry a hand, everybody." Reluctantly, everyone claps including Vladimir who claps long after everybody else stops, gloating in the hypocrisy of his action.

The bus takes them out of town to a rock quarry. The program participants are each given a pick and a large canvas tote bag. The class is told to break down the big rocks into little rocks then put the little rocks in their canvas bags and tote them to the designated area and then dump them on the pile. Their day will not end until the pile reaches an adequate height as determined by Judge Andre. A huge, muscular guard holds a bamboo cane to attitude adjust anyone he deems to be slacking off. This is enough to motivate all the class to work at a frenzy. Yet again, Henry has inside information. No matter how high the pile of rocks gets, it will not be enough. No matter how hard you work, you will still receive a stripe on your back from the bamboo rod.

The day wears on and the easy living city people are beyond tired. Whenever a classmate falls from exhaustion or heat or a combination of both, he or she gets hauled back to their feet, struck by the cane, and told to get back to work. Henry does comparatively well next to everybody else. He guzzles down as much water as he can when the water bucket is passed his way then rips a cocaine capsule from his hair and swallows it when nobody is watching. After a few hours of hard labor, Henry is drenched in perspiration. He happens to look at Vladimir who is working across from him, and the Russian is grinning from ear to ear. Vladimir points at the top center of his head. Henry feels the top of his own head and finds a capsule sticking straight up. Without hesitation, he yanks it out taking some of the surrounding hair with it and chokes down the whole hairy concoction.

As the sun passes its zenith in the sky, the guards join Judge Andre under a nearby shade tree and drink ice cold lemonade in the shade. The leaves Henry and Vladimir practically alone in the blazing heat in the very center of the quarry. Their classmates are bunched up, working in what little shade they can find against the face of a rock wall. After a while, Vladimir asks Henry in a quiet voice, "Is it safe to talk?"

Henry answers back in the same quiet tone, "You never can be sure, but I'd guess yes. As long as we keep working and talk softly. Also, don't look directly at me and angle your mouth away from the guards."

Vladimir: What about the microfiberoptic surveillance? Henry: Like I said, I can't be sure, but usually they're indoors or at least attached to a manmade structure like light poles and such. Vladimir: Why are you in the program?

Henry: I wouldn't marry my boss' retarded sister-in-law. Vladimir: You've got to be kidding. Henry: Hell, no. I don't joke. Life's too damn hard to joke. Vladimir: Perhaps, your life is so hard because you do not joke.

Henry: Perhaps,.... So what is your story? Vladimir: I am a spy. Henry: You admit it so easily? Vladimir: I not only admit it, but I'm proud of it. I will do anything for my country, my people. Henry: Yeah maybe, but you know

they'll eventually break you down, and then you'll tell them everything they want to know. Vladimir: No, never.
Henry: Listen, they have truth serums. Vladimir: They have already tried. In training I build up certain tolerances for the drugs. Henry: Hey, good luck, but I know these people. Consider this program a light warm-up for the really bad torture that's headed your way. Vladimir: I see Henry: Can I ask what information you were after?
Vladimir: Sure, for some reason I can't explain, I trust you. My mission was to procure several of the microfiberoptic surveillance devices and smuggle them back to Vorkuta. There they would be studied and countermeasures developed.
Henry: Too bad we didn't meet sooner. I have this little pager-sized device that detects their locations. Sometimes, my job requires me to replace faulty units or plant them in the first place. Vladimir: Your knowledge would be invaluable to the cause. Why don't you join us? Henry: You got the wrong idea about me, friend. I'm basically a trained monkey. I don't know the technology behind any of it. Vladimir: You said that you never joked; yet you are a trained monkey?
Henry: How did you manage to look for the microfiberoptics without drawing attention or is that how you got caught?
Vladimir: Yes and no, let me explain. I have a doctorate in entomology. Henry: Brilliant, I would never have thought of that. A perfect pretext for snooping around with a magnifying glass. Vladimir: Actually, I used a jeweler's eyepiece. But I got carried away and took six of them from the apartment complex in which I was staying. Henry: Just remove one of those things and you're begging for an investigation. Vladimir: I know that now. Henry: Where did you stash them at? Vladimir: That's what they want to know, and how I was going to smuggle them out of the country.
Henry: If it was me, I'd roll them in powdered lead then stick them inside a watch. Vladimir: That's so close, you must be psychic. Swear you'll never tell where I hid them, and I'll tell you. Henry: I don't hold anything sacred enough to swear by, but I promise you I'll keep your secret to the grave. Vladimir: Good enough, I wrapped them in a thin lead lined tape and slid them into my passport cover. Henry: Very smart, but unfortunately you'll never be able to use that passport again. Vladimir: No, but you could. Henry: Dude, in case you haven't noticed, we're not exactly twins.
Vladimir: It doesn't matter. If you can get past your airport security and board a flight to Russia, my contacts will guarantee your safety on Russian soil. We don't have much goods to offer, but you will be treated like a national hero for the rest of your days. Let me sweeten the deal by saying that Russian women are beautiful and smart. How does that sound? Henry: You have people in customs? Vladimir: We have people everywhere in Russia. Henry: All I have to do is present your passport and that's it? Vladimir: That's it. Henry: How do I know I can trust you?
Vladimir: How do I know I can trust you, either? You have to go with your guts. What do they tell you? Henry: Right now, they're telling me.... Maybe. Vladimir: Fantastic, just think about it. Henry: I've got something for you.
Vladimir: No thanks, I don't want any of your drugs. Henry: Not even a cyanide capsule? Vladimir: You have cyanide? Henry: Yeah, on the nape of my neck covered by hair. Vladimir: Where did you get it from?
Henry: Drugstore, it's fat and yellow about the size of your thumb. Vladimir: Yes, I know of the pill of which you speak. It has enough poison to kill four grown men, and it's coated to last an hour in the stomach. Theoretically, enough time for a paramedic to pump one's stomach should he or she change one's mind. Henry: Do you want it or not?
Vladimir: Will you promise to take my passport back to Russia, or at least, give it to a pilot or stewardess on a Russian plane? Henry: I guess I could do it on my way out of town. After I get out of this damn program, I'm gonna run away to be a mountain man. I'll live off the land and stay the hell away from 'civilization'. Vladimir: Go to Russia.
Henry: I don't speak Russian, and your winters get cold like minus fifty degrees below zero cold. Vladimir: Do what you think is best.... My passport is behind the toilet at my apartment, 148 Rosa Drive. You may have to break down the door to get in. Henry: Fine. Now, I'd better tell you what's coming up tomorrow and the day after. Tomorrow's the chain day. Everyone gets shackled in long heavy chains, which you're locked in, all day and part of the next. They will then cut off our work clothes, and everybody gets paraded around naked. It all ends after lunch when everyone is 'freed' from their chains and given new African Heritage clothing. They all congratulate us on being new, non-prejudiced, love all peoples of the world, blah, blah, blah..... I know this is going to sound condescending, but are you sure you can hide this pill until you need to use it? Because if you can't, it's me who's going to need the cyanide. Vladimir: You underestimate me. True, they captured me alive, but I can end my life without your help. Right this instant, I could put this pick through my chest. I could slash my wrists with ten different objects in my cell. There are also various means to suffocate myself. Not to mention, these guards are real chumps. I could goad one into shooting me in a heartbeat. But I have to admit, it would be poetic to use the system's own poison to kill the only white man they want to keep alive. Don't worry, I'll make it look like I got the cyanide elsewhere. You will be the last person they'll suspect. Henry: Vladimir, it's been a pleasure talking to you. Just in case we never get to speak again, I want you to know that I think you're a good guy.
Vladimir: Henry, in this world where right is wrong and wrong is right, you also are a truly good guy. Henry: You're the expert in espionage, so tell me how best to hand over the pill. Vladimir: Don't give it to me; I'll take it from you. You rush over to me and start throwing wild punches. I will fight back but not with full force then I'll wrestle you to the ground. I'll snatch the capsule from your scalp myself. You will then assume a mounted position and pummel me while I'm in a submissive fetal position. I'll be hiding the pill on my person. Are we agreed? Henry: Yes, but do understand they

will beat you severely for this? Vladimir: Nobody will make it through today without at least one beating anyway. I am correct, yes? Henry: Yes Vladimir: So let us do this thing while we still can comrade.

Henry takes a deep breath, throws down his pick, and charges at Vladimir. His first few punches find their mark, and Vladimir returns them in kind. The force of the Russian's blows almost knocks Henry out. If this is Vladimir's holding back, Henry would dread to fell them at full power. Sensing the daze in Henry's demeanor, Vladimir pulls Henry to the ground on top of him. "Punch me, damn it! Punch me!" mumbles the Russian as the guards run ever closer toward them. Somehow Henry regains his wits and starts raining down punches on the downed Russian. It takes three guards to pull Henry off Vladimir. Once Henry's up, in an instant Vladimir is to his feet and glances a punch off Henry's left cheek before other guards pull him off Henry.

An irritating, buzzing noise emanates from the electric wheelchair as it rolls up to the two restrained combatants. "What is the problem over here?" asks Judge Andre.

"These two program attendees were fighting," responds one of the guards.

"I can see that officer," says Judge Andre trying to shield his eyes from the blazing sun. "I was asking Henry. So what's flown up your ass, boy?"

"I'm sorry, Judge Evans," answers Henry. "It's just that Vladimir keeps humming that stupid Russian National Anthem, and it's getting on my nerves."

"Is that so, Henry?" Judge Andre asks as he studies Henry's face. "I think there's more to the story than that. What's the real reason you're fighting this man who can obviously whip your ass?"

Henry takes a long pause and looks over at Vladimir who is shooting daggers of hatred through his eyes. Henry turns back, looks Judge Andre and says, "This Russian bastard is rolling his rocks to my side so I have to tote a heavier load than him."

"See, that wasn't so hard was it?" smiles Judge Andre. "I can always tell when someone's holding back the truth. It's a skill I acquired from decades on the bench. You want to tell me what you think I want to hear. It is more politically correct to blame his foolish pride in that backwater country than to tell the whole truth. And the whole truth is Vladimir was humming as he rolled rocks into your vicinity, increasing your workload, therefore you used his humming as a pretext for starting a fight. Isn't that correct, Henry?"

Henry lowers his head and says, "Yes sir, Judge Evans."

"I'm prepared to make a ruling on this case," states Judge Andre. "I find the both of you guilty of willful misconduct. Henry White, you will receive one stripe upon your bare back. Vladimir Gorbachev, you will receive five stripes upon your bare back. Punishment will be carried out immediately."

The muscle-bound guard holding the bamboo cane yells out his commands, "Let the guilty come forward!" Henry and Vladimir each step forward toward the yelling guard as the other guards back away to make room for his swings. "Let the guilty remove their shirts!" They take off their shirts with Henry looking at the ground and Vladimir giving the one finger salute. "Let the guilty touch their toes and prepare to receive punishment!"

Henry's back makes a popping sound as he touches his toes while keeping his back as straight as possible. He figures the blow will hurt less if it dissipates over a flat surface rather than hitting a high arch on a curved backbone. Whether it works or not, Henry cannot say because he almost falls to the ground, head first from the force of the rod's impact. Vladimir takes his five blows better than Henry took his one. The Russian's only hint of discomfort is when his left leg buckles during the last strike and starts to tremble involuntarily.

Judge Andre rolls back toward the two transgressors and says, "Have you boys learned to play nice, now? Officers, I want you to have a patrol car come take Vladimir back to his holding cell. We don't want him to drop dead of heat stroke; do we? Then I want you to call a taxi for Henry. He worked out here in the scalding sun while the rest of my pupils were huddled in the shade like wilting daisies. They will finish the work here if it takes them the rest of the day and all night long. Henry, you will show up first thing tomorrow morning in those very same clothes. You may launder them or not. It is totally up to you."

"Thank you, Judge Evans," replies Henry watching the guards cuff Vladimir and haul him away.

Day three comes to an end with Henry washing his state provided work clothes in his apartment building's coin operated washing machines and dryers. Lots and lots of starch is used.

From here on out it's all downhill, thinks Henry as day four begins. The front of the classroom is an iron jungle with all manner of chains and shackles hanging from the ceiling. Terror and stale sweat hangs in the air as the panic-stricken group looks ahead dumbfounded. Henry notices that everyone's spirit has been successfully broken, except for Vladimir's. He, himself, plans on making his countenance more zombie-like as soon as Judge Andre enters the room.

Judge Andre walks into the classroom slower than usual, sporting his new swollen face and dark ringed eyes.

A large man wearing a heavy, thick smock sashays in behind Judge Andre. Following him are more guards carrying an anvil, hammers, and a box of iron pins. Once Judge Andre is sitting behind his desk, he announces, "This is the day when you will learn the burden of wearing the shackles of slavery. You cannot truly know the shame of your race until you experience the weighty chains of bondage."

Fully in everyone's view the anvil is placed on the floor at the front center of the classroom. Starting with Vladimir, each person has to lie on the floor by the anvil as the darksmith fits them with connecting wrist, waist, and ankle shackles and chains. Contrary to the usual routine, Henry is not the second person to step forward and take his medicine. The previous day had tuned in these people's enthusiasm. Now, you have to push and shove for a spot in line. This is just fine with Henry who is second to last in line today. The more the farrier works with adjusting the iron collars and cuffs; the better and more competent he becomes. Therefore, reducing the chance of being accidentally hit by the hammer or cut by the securing of the irons. It is Henry's turn, and he lies on the floor warmed by other bodies. He looks up at the huge monster placing an iron collar around his throat and for the first time Henry understands the reasoning behind this particular torture. If anyone has any illusions about who is in charge of his/her life, the doubt disappears when this agent of the government swings a twelve-pound hammer inches from one's skull.

Slowly Henry shuffles back to his desk, clanking and clinking all the way. This day will be cut short for the program participants so they can go about their mundane daily activities. Life still goes on for the group outside of class: chores have to be done; groceries have to be bought; bills have to be paid. And when a chained program attendee shows his/her face in public, he/she will have to explain the restraints, thereby letting the whole society participate in the rehabilitation process. Henry looks around the room and sees the same faces, which had stared blankly ahead the day before, now look at their tormentor with earnest, fervent belief. They are now converted: mind, body, and soul. Henry worries that his own mask of false conviction is not enough to hide his true feelings.

Judge Andre recesses the class for the day at lunchtime on the condition that no one removes their chains.

No shit, thinks Henry, it'll take a hacksaw to cut these things off.

Knowing the future has its advantages. In preparation for this day, Henry had placed pillows on his recliner to support the weight of the chains. His pantry was stocked with snack treats of both the salty and sugary varieties. A case of chilled soda pop lines the refrigerator shelves, and most importantly, a selection of recorded chain-gang movies awaits his pressing of a play button. Henry can imagine himself as one of the convicts on the TV because in fact he is one of them. Of all the days scheduled for sensitivity training, this has to be the least taxing. Day four ends with Henry falling asleep in front of television.

Day five, the final day of the program, begins with an ominous gathering of a mob outside the Race Relations Building. Today will push most program participants to their psychological breaking points. Henry is just glad the physical stuff is at end. Public shaming and hurt feelings heal faster than burned flesh and strained muscles, at least that is the way Henry looks at it.

Inside the classroom Judge Andre begins by saying, "One day you spent in cold, hard, unforgiving chains. Think of how they weigh heavy upon your flesh. Think about the cuts and bruises that they caused you from less than twenty-four hours of wear. Now, think of how they would feel after a week, a month, a year, ten years or more. It brings a lump to my throat and tears to my eyes when I think about it."

Tears are flowing down every cheek in the room except Vladimir's and Henry's. Some people are actually hysterically sobbing. Others rock back and forth on their haunches in a trance like state. Henry starts nodding his head in agreement and hopes that it will be enough of a gesture to satisfy the judge. Vladimir shakes his head in disbelief and smiles an evil smile.

Judge Andre continues, "Think about the Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland paradise and cruelly, and inhumanly enslaved by your white devil ancestors. So much pain and suffering they must have endured. Not only were they stolen from paradise, but you people then sold them in the marketplace like cattle. Standing out there alone and naked for the whole world to see and ridicule. I say again, what type of lowlife, degenerate scum would do that to a human being? I tell you who, that who is you and your entire race! You are guilty from birth, inheriting the sins of your fathers and your fathers' fathers. That part of your debt will be repaid in full. Line up! We are going to have an old-fashioned slave auction on the front steps of this very building."

As on the previous day, everybody pushes and shoves to be one of the first in line behind Vladimir, who with his permanent guard escort has to be first. Henry, once again, is second to last in line. His theory is the crowd will jeer themselves out on the first few people and the last person will also catch hell. They go single-file behind Judge Andre who rolls in his electric wheelchair. The front doors of the building open to a chorus of 'boos' and 'hisses'. Several hundred people have gathered to witness the spectacle. All peoples of the world are represented in the throng, yet the caucasians are by far the most vocal with their hatred of these traitors of mankind.

Vladimir is the first to be taken forward where a guard using shears tears off all of his clothing. He stands there

looking over the crowd as they throw tomatoes at him, spit upon him, and taunt him with hateful words: white Russian bastard; white Judas; baby killing honky; racist bigot; white devil; etcetera, etcetera.... To his credit, Vladimir takes it like a soldier, showing no sign of weakness or remorse. Henry hopes he will fare as well.

The line gradually proceeds, and Henry's turn is drawing ever closer. He glances at the row of naked people off to the side and is grateful the only women in this group are ugly hags. No chance of being in an aroused state when his turn comes, and it is coming quickly. Henry lets his mind wander to the remote forest where he will be heading after this day ends. The fresh air, sparkling clear water, and most importantly his cowboy pistol and holster wait for his return. Someone pushes Henry forward to the guard with the giant scissors. He watches as his nakedness is revealed to the world. Funny, thinks Henry. This should make me ashamed, but it doesn't. Nobody has any real privacy anyhow. They see me; the surveillance cameras see them so how's this any worse?

The answer to his question comes in a glob of spit, which hits him between the eyes. Immediately, Henry comes back to reality. He bows his head and lowers his shoulders. Best to follow the rules of the dog pack, thinks Henry. A submissive posture should appease the mob somewhat. A white woman with blonde hair in her mid-twenties shouts at him, "You prejudiced son of a bitch! What's wrong with you? I love my King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by us white devils! Die! Die, you racist motherfucking pig!" And with that a guard walks him over to the other chained, nude classmates. His penance is paid in full, for now. As he predicted, the last person in line gets pummeled with all the leftover produce.

Judge Andre's demeanor is now completely changed. His is all smiles and good cheer as he escorts the group back to his classroom. The darksmith dressed in formal attire, removes their shackles with a handheld laser. In keeping with the spirit of the occasion, Vladimir is unchained and given new prison clothes. He even gets a glass of champagne. Judge Andre, who minutes before was torturing them, now is hugging and praising his new, open-minded, enlightened friends. Henry cannot help but get caught up in the moment as he eats fresh strawberries with imitation whipped cream in his new African Heritage clothing. An office worker interrupts the celebration with a message for Henry. He is to report to psychologist Michelle Lawrence's office as soon as possible.

Judge Andre makes his way over to Henry and takes one of Henry's hands in both of his and says, "It has been an honor to help you see the light, son. I hope you'll take all the valuable lessons learned here and be a better person for the rest of your life."

Henry leans down to Judge Andre and says, "Thank you, for the wakeup call. I'll never forget what happened here." Judge Andre smiles and waves goodbye to Henry as he leaves and then something occurs to Judge Andre. What Henry said could be interpreted in two different ways. Taken at face value it was good and correct, but it could also mean that Henry holds a grudge against him.... No, Henry White is a good boy, thinks Judge Andre as he wheels over to the reporters' TV cameras.

Outside on the same steps where a mob had ridiculed him, Henry sits and thinks. If I make a run for it now, they might not catch me. If I go to the psychologist's office, she may have anything in the world in store for me, from sex-change surgery to the insane asylum. However, I could probably get a postponement until after my guaranteed enlightened celebration vacation. So I guess, the best thing for me to do is keep the appointment and wait until tomorrow to fly out west. If it's not a long session, I can empty out my bank account on the way back to my apartment. Oh shit! I also have to get Vladimir's passport out of his apartment.... Of course, I don't have to do that. I'd be putting myself in jeopardy and for what? A bunch of strangers on the other side of the planet.

Either by coincidence or fate, Vladimir is taken out of the building at this exact instant. He drags his feet on the steps adjacent to Henry and says, "American mutt!" Vladimir spits toward Henry as the guards hustle him away toward a patrol car. Henry jumps to his feet, rushes at them, yells, "Russian racist!" and spits at Vladimir, 'accidentally' hitting one of the guards in the neck. Vladimir bursts out laughing, and the angry guard says, "Watch where you're spitting, asshole!" Vladimir is still laughing as he's roughly thrown in the back of the cruiser.

Well, muses Henry, I guess I'm going passport hunting after all.

When Henry enters psychologist Michelle Lawrence's office, Michelle is sitting behind her desk more relaxed than the last time he'd seen her. Although, she does tense upon seeing him. Michelle says, "Henry, good to see you. Please sit down. I didn't know if you would get my message before you left or not."

Henry settles down in the patient recliner and says, "Yes, I got it during the graduation celebration. I was in the middle of eating a plate of fresh strawberries and imitation whipped cream."

Michelle: Mmmmm, sounds scrumptious. I hope you didn't have to leave too early on my account? Henry: No, I put a bunch of strawberries in my pockets and ate them on the way here. Michelle: That's good to know. Henry, I don't want to keep you here too long today. I know you're ready for a much-deserved vacation. By the way, where are you

vacationing at? Henry: Out west in the mountains, I'm going camping. Michelle: Well good for you. Sometimes Moses and I go skiing in Colorado during winter. OK, back to the reason I summoned you, I have been pondering over your case for almost two weeks. Also, I have discussed the circumstances surrounding your enrollment in a sensitivity training program with Ms. Jones, and I have conferred with some colleagues of mine in the mental health field. You are an absolutely fascinating patient. You combine the understanding of a learned scholar with the psychopathic mind of a mass murderer. I could psychoanalyze you for the next fifty years and still not find an effective treatment for you. But I have made one rather startling conclusion. (Henry takes a deep breath and thinks, oh hell, here it comes.)

Michelle: You have some leanings toward homosexual behavior, but that's not the ironic part. See if you can follow my logic on this. Those particular homosexual traits, which you exhibit, are more common in lesbianism than in male homosexuality. Therefore, I propose that you are a lesbian trapped in a man's body. Are you shocked? Henry: Does this thing of which you speak, put any surgical procedures in my immediate future? Michelle: No that's the ironic part of your disorder. The lesbian side of your personality is, for lack of a better phrase, very butch. So your penis is the perfect female phallic device. Do you understand? Henry: Sort of,.... that's a lot to think about. Is that all for this session?

Michelle: You don't seem impressed by my skills of deduction. Henry: Oh, I am! I am. It's just that I'm so physically and emotionally drained from this week's sensitivity training that I'm finding it hard to show much enthusiasm.

Michelle: I completely understand, and let me apologize for making you come all the way down here on what should be your time off. Henry: No problem, if that's all for today, I guess I'll be going now. Michelle: Wait a second, your sessions aren't quite over for today. Henry: Sessions? Michelle: Yes, as I previously said, we've reached the end of what I can do for you. Your psychological problems require a practitioner with more skills than I presently possess, so I've scheduled a preliminary appointment with Dr. Mikeal Freeman. He is a renowned psychiatrist, and his office is on the second floor of this building. Talk about luck, huh? Henry: Sure, yes it is. Michelle: Dr. Freeman was kind enough to say you could drop in whenever you finished here. And I guess we are about done. Feel free to schedule a lunch with me through my secretary if you'd like. You know, just to say 'hi' every now and then.

Henry rises from his recliner, extends his hand, and shakes Michelle's hand. He says, "Thank you for everything you've done for me. I feel like I'm better already."

"Wait," says Michelle as she digs around in the papers on her desk. She finds the one she was searching for with an official seal on it. "This is a 14378 Form. You should keep it on your person at all times."

"Is this what I think it is?" asks Henry.

"It certifies that you are a protected 'minority'. You are now in the system as a female lesbian, thereby providing you with a measure of protection from being discriminated against either as a woman or as a homosexual or both. An instantaneous benefit you'll see is that your next paycheck will be bigger from a reduced reparation deduction. It's just the government's way of saying 'we feel your pain'. Now, you had better hurry to Dr. Freeman's office. Be sure to tell him that I said 'hello'."

Henry nods his head and leaves her office. In his hands he holds the ticket to an easier life. With one signature and one phone call, Michelle had altered his station in life. No more letting everyone ahead of him in line. No more attending the United World Church. And less reparation deductions from his paychecks leaves more money for better restaurants, more cowboy memorabilia, and prettier whores. For once the system has screwed up in his favor. As the doors shut on the elevator for descent to the second floor, a terrible thought occurs to him. What if this psychiatrist tries to revoke his 14378 Form? Or worse yet, decides that he should experience life as a real lesbian woman? What the hell, thinks Henry. I'm headed for the backwoods, anyway. Let him do his worst. They'll never catch me after today.

Dr. Mikeal Freeman is an extremely overweight King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. Dr. Freeman is in his late fifties and has authored four best selling books about psychiatry. His tastes run toward the garish, as his office testifies. The best way to describe his office's decor is as the bastard stepchild of Las Vegas showroom and an abattoir.

Dr. Mikeal looks up from the travel guide that he's reading as his secretary ushers Henry into the office. "You must be the infamous Henry White," chuckles Dr. Mikeal. "Lie down on the couch over here and make yourself comfortable. I'm going to have to cut this introductory session short today. I'm leaving in a few minutes for the African Motherland. Have you ever traveled there, Henry?"

Henry: No sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Really, you should go someday. You're not one of those animal rights nut-jobs are you? Henry: No sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Me neither. I'm going on safari. They're a lot more understanding over there about hunting and eating meat. Have you ever eaten elephant? Henry: No sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Yeah, me neither. That's why I'm going to blow a couple of those big boys away while I'm over there. I tell you that you've never eaten until you've tasted hippopotamus. I ate a rack of ribs from one, this big. (Dr. Mikeal spreads

his arms as far apart as he could.) I kill what I can, and I eat what I kill. Nothing's wrong with that, is there?

Henry: No sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: I wanted to see you before I left, so that I can confirm a few facts. You are an orphan raised by the state, educated by the state, and currently are employed by the E.E.O.C. You have two strikes against you from the U.S. Agency for Dating Diversity, and you just completed a sensitivity training program. You have manic depressive inclinations and poor coping skills, which primarily consist of escapism. Am I correct, thus far?

Henry: Yes sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Super, I intend on using you as a case study for my next book. It'll be about a miserable, disturbed man who gets transformed into a happy, caring member of society. The human-interest angle alone will sell a million copies..... Before I proceed any further, I need to know that you won't see another psychiatrist. Can I have your promise? Henry: Yes sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Super great, I want our sessions to start on a fresh note, so I want you to forget everything that Michelle woman told you. Henry: Excuse me, Dr. Freeman, but does this mean that I forfeit my 'minority' status? Dr. Freeman: Minority status?.... Oh, now I remember. Michelle said something about you being a faggot or something like that. Henry: She said I was a butch lesbian in a man's body.

Dr. Freeman: (laughing) That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. Leave it to a woman to come up with the goofiest shit. If it were up to me, women would be banned from all professions except for waitressing and stripping. Did she issue you a 14378 Form? Henry: Yes sir, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Well,..... I guess that's alright. Maybe it'll keep you out of trouble while I'm on safari. As a matter of fact, I've got an idea. (Dr. Mikeal presses on his desk intercom and speaks to his secretary.) Mrs. Ladner, will you please bring me a stamped, certified 8496C Form and a completed 158943 Form?

Mrs. Ladner: Yes, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: And put Henry White's legal name and social security number on both of them and have copies couriered to City Hall. Mrs. Ladner: Yes, Dr. Freeman, I know how to do my job. (Dr. Mikeal turns his attention back to Henry reclining on the couch.) Dr. Freeman: Mrs. Ladner is the best secretary that I've ever had. I trust her implicitly. She even signs my checks, but deep down she's still a woman. And one day that sassy mouth of hers will get her in trouble. Anyhow, I'm going to juice up your level of protection under the law. Michelle authorized sexual deviant protection, and I'm adding mental and physical disabilities. If anyone asks, the years of being a social pariah messed up your learning abilities and gave you chronic back-pain, or some shit like that. Make up whatever you want. Henry: Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman: Don't mention it. But there is one thing, I want you to go to the Hall of Records and dig up all the information you can about your parents.... Oh my, it's getting late! I've got to catch a plane. Come on, Henry. Walk with me out the door.

Henry walks behind Dr. Freeman as he shuffles out his door to the secretary's desk. Dr. Freeman leans on Mrs. Ladner's desk and asks, "Are you going to be alright for the next eight to ten weeks without me here?" "Somehow, I'll survive," responds Mrs. Ladner as she hands Henry the two forms complete with Dr. Mikeal Freeman's forged signature.

"Oh yeah, one last thing, Mrs. Ladner," says Dr. Freeman as he places a huge arm around Henry's shoulder. "Would you be so kind and call the Hall of Records? Tell one of the minimum wage assholes to stay late and help Henry find some information on his birth parents."

"Yes, Dr. Freeman," replies Mrs. Ladner. "Shall I give him an 870120 Form? It'll allow breakage of the secrecy seal, which is undoubtedly on any adoption records."

"Mrs. Ladner, you are a jewel," says Dr. Mikeal. "I don't know what I'd do without you. I've got to run or at least walk really fast. I'll see you both in eight to ten weeks. Adios!"

Mrs. Ladner and Henry both wish Dr. Freeman good luck as he leaves.

Inside the taxi, spread out on Henry's lap are four certificates, three of which give him a measure of security in a world gone insane. Fate is playing a cruel joke on me, thinks Henry. When I'm about to run away from civilization, they give me the keys to a candy store. I'm still running though. Even if they give me a million dollars, I'm still running. A man can only take so much before his spirit breaks, and mine's beginning to crack.

Outside the Hall of Records, a tall thin man hastily walks to the taxi, in which Henry arrives. He opens the back door of the cab as Henry is paying the driver. "Welcome to the Hall of Records. My name is Tom Thatcher. I'll be your helper in finding the paperwork you're after.

"Thank you, I'm Henry White," says Henry walking with Tom toward the building. "I want to apologize for keeping you, so late. Dr. Freeman insisted on it."

"It is my pleasure. I am happy to serve," responds Tom as he holds open the building's front door for Henry and locks it behind them.

Tom: You are looking for adoption records? Henry: Yes, I have a 870120 Form. Tom: May I see it?

Henry: Of course, here. Tom: It looks authentic, but I'll have to put it under the microscope to be sure. Follow me, please. Henry: Are there a lot of counterfeit certificates circulating around here? Tom: No, not really. I am just

extremely cautious. I'd hate to lose my air-conditioned job and have to actually work for a living. Henry: (chuckles) I know what you mean. (They enter the cubical, which serves as Tom's work station, and Tom pulls a microscope from his desk drawer. He examines Henry's 870120 Form.) Tom: It's authentic, alright. Would you like to see what a counterfeit looks like under the scope? Henry: Not really. Tom: Come on, it'll be interesting. I promise. Henry: OK. (Tom pulls a phony 870120 Form out of a filing cabinet, places it under the microscope, and focuses the lens to a particular spot on the seal.) Tom: There now, look at that. (Henry looks through the eyepiece and sees writing which says, "We must meet in private, ASAP!") Tom: See how the color blotches out in spots? That means it is counterfeit. Henry: Um.... I see. Tom: So listen, I skipped lunch today, and I'm starved. What do you say we go get some supper? I know this great little restaurant on the edge of town, my treat. Henry: Fine with me.

The duo takes Tom's jalopy out on the open road. Henry marvels that the relic is rolling under its own power. It comes as no big surprise when the vehicle starts shaking and emitting screeching noises. Tom pulls over to the shoulder of the roadway and says, "Henry, would you mind helping me with the motor? I believe I know what's wrong with it."

Henry unbuckles his seat belt and says, "OK, but I'm not really mechanically minded."

Tom unlatches and raises the car's hood, while Henry looks on with curiosity. Without saying anything Tom walks away toward the nearby woods, motioning for Henry to follow him. Against his better judgment, Henry follows. This cloak and dagger stuff isn't Henry's forte, yet it is oddly exciting to him. They walk far into the forest until the stranded car is out of sight. Henry stays out of tall Tom's reach, just in case. Spy movies start like this but so do many horror movies. Finally, Tom stops, turns around, and says, "I think we're safe from listening ears out here."

"Wait," says Henry. He takes his detector out of his pocket and checks for microfiberoptic surveillance. "I think we're safe. So, what's with all the espionage?"

Tom: It's the only way, I can make you this proposal. Henry: Whoa, there big guy. Flattered but I don't swing that way. Tom: No, no you misunderstand. You work for the E.E.O.C., don't you? Henry: Yes. Tom: Then you have the authority to get someone out of the sensitivity training program, don't you? Henry: Theoretically, I might, but in actuality it would be suicide. Tom: Would it be suicide for a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils? Henry: Probably not. But what if elephants could fly? What if it rained hundred dollar bills? Why ask what if? Tom: What would you say if I was to tell you that I can change your race color? Henry: I would say that you are one stupid S.O.B. and quit wasting my time. Tom: A baby given the name of John White was born thirty-one years ago. He is a reverse octamaroon. Henry: Reverse octamaroon? Tom: His entire birth family were Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, but his maternal great-grandmother was a full blooded white woman. Genetics is a motherfucker. Odds of him being white are like a hundred to one, but nevertheless there he was, white as rice. His parents were embarrassed at having a white devil, so off to the orphanage he went. Years later, both parents were killed in a house fire. John White is now married to a woman named Latiffina. They have eight interracial children. John has never checked on who his birth parents were. That leaves the brass ring of all birth certificates unused and gathering dust. Henry, wouldn't you like for that dusty birth certificate to be yours? Henry: What's the catch? Tom: A man who gets to the point, I like that. See Henry, I believe that the Lord let me find that birth certificate for a reason. And that reason is to do a good deed for someone who cannot help himself. Henry: I gotta stop you right there. If you give me that paper and the first thing I do is pull you or one of your relatives out of the program, 'Kablamo!', game's over. Tom: Don't mistake me for a fool, Mr. White. I never make a move without calculating all the risks involved. The person, of whom I speak, has no direct link to me. He is the retarded adult son of a widowed, old woman. They used to be neighbors of mine when I was a kid. Henry: Doesn't his mentally challenged status protect him from prosecution? Tom: Not when he called a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, 'boy'. But it was really innocent. To Dave, you're either a boy or girl. He doesn't have the brains to be prejudiced even if he wanted to, but that doesn't matter to the King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. He lobbied hard for Dave's enrollment in a sensitivity program, and he got it. Henry: Damn, that sucks. Tom: Yeah, but I'm going to help you to help him get out of it. Henry: What's this Dave guy to you that you would go through so much trouble and risk to help him? What's your angle? Tom: My angle? My angle is the Lord will reward the good deeds I do in this lifetime in the hereafter. My home will be with the angels in Glory. Henry: Exactly, which Lord are you talking about? Is he the United World Church's god? Is He the outlawed Christian God? Tom: You are one sad, sick individual. Don't you believe in anything? Henry: Yes, I believe. I believe that the winners write the history books and portray the losers as evil bastards. I believe that the ultimate evil lies in trying to be too good. In short, I believe in everything and nothing at the same time. Tom: Dude, you are seriously fucked up. I take it back when I asked you what you believe in. All I want to know is will you help Dave? Henry: In exchange for that birth certificate,.... Yes, but I have a better idea. You give me that certificate, and I'll get 'Dave the retard' out of the country. Tom: Slow down, I don't want him separated from his mother. I just want this situation with the program fixed. Henry: There's a problem with me just pulling him out of the

sensitivity training program. From what you've told me this guy habitually calls people 'boy' or 'girl'. How long do you think it'll be before he's back in the same boat that he's in now? a week? a month? a year? ten years? Let me hit you with some reality. I don't see myself sticking around here much longer with or without your birth certificate. Then what are you gonna do about Dave next time, hotshot? Tom: ... Alright, you've made your point. What countries can you send him to? Henry: Not countries, country, and the only country he'll be safe in is Russia. Tom: How do you figure he'll be safe in Russia? They adhere to NATO policies. Henry: Only in token and only in the major cities, go outside Moscow and St. Petersburg and you'll see what they think of the One World System. Tom: Dave can't survive on his own. Henry: I didn't say he had to. I've got a major connection and one hell of a bargaining chip. Trust me, he's going to be fine. As a matter of fact, Dave will be a lot more free, better fed, and happier than you'll ever be, Tom. Tom: Maybe I should go instead of Dave, huh? Henry: That's a real holy attitude, you got there. Tom: I was only joking. Henry: I don't joke. Is it gonna be you or the retard? Tom: Dave, of course. Henry: OK, let's do this thing. What's his legal name and address? Tom: Dave J. Hall, 847 Thurgood Avenue, can't you look it up at work? Henry: I'm tired of all this sneaking around corners shit, going in circles instead of straight lines. You get me that ultimate 'minority' status, and I'll bust through all the red tape like a freight train through a Yugo... What's his mama's name? Tom: Teresa... Are you sure that's the smartest way to go about this? Henry: You do your job your way, and I'll do things my way. Dave J. Hall, 8... 4... 7 Thurgood Avenue, mom's name's Teresa. Right? Tom: Right... Why do I feel like I'm making a pact with the devil? Henry: I don't know. I've always thought of myself as a good guy wearing a white hat, but maybe, you're right. I guess I'm a bad guy wearing a dark hat. So is that all? Tom: Yes, I think so. We'll make our way back to the car. You walk north on the road a mile or so, till you get to Hungry Stan's Restaurant. Eat, call a taxi, then call a wrecker to pick me up. I'll take a hammer to my car so it won't run anymore. Henry: It's barely running to begin with. Hit it too hard and you'll have a three thousand-pound paperweight. Tom: Ha, see you do make jokes. Henry: No, I am serious, and one last thing, you are never to speak of this again. I'm gonna keep my part of the bargain, and I expect you to do the same. Betray me, and I'll stick an ice pick in that giant heart of yours.

Later during the night as Henry lies in bed struggling to sleep, a steady knocking comes from the apartment's front door. As expected here is Tom with two other men dressed in a combination of formal attire and pajamas, behind them stands a TV crew complete with bright lights and cameras. The man in charge, identifies himself as, Thabo Hutchison the Chief Administrator of the Hall of Records.

Mr. Thabo explains, "Mr. Henry White, there has been a fluke in record keeping at our office. You have been mislabeled as white. Mr. White, you aren't white at all; you are a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. Your skin and eye color defects are due to a great grandmother who was caucasian. Somehow, the people at the orphanage must have assumed a little white skinned, blue-eyed, baby boy was white. A part of this colossal mistake rests on your shoulders for not checking sooner about your heritage. However, my staff does share in this miscarriage of justice. I want to personally apologize for any inconvenience this misunderstanding has caused you."

A pretty reporter shoves a microphone in Henry's face and asks, "Mr. White, how does it feel to switch sides from being a white devil to becoming a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils?"

Henry pretending to be dumbfounded, replies, "Good."

"Will this new information change your life for the better?"

"... Probably," answers Henry.

Turning to face the TV camera, the reporter says, "Obviously, Mr. Henry White is shocked beyond words. And who wouldn't be? The unthinkable has happened. A man, who has lived with the shame and guilt that rightfully belong to all of us white devils, has discovered his true heritage to be with the Kings and Queens, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. A truly extraordinary human-interest story. This is Jill Green reporting for Liberal World News.

Still pictures are taken of Thabo handing Henry his Certificate of Racial Heritage, and more pictures are taken of Henry and Thabo shaking hands. Finally, Thabo whispers to Henry, "Welcome to the fold my brother."

Henry leans close to Thabo's ear and says, "... eat me." Thabo backs away with a quizzical look at Henry.

Tom steps forward toward Henry with a folder stuffed full of official papers and says, "Mr. White, you may want to look these over. This folder contains documents explaining your guaranteed constitutional protections. Also included is the passbook to your reparation account, which has been augmented with back interest plus a total refund of all your lifetime reparation and income tax payments. Your future monthly stipend payments will automatically be credited to this account until you make other arrangements. Should you have any questions or problems, our offices are always open for you. Goodnight."

The late night frenzy of activity is over as fast as it began, leaving Henry alone to ponder his sudden change in

fortunes. Within a twenty-four hour time span, he has went from standing naked and chained before an angry mob to becoming the closest thing to invincible that society has ever seen. Every possible protection under the law is now his. Henry White is now classified as a mentally and physically handicapped, homosexual, female Queen, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. For all practical purposes, he is..... a demigod.

While the sun lazily rises, Henry is already on his way to the office supply store. There are a million things he wants to do, but this is the first thing he has to do. The store's doors eventually open, and Henry dashes to the copier section. He has his Certificate of Racial Heritage laminated and attaches miniaturized copies of his other protective forms beneath it. The whole montage is mounted in a clear plastic with cardboard backing. Later at a jewelry store, two holes are punched at the top of the page and a gold chain attached, resulting in a perfect idiot sign for Henry to wear around his neck. Nobody will be able to criticize or discriminate against Henry without being aware of the dire repercussions.

On his way to the E.E.O.C. headquarters, Henry thinks of how his disposition has changed in the past couple of weeks. He has gone from an unassuming, civil servant to a hateful anarchist. And the metamorphosis still isn't complete. For his plans to work, he has to turn everything up to its maximum. He must become the living embodiment of all things, which his sensibilities find vile. Dave Hall's very life depends upon Henry's unqualified success in the next few hours, and Henry is going to win, no matter what.

Behind locked doors, the surveillance employees of the E.E.O.C. watch banks of video monitors for signs of 'minority' oppression or live sex acts. Trevor Ducker is focusing his attention on a couple having sex in an elevator when there's a loud knocking at the door. Since he is closest to the door, he has to interrupt his voyeurism to open the door. Trevor finds an unshaven, angry Henry White. Trevor says, "Henry, you know you're not allowed in here."

Henry pushes past Trevor, points at the sign around his neck, and says, "That's Mr. White to you, asshole." Henry barges to the center of the room, jumps up on a chair, and shouts, "Listen up, motherfuckers! Everybody see this here paper? It says that now I'm officially a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. Genetics is a bitch, ain't she? I also have a retard, handicapped, and lesbo papers. What this means to you is that I am a god! I am invincible. If you fuck with me, I will mess you up! Any problems that come my way will be dealt with by jury trial, as per my now constitutional right. And let me lay it all out for you so nobody gets confused. We all know voting is for chumps; only preapproved candidates can run for office, and even then the powers-that-be handpick who wins. Nobody with any commonsense votes. And nobody with a decent job will serve on jury duty for twenty-five dollars a day. So who does that leave to do jury duty? Hmm... I know, white trash with minimum wage jobs or no jobs at all. And who do you think they'll side with you or me? Look at my skin color. I'm a white King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. Those same colored white devils are one hundred percent of the time going to side with me! I could stab anyone in this room in the head in front of a thousand eyewitnesses, and I'd still be found not guilty. Then I could sue you for dulling my knife and be awarded your house, your car, and all your money. Have no illusions, I am.... a god. And what this god demands of you mere mortals is this. Don't record me with any of those shitty, microfiberoptic surveillance devices. If you see me on one of these video screens, cut it off. You will erase any disks that you see me on. This is not a request; it's a fucking command!..... I know I could stand here and rant and rave all day long, yet some of you will still defy me. You will sit in your comfy chair and watch me walk, talk, eat, and shit. Maybe you feel it's your duty as a productive, caring member of this great society of ours to do your job, regardless of the consequences. To those persons let me say this. It's one thing to do your job and stand behind a badge or sit behind a desk while you commit atrocities in the name of your government. But if you refuse my request and I find out that you've watched me. And believe me, I will find out. Then you don't have to worry about me attacking you with a knife or a court order. No, what I'll do is a thousand times worse. I will take evil to the next level. Where normal people would cringe and cry 'no more, no more', I'll open my arms and embrace the carnage. What I'm trying to say is that if you cross me.... I'll kill your children. You may be willing to die for your government, but I'm betting that you won't risk the precious, little lives of your kids. This is not a threat; it's a motherfucking promise! Doubt me, and I'll come back here and dump a sack full of hacked up body parts all over this damn room!"

A large man from the back of the room speaks up, "You touch my kids; I'll kill you!"

"Good," says Henry hopping down from the chair. "If you take me seriously, you'll never have to see me again. Now, somebody give me a permanent marker."

Reluctantly, Trevor gets a marker and takes it to Henry. On the side wall, Henry scrawls out a message. Then he takes a box cutter out of his pants pocket, cuts his palm, and signs his message in blood. It reads:

Watch me and I'll kill your kids

HENRY WHITE

Without saying anything else, Henry quietly leaves the room. He walks down the hall dripping droplets of blood on the spotless floor. In a bathroom, he is able to stop the bleeding. Leaning over a sink with the faucet flowing cold water into its basin, Henry looks at himself in the mirror. He is pale, unshaven, and slightly trembling.

So this is what a madman looks like, thinks Henry. I'm way over the edge. Can I actually go through with this? Keep it together. I've got to keep up this intensity. Just get through the next few hours, and then it's off to collect the holster and pistol. Fish and hunt for the next forty years. I can do this!

With renewed conviction, Henry walks by Laquita's secretary, flings open the door, plops down in a chair, puts his feet up on Laquita's desk, and asks, "How they hanging, Laquita?"

Unaccustomed to such insubordination, Laquita squeaks, "What did you say?"

"Come on, babe; don't treat me like that. You know I got your G thang right here," says Henry grabbing his crotch. "Look here, you know about my new life circumstances, don't ya? Yeah, I'm the closest thing to social perfection that this system can come up with. My protection package is full, and so is my ass from bending over letting you guys screw me over without using any lubricants."

"That's uncalled for, He-," tries to speak Laquita before Henry cuts her off.

"Shut the hell up, while I'm talking woman!" storms Henry pointing a finger at Laquita's face. "This here paper says, 'I'm a god,' and you'd better show some fucking respect unless you want me to take you to court and take all your damn money. So clean your ears out and listen. I've been doing the work of three people around here for the past ten years. The way I figure it, I'm unofficially retired. Every week you're gonna sign off on my timesheet and have my pay direct deposited into my passbook account. I'm sure they've got the numbers down in payroll. Now, I was led to understand that Montumbo's section took up the slack while I was in that fucking sensitivity training program. Well, they can damn sure keep doing it. Anybody has a problem with that, you tell them to suck.... my.... dick! OK, anything else?..... Oh yeah, I lost my detector thing. I'll take yours."

Henry stands up and holds open his cut hand. Laquita sits in stoned silence for a few moments until she regains some of her senses, reaches inside her desk drawer, pulls out the small detector, and places it in Henry's hand. Henry puts it in his pocket and leaves her office. As he walks toward the building's front door, he smiles for the first time at work in the past ten years.

The bank can only spare one hundred thousand dollars. The bank manager explains that they don't keep millions of dollars in their vault. The bank only has so much cash in their day-to-day operations. Henry's frustrated, but he really only needs a few hundred dollars anyway. He grudgingly snatches the large bag of money from the bootlick manager and walks out to his car.

The hardware store has no problem selling him a sledgehammer. Henry throws it in his car in case it's needed at the next stop. Vladimir mentioned something about knocking down a door. In any case, Henry wants to be prepared. He pulls into Rosa Drive and looks for number 147. Apartment 147 is open. An elderly Mexican woman is sitting in the doorway watching her grandchildren play outside. Henry leaves the sledgehammer in his car and walks up to the old lady. "Excuse me, Miss," says Henry. "Do you know if a Russian man used to live here?"

The woman looks up at Henry and says, "Russian? No, we've lived here for many years.... Would you be looking for the bug-man?"

"Yes ma'am, that's him," answers Henry.

"You want number 148, but I haven't seen him in weeks. If you find him, tell him his apartment stinks. I am going to report him if he doesn't clean it up."

"Thank you, ma'am," says Henry as he pulls a hundred-dollar bill from his pocket and gives it to her. "This is for your help."

Henry walks over to apartment number 148 and knocks. Of course nobody answers, but the old lady is watching. On a hunch, he twists the doorknob. It opens to reveal the source of the stench, busted jars of bug-filled, yellowish liquid. The police or FBI or whoever had gotten here first. The place had been thoroughly trashed. Henry carefully makes his way to the bathroom. If they have broken the toilet, it's all over. To his surprise and disbelief, they had only removed the lid off the toilet tank. Henry reaches between the tank and the wall and pulls out Vladimir's passport. Thank goodness for old-fashioned law enforcement incompetence. He puts it in his back pocket, and calmly strolls out to his car. Henry waves bye to the old lady and drives away.

The Hall's home is on the outskirts of town, an old house with need of paint, grass too high, and a faded picket fence with a couple of missing pickets. A little, ancient lady cracks open the front door to investigate who was knocking.

Henry shows her, his E.E.O.C. credentials. She ushers him inside with offers of coffee or tea. Henry declines, and they sit down in the living room. Dave is in the kitchen watching a children's program. From Henry's position on the sofa, he can see that Dave seems fascinated by the puppet things on the TV.

Ms. Hall starts the conversation. "I hope you're not here for Dave. He isn't scheduled to enter the sensitivity training program for two more weeks."

Henry: No ma'am, I've got good news for you. It would appear that Dave has a guardian angel. The charges against him will mysteriously be dropped, and his name will vanish from the program participation sheet. Ms. Hall: Praise to the Lord. I mean praise to the United World Lord. My prayers have been answered. How can I ever thank you?

Henry: It's not necessary. Ms. Hall: Oh yes it is. Come here, I'm going to hug you. (Hesitantly, Henry goes over to where the old lady sits and bends over to hug her. She squeezes him as tight as she can and pats him on the back. Only after a full ten seconds does she let loose her grip. Henry sits back on the couch, but not in the middle as before. This time he sits at the end of the couch closest to Ms. Hall.) Henry: Ms. Hall, this is at best a temporary fix. It's only a matter of time before something like this happens again.

Ms. Hall: No, I'm not letting Dave out of my sight. He'll stay out of trouble from now on.... I promise. Henry: With all due respect ma'am, you cannot make that promise. Dave might say something like 'boy' or 'girl' to someone even if you're with him. And to be blunt, you are an old, old lady. How many more years could you possibly have left? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty at most? What happens to Dave then?

Ms. Hall: Don't you think I know that? I pray every night that the Lord will spare my life another day, so I can be with Dave. Henry: Yes ma'am, and you're running out of days to pray. Ms. Hall: That's just shy of blasphemy, young man.

Henry: True, but what if your Lord gave you a way to keep Dave safe, long after you've passed away? Would you do it, no matter how much hurt? Ms. Hall: Sonny, I'd take Dave's place in a sensitivity training program, if they'd let me. I'd do anything to protect him.

Henry: If you really mean that, then you'll have to give him to me. I can get him on a flight to Russia. He'll be taken good care of there for as long as he lives. I promise, and more importantly Vladimir Gorbachev promised. Ms. Hall: Dave is the only family that I have left in the whole world. How can you ask this of me? Henry: Ma'am, I'm not the One, you should be asking that question to. (Henry points up toward the ceiling.)

Ms. Hall: Touché, Mr. White, touché.

Ms. Hall walks into the kitchen where Dave is watching his kiddie show. She puts her hand on top of his head and says, "Son, how would you like to fly on an airplane?"

Dave forgets all about the TV, turns to his mama, and responds, "A real airplane?"

"Yes, Dave, a real plane," says Ms. Hall as she straightens her grown son's hair for the last time. "This kind man is going to take you on an airplane ride. Aren't you, Mr. White?"

"Yes ma'am, that's right," speaks Henry with a crackle in his voice. "You're going to fly up in the sky like a bird."

"Wow!" shouts Dave. "Are you coming too, Mama?"

"Not this time, baby. You'll have to be a big boy and mind Mr. White. You do what he tells you, OK?"

"OK, Mama, I will," says Dave as his mother hugs him with all her might.

"Mr. White, should I pack a suitcase for Dave?"

"No ma'am, Ms. Hall, all he needs are the clothes on his back. We'll take care of everything."

Ms. Hall gives her son a kiss on his cheek and reluctantly lets him go, saying, "I love you, son. You be a good boy. I mean man, be a good man."

"I will, I will already," responds Dave as he takes Henry's outstretched arm. "Bye, Mama. I love you. I'll be back in a little while."

"Dave," says Henry. "Why don't you go sit in my car on the curb out there? I'll be right there."

"Wow! Mr. White, you have a car? You must be a kazillionaire," says Dave as he races out the door toward Henry's car.

Henry turns back and looks at Ms. Hall who has tears streaming down her face. Henry tells her, "I just need a second to compose myself. Don't want him to sense anything's wrong. There's no reason this shouldn't be a fun experience for him.... Damn, I knew it would hurt you, but I never figured on it upsetting me."

Ms. Hall walks out of sight, weeping loudly. Henry takes a couple of deep breaths, clears his mind, walks out the door to his car, and drives off after telling Dave to 'buckle up'.

Henry calls the airport to see what time a flight leaves for Moscow. Only three flights are scheduled for the week, and one's departure time is for later this same day. Henry persists until he finally speaks to a person and not a machine. The voice on the other end of the line assures him there is no need to make a reservation because most of the jets traveling to Russia were empty save for a few diplomats every now and then. Anyhow, it's only a token gesture of goodwill that keeps the planes flying to and from that despicable country.

Since it's going to be a few hours before the plane takes off, Henry takes Dave back to his apartment. Dave is in awe of all the framed western posters and cowboy books and movies and other old west memorabilia that Henry has

collected over the years. Henry puts a cowboy movie on the television for Dave to watch, while he works on a letter for the Russian customs agents. It reads:

To whomever it may concern :

Vladimir Gorbachev is either dead or near death at the hands of his American captors. I am privy to this information because I was his classmate in a sensitivity training program. We had a brief opportunity to talk in private, and he took full advantage of the situation. Vladimir informed me of the absolute necessity of getting his passport into your possession.

Now, I'm not a revolutionary or a traitor for the most part, but what I am is a man of my word. I made a promise, and if you are reading this letter then I've upheld my part of the bargain. Vladimir also made a promise to me that, whoever brings his passport to you, will be taken care of for life. As a means to that end, I present to you, Dave Hall.

He is a mentally retarded man, black hair, green eyes, early forties, wearing a red shirt, blue jeans, red tennis shoes, and carrying saddlebags. In one of the pouches, you will find a small microfiberoptic detector. This is my contribution to ensure Dave's comfort for the rest of his days. You are to treat him like a national hero. You will make him as happy as you can. Never tell him that he will not see his mother again. As far as you know, Ms. Teresa Hall is coming to see him shortly.

I am taking a great risk in fulfilling Vladimir's last mission. I am also trusting that you people will live up to Vladimir's last promise.

Sincerely,

Henry White

Dave wanders over to Henry just as he finishes writing the letter. Dave asks, "What you doing?"

Henry rolls up the letter and ties it with a thin red ribbon. "I wrote a letter for you to take on the airplane, and now I'm making it official."

Dave: It looks like the paper, I got when I graduated from school. Henry: It's called a diploma. Dave: Yeah, I graduated.... Can I wear one of your cowboy hats? Henry: Sure you can. (Henry takes two hats down from their hooks on the wall.) Henry: Which one do you want, dark or white? Dave: White! Only bad guys wear black hats. Don't you know nothing, boy? Henry: Since you're wearing the white hate, I guess I'll have to wear the dark hat. Dave: Ooooh, you're a bad guy. Pow! Pow! Henry: You got me sheriff. Everything's fading to black. I'll never rustle cattle again. Dave: Yeah, don't wrestle no more cows, boy! Henry: If you'll be a good boy on the plane, you can keep the cowboy hat. Dave: I'll be good! I'll be real good! Henry: That's great news, Dave. And because you're going to be so good, I'm going to give you something else, too. Dave: Wow, is it my birthday? Henry: No, wait here. (Henry pulls the saddlebags off a sawhorse displayed in the front room. He puts his letter, Laquita's detector, and several thousand dollars in one bag, buckles it, and ties it secure with more red ribbon. In the other bag, he places Vladimir's passport.) Henry: Dave, do you know what this is? Dave: I don't know. Henry: They're called saddlebags. A cowboy would put this across his horse's back. One bag hangs off the left side, and the other hangs off the right side. Dave: It kinda looks like a purse. Only girls carry purses. Henry: These aren't purses. They're saddlebags. Only macho cowboys can carry saddlebags. Are you a tough cowboy? Dave: Yes, yes I am. Henry: OK then I'll let you carry them on your plane ride. Tell you what, we still have a few hours before the plane takes off. Let's watch a cowboy movie that has saddlebags in it. I believe this one about train robbers has some points of reference. Dave: Oh, you shouldn't steal. That's wrong. Henry: Yes, Dave, stealing is bad.

Many necks turn as Henry and Dave make their way through the airport. It's not everyday that men wearing ten-gallon hats stroll these walkways. The ticket counter lady never takes her eyes off them as she contemplates why a couple of cowboys were buying a plane ticket to Moscow. Everything is going smoothly, perhaps too smoothly, when Henry sees the security checkpoint blocking their path to boarder the jet. Henry sees that the lone security guard is white and lets out a sigh of relief. This is going to be easier than I hoped, thinks Henry.

The guard stretches out his arm and says, "I'm going to have to see your passports, and I'll need you to give me that bag on your shoulder."

Henry pulls out his E.E.O.C. credentials and shows them to the guard. "That won't be necessary. I've been

assigned to the deportation committee, and this man has to get on that plane.”

The guard studies Henry’s identification, and says, “I understand, but I’ll still have to see his passport and search the contents of that bag.”

Henry: Listen you, honky motherfucker. You see these forms around my neck? Dave: Oh, you said a bad word.
Henry: Be quiet, Dave! This certificate right here, confirms my heritage as a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by you white devils. Now, cracker, are you doubting my word? Guard: No sir, I’m just doing my job. Henry: Listen to what I’m saying. If you don’t step aside and wave us through, I’m going to see to it personally that you enroll in a sensitivity training program. By the time we get finished with your rehabilitation, this mentally handicapped man will have twenty more IQ points than you’ll have. Understand, white devil? Guard: Yes sir, go right aboard at your leisure, gentlemen. Henry: Thank you, tell the nice man ‘thankyou’, Dave. Dave: Thankyou. Guard: You’re welcome, sir.

A friendly, short haired, brown-eyed stewardess meets them at the plane’s door. She takes Dave’s ticket and says, “They sold you a first class ticket! You’ve been taken. There are only two other passengers on this trip other than yourselves. Everyone gets first class treatment on my route.”

Henry clarifies the situation for her. “Only Dave’s taking the plane ride. I need to speak with everybody on the plane, right now.”

The stewardess goes to fetch the pilot and copilot, while Henry and Dave make their way over to the other passengers, an elderly Russian diplomat and her husband. The plane’s crew comes back to see them as ordered by Henry. The pilot asks, “Is anything wrong, sir?”

Taking his detector out of his pocket, Henry scans the area for surveillance bugs. Only one shows on the small screen. It seems to be signaling from the copilot. The copilot looks to his captain for guidance as Henry lifts the copilot’s cap from his head. The pilot hunches his shoulders in a ‘I don’t know’ pose. Henry takes the bugged cap to the plane’s lavatory and soaks it in the washbasin. Everyone is still in place when he returns and asks, “Did you know your hat has a microfiberoptic surveillance device in it?”

The copilot vigorously shakes his head, saying, “I had no idea. Please, you must believe me!”

Henry places a hand upon the young man’s shoulder and says, “Calm down. No harm done. It’s almost impossible not to have one or two hiding somewhere. Anyhow the reason, I want to speak with all of you, is that this man is about to take his first flight on an airplane. It’s in the best interest of everyone involved, especially your nation’s interest, that Dave and his saddlebags reach your customs office in Moscow.

The elderly lady diplomat responds, “We’ll see to it that your friend makes it there safely. And what is this cowboy’s name?”

Dave looks to Henry to see if it’s OK to talk. Henry nods and Dave says, “My name is Dave Hall. Mr. White gave me this cowboy hat and cowboy saddlebags.”

“That was nice of Mr. White,” says the elderly lady. “My husband and I have a son who’s about your age. Perhaps, you would like to meet him someday? By the way, my name is Olga and my husband’s name is Victor. Why don’t you sit by us, and we’ll talk and have a pleasant flight?”

Once again Dave looks to Henry for permission. Henry says, “That sounds like a super-good idea. Dave, you sit here by Mrs. Olga and be a good boy, OK?”

“OK,” answers Dave as he sits down and starts talking about cowboys and train robbers with the Russian couple.

The crew of the jet plane follow Henry to the exit after he motions for them. Henry pulls out a wad of money from his pocket and gives each of them four hundred dollars. “This is for each of you to make quadruple sure Dave and the saddlebags get there in tact.”

The stewardess attempts to give the money back to Henry, saying, “You do not have to bribe us. It is our privilege to look after your friend.”

Refusing to take the money, Henry walks out onto the airport’s gangplank and calls back, “Consider it a tip. Have a safe flight.” Henry stood in the lobby, watching through a window until the plane took off and flew out of sight.

A few hours later, Henry is aboard a different flight, taking him back to the scene of his latest crime. The survivalists’ encampment where he had fed the naive sheep to the wolves in civilization. The plane lands; Henry rents a car at the airport, and drives until the paved roads turn into dirt roads. The dirt roads turn into forgotten trails, and finally, the forgotten trails turn into impenetrable forest. Abandoning the car, Henry starts the long hike to his destination, the buried cache of weapons outside the ghost camp.

The first ten miles of his trek seem like a walk through a magical wonderland. However, with the later succession of miles, Henry's romantic notions of 'getting away from civilization' are replaced by the hard realities of 'getting away from civilization'. His back aches from the load of supplies, which he carries. And the blisters on his feet break inside of his new hiking boots, only to be replaced by more blisters. It dawns upon Henry that he hasn't put enough food in his already weighty backpack. Thinking back to the bounty, which he had shared with the separatists, he suddenly realizes the feast was the culmination of a group effort. Alone, Henry will have to spend every waking moment hunting and gathering, no different from a caveman in the ice age. So much for the dream of sitting around, enjoying the beautiful scenery. Sure, he could buy most of his supplies in the nearest town and tote them to a remote campsite, but that isn't fleeing from society. It's suckling at the government tit, running away, and coming back for more. He could stay in his air-conditioned apartment and suck more and harder, thanks to his new racial heritage. The same racial heritage, which ensures he can never associate with others of like mind, else he bring doom down upon their commune like the Jacksons had done.

Henry reaches the abandoned compound, and all traces of life are gone. The efficient government controlled killing machine had done its job well. Remembering the swarm of microfiberoptic bugs, Henry decides to set up camp outside of this camp. He cannot be sure if the devices were still being monitored, and if so, by whom. It would be a tragedy to get caught this late in the game.

Days later, the sun beats down through the cracks in the forest canopy, just enough to make Henry's life miserable. He is hot, sunburned, dirty, bug bitten, and every muscle in his body hurt. It had taken days of digging, but he has finally uncovered the weapon cache. When he breaks open the correct crate and holds his pistol once again, all is right with the world.

First, he practices the quick-draw with the gun unloaded. Then he sets fallen pinecones about head high on bushes and low branches of surrounding trees. He loads six bullets into the empty chambers, takes aim, and pulls the trigger. The recoil, the smell of burnt gunpowder, the slight wisp of smoke from the barrel, the explosion of a pinecone into a thousand little pieces,.... it's poetry. Western novels, cowboy movies, documentaries, nothing can truly describe the shooter's feeling of unbridled, raw, destructive, awesome power!

Four boxes of cartridges later, Henry is a fair shot. Eight boxes later, he is a good shot. Thirty-six hours later, Henry never misses a shot. To make it a little more challenging, he combines the quick-draw with target shooting, yet like most things in life, Henry will always remember his first trigger pull as the best. He continues shooting and improving until the only correct caliber bullets remaining are on his gun-belt and inside the pistol.

Other model handguns and rifles remain with many cases of bullets still at the bottom of the recently excavated pit. If Henry is to become a mountain man, he will need all of them. Henry has a choice to make. Either he has to start hauling the weapons and ammunition above ground or leave them where they are and admit to himself the dream is over.

It is a hard thing to lose all hope. With hope, no task is too daunting. With hope, the impossible is made possible. With hope, the most horrific torture can be endured. Without hope, getting out of bed is a daunting task. Without hope, the possible is made impossible. Without hope, life seems like an unending horrific torture. Henry White lies on his back in his apartment's bed, staring at the ceiling. Reality has struck him with the power and illumination of a lightning bolt. He isn't a cowboy or a mountain man. Henry is no different than anybody else. He wants a full stomach more than he wants his freedom.

"OK, you've got to snap out of this," Henry thinks aloud to himself. "What can I do that will make me happy? The wilderness thing is out the window. I can't join a commune because of my new race. I can't survive alone in the forests because I'm not man enough. But that's fine, it's good to know that sort of stuff about yourself. So what can I do with the rest of my life? What if I try to become a productive member of society? I could go back to work and claw my way to the very top of the E.E.O.C., but I hate fucking up other people's lives even if it is 'the right thing to do'. I could get another job, but I've already got enough money in the bank to last three lifetimes. I could marry a white woman and have children. It wouldn't even be prejudiced. After all, I am a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. But I don't really want to put any kids into this world gone mad. And what would I want a wife for? I don't even visit the brothels anymore. I can't watch westerns or read cowboy novels anymore because they depress the hell out of me. I'm not gonna do drugs, out of principle. There is nothing to live for.... This is silly; something has to make life worth living. Think, Henry, think! When was the last time, I was truly happy?.... I know, when Vladimir beat the crap out of Judge Andre. Vengeance, that'll make me happy. I'll make the old bastard's life a living hell. Will that make me happy? I think it will. At the very least, it'll get me out of bed and stop talking to myself."

Henry gets out of bed for the first time in days, dresses himself, and starts his car on a quest to find Judge Andre's house. He asks a guy at the battery station if he knows where Judge Andre Evans' house is located. He discovers that Judge Evans has a huge estate in a pricey suburb outside of the city limits. Henry thanks the man and takes off for Andre's

mansion. He arrives at the gates of the estate exactly forty-five minutes later. Luckily, an ancient oak tree is growing near the roadside, giving shade to Henry and his car. He rolls the windows down and begins to scheme.

Henry thinks, what will hurt the old man most? A physical attack might kill him, thus ending my fun. Financially, the judge seems to be wealthy from appearances. He must be one of the few white men to have retained their wealth after 'social redistribution'. Any jury decision certainly would go my way, but Andre is white so any lawsuit I file against the judge might possibly end up under the jurisdiction of Andre's friends. Besides, bankrupting the old bastard will take too long and too much effort. That only leaves Andre's family to pick on. However, It seems the only way to hurt these kind of scum is through their family. But which family member is the dearest to the old cocksucker's heart?

Fate steps into Henry's life again when a gardener opens the gate to cut the grass in front of the fence. Henry gets out of his car and walks over to the young, white man in the torn overalls. Henry says, "Hot enough for you?"

The gardener suspiciously eyes the sign around Henry's neck and says, "Yes sir, I believe it is. Is there something, I can do fer you?"

"Could be, could be," replies Henry as he pulls out a wad of hundred dollar bills and starts peeling them slowly off the roll, one by one. "You, Judge Evans' groundskeeper?"

Not taking his eyes off the money, the gardener says, "Yes sir, I am. Name's Jimmy."

Henry: Good to meet you, Jimmy. I'm Henry. You been working for the judge, long? Jimmy: Three and a half years come next month. Henry: That's great, Jimmy, just great.... So, I guess you know Judge Andre and his family, pretty well, huh? Jimmy: I guess I know 'em about as much as any hired hand can know the boss.

Henry: Excellent, in your opinion, who do you think is Judge Andre's favorite member of his family. Who does he love the most? Jimmy: Judge Evans loves all his kinfolks. Henry: Good, good but he has to have a favorite. Maybe one of his grandchildren, he cherishes more than the rest? Jimmy: If you don't mind my asking, why do you want to know?

Henry: I do mind, so don't ask. Jimmy: ... You ain't going to hurt her are you, Mr. Henry? Henry: Of course not, Jimmy, I work for E.E.O.C. I protect people; it's my job. Jimmy: In that case, I reckon it's alright. The judge has a great granddaughter named Dominique Evans. She's the apple of the Judge's eye. Henry: How old is she?

Jimmy: Sixteen years old. Henry: Perfect, white girl? Jimmy: Hard to say, she could be mixed. She's got olive skin, but she swims a lot in the pool out back. Could be she keeps a suntan year round. Henry: What's her hair like?

Jimmy: Jet black, straight not kinky at all. And she's got blue eyes and a smoking little body. Henry: OK.

Jimmy: And she's real smart, straight A's from kindergarten on up. Henry: Fine. Jimmy: She lights up the whole room that she's in, friendly and liberal minded just like Judge Evans. Everyone loves her. Henry: Yeah, look here, it would be in your best interest to forget you ever met me. (Henry gives Jimmy several hundred dollars.) Jimmy: I never even seen you, mister.

Without another word spoken, Henry turns, walks back to his car, gets in, and drives away. On the road back to town, Henry calls the Hall of Records and immediately gets Chief Administrator Thabo Hutchison on the phone. Henry tells Thabo to gather all the information they have on Dominique Evans and have it ready for pickup at the front door in thirty minutes. Before Thabo can voice any objections, Henry clicks the phone off. He is beyond arguing with petty bureaucrats.

True to form, Tom Thatcher has all the required paperwork neatly organized in a folder. He is standing outside the front doors of the building as Henry drives up and parks directly in front of a fire hydrant. Let a cop give him a ticket, he dares them. Tom runs to meet him halfway, and says, "Mr. Hutchison ordered me to get these papers on Dominique Evans and give them to you."

Henry takes the file from Tom and looks him in the eyes for a couple of seconds. Henry says, "Yes," and walks back to his car. Henry glances over his shoulder. Tom has a great big smile on his face. Starting the car, Henry thinks, it takes so little to make some people happy.

From the Hall of Records, Henry goes straight to his old office at the E.E.O.C. and finds it occupied by three new employees. The floor is clear of paperwork, and somebody had requisitioned more filing cabinets. Three pair of eyes lock on Henry, as he walks over to the middle of his former desk, snaps his fingers, points at the woman in his former chair, points at the sign around his neck, and points toward the door. They all get the message loud and clear without speaking. She and her fellow employees leave Henry's office as he sits down in his chair, which was warmed by the woman's buttocks. With one arm, he scraps the entire mess off his desk and onto the floor. Let someone else pick all this shit up, he thinks. He gets the prerequisite forms from a desk drawer and commences writing a judgment against one, Dominique Evans.

The information file on Dominique proves most helpful. It is shocking to discover that she is full-blooded white. The supremely holy attitude of Judge Andre Evans proves to be the epitome of hypocrisy. He preaches absolute, total, unhesitant, complete integration, yet his own grandchildren are bigoted racists. But everything is roses and licorice. Old Andre is about to get a heaping dose of his own medicine. Henry finishes the judgment. Miss Evans is going to be sentenced to a professionally supervised intimate encounter, and Henry has plans on who will be the 'minority' stud. Only one small

detail left undone, a supervisor has to sign it.

Montumbo is on the phone when Henry barges into his office. "I'll have to call you back," says Montumbo and hangs up the receiver.

Henry tosses the judgment on Montumbo's desk and says, "Sign it." Henry sits in one chair and props his feet up in another chair.

Montumbo: That's right, make yourself at home.... I haven't seen you in a while. The fellows in surveillance say you've flipped your lid. Henry: Maybe. Montumbo: Are you back at work for good? Henry: No, just filing this one judgment then its back to bed. Montumbo: Mind if I read it before I sign it? Henry: Don't care.

Montumbo: Dominique Evans? Is this Judge Andre Evans' grandkid? Henry: Great grandchild.

Montumbo: Henry, I don't Henry: Mr. White! my name's Mr. White. Montumbo: O.... K...., Mr. White, I don't think it's a good idea to mess with Judge Evans' family. He's a legend, a true American hero. Why don't we let this girl slide, just this once? Henry: No. Montumbo: No?.... I think you've got a taste of power and gone insane. I don't care if you're a purple, Martian hemophiliac. There are laws and due process and procedures, which have to be followed. You cannot come in here, throw papers on my desk, and demand that I sign them. Just who the hell, do you think you are? Henry: How old is your little girl, eight or nine? Judy is her name, right? Why didn't you give that child a name with African Heritage?.... I sure would hate to see anything happen to her. Montumbo: Henry, Mr. White, I know you from way back. Your threats won't work with me. You couldn't hurt a child if your life depended on it. Henry: A few months ago, I would agree with you. I was a live and let live, sort of guy. I had a conscious, then my world collapsed, thanks to you in part. Now,.... now I just don't know. Why shouldn't I kill Judy? This is your world; I'm just a parasite hanging on for the ride. I'm hell bound, no doubt about it. I ain't sucked enough dicks to get into your heaven. The way I see it, you're the one with something or rather someone to lose. Are you willing to risk the life of your little girl for a young, honky slut?.... Sign the fucking paper!

Montumbo sits in still silence for a few moments, assessing the situation, weighing his options. The only thing that makes any sense is to sign the judgment and hope this loose cannon self-destructs. Montumbo signs the paper and looks away. Henry picks up the judgment and leaves. He is going to escort this writ through the proper channels in record time.

One o'clock, three days later at the Department of Interracial Relations, Henry sits in the waiting room. He hasn't been able to sleep or eat for forty-eight hours. Each passing second raises Henry's level of excitement. He checks his shirt pocket to make sure the filled hypodermic syringe is still there. The pharmacist said that one shot of this stuff will give you an erection that would last for hours. Little Miss Evans is in for the ride of her life.

Technically, the lucky stud was chosen by a random lottery and informed by certified letter of the time and date of the 'date'. Henry realizes this is a detail, which has escaped his attention. No matter, when the dude arrives to claim his prize, Henry will whip out his 'minority' sign and send the bastard on his merry way.

The nurse returns from her lunch break and walks past Henry to her station. It must be a slow day because all the other chairs in the lobby are empty. Full of nervous energy, Henry decides to pace back and forth in the waiting room. Out of curiosity, he opens one of the doors on the far side of the waiting room and looks inside. The room is bare save for a king-sized bed with a couple of large pillows on it. There are no covers or sheets of any kind; however, the ceiling is mirrored as are two entire walls. Everything is going to be in sight. There has to be some sort of psychological reasoning behind the room's layout, but Henry doesn't try to figure it out.

Into the waiting room walks Dominique. She is accompanied by what has to be her parents, and Judge Andre walks in behind them. Henry doesn't want to miss a second of this, so he goes over to where the group is congregating and sits near them. The nurse comes over with a pill and a glass of water and asks, "Is this young lady, Dominique?"

Her mother answers, "Yes, we're a little late because of the traffic. I hope that will not be an inconvenience?"

"No problem," says the nurse as she hands the medication to the girl in a trench coat. "The stud is running a little late, too. Now swallow your pill like a good girl."

Dominique looks at the capsule in her shaking hand and replies, "I'm not prejudiced. I... I can do this without using drugs."

"Really, baby? Let me ask you this. By any chance are you still a virgin?"

Dominique nods her head. "I was saving myself for my future husband, a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. That is if I could ever find a man that would have me."

"Listen baby," says the nurse as she puts her arm around the frightened, little girl. "I believe you. I don't know the circumstances behind your being sentenced to this, and I don't need to know. The question of if you're a racist or not will be put to rest as soon as a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, puts his johnson deep inside you. But if you are all stiff and frightened, my brother can't have the full pleasure of getting his

freak on. Understand, little missy?"

"Yes ma'am," meekly answers Dominique as she washes down the pill with water.

"Here baby; let me get your coat for you," says the nurse as she removes the girl's trench coat. "Whoa, you sure are a pretty little white girl, baby."

Henry almost burst his nut, then and there. Dominique has on a white teddy covered in pink bows and white stockings supported by a pink garterbelt and wears patent leather pumps with five-inch heels on her tiny feet. She has an overflowing, ripe body built for sin. This is so wrong, on so many different levels, but if Uncle Sam is offering this underage, drugged up peach, who is Henry to say no?

The nurse escorts Dominique to the very same room where Henry was looking moments before. Henry casually walks over toward the nurse's station. Shortly, a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, joins Henry near the nurse's station. "Hey man, do you know if they called for me yet? The name's Aristides Monteiro."

"No pal, and they're not gonna," responds Henry.

"What are you talking about, cracker?" angrily says Aristides.

"Look at this sign, stupid asshole," screams Henry pointing at the sign around his neck. "I'm a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils, just like you, dipshit. Plus I'm also a mentally and physically handicapped, lesbian female. To put it in plain english, I fucking outrank you. So you can turn your ass around and go home. The honky bitch is mine."

Aristides: Yo brother, we got off on the wrong foot. What do you say, we tag team the whore? Henry: Umm.... no.

Aristides: Hey man, my name's on the list for today. They called me to do her, not you, brother. By law, I can tell you to go home. Henry: And by law, I'll take your ass to jury trial for discrimination, or some charge I'll make up, then you'll be in prison getting banged by a big, hairy honky. And I'll get all your possessions. Still want to play this game?

Aristides: Chill out, brother-man. I'm only playing. It's just that I ain't had no pussy in two whole weeks. My balls are starting to turn blue. Is there nothing I can do to change your mind? Henry: I don't know. There may be something. What are you packing down there?

Aristides: Say what? Henry: You know. How long of rod you got?

Aristides: The anaconda's ten inches long. You wanta see him? Henry: No, that won't be necessary. You definitely could do more damage than I could, but it's the principle of the thing. How much money do you have in your pockets?

Aristides: I don't know, maybe fifty dollars. You going to pimp the bitch out? Henry: The thought had occurred to me. I once had a friend who got off on something he called poetic justice. Reveling in the insanity of it all. What could be more perverse than prostituting the judge's great granddaughter in a government owned facility? Aristides: I got exactly forty-seven dollars and thirty-nine cents. All of it is yours for the whore. Henry: Well,... you'll have to take this.

Aristides: What's that, a hard-on shot? Henry: Yes. Aristides: I don't need it. The anaconda's already slithering in my drawers. Henry: If you want the girl, you'll have to take the shot. The pharmacist guarantees it will make a man last an hour, at least. I want you to bang her so long and hard that her mama will get the cramps. Aristides: It's a deal.

Aristides hands the wad of bills and coins to Henry, who in turn passes the syringe to Aristides. He drops his pants and pokes the needle into his left buttock. Inadvertently, Henry sees Aristides' penis, and the man isn't joking about his anaconda. Henry pockets the money and walks over by Judge Andre who is sitting beside Dominique's parents.

"Your first time, judge?" asks Henry.

"Can we please have silence, mister? This is really hard on the family," responds the old man.

"Sure," says Henry sitting next to the judge. "No reason for the whole family to get a hard-on just because the girl's about to get one." Henry looks at the old judge for a response, but the old man only stares straight ahead. The old bastard doesn't remember me, thinks Henry. But I bet he'll never forget me after today.

The nurse escorts Aristides to the bedroom door where Dominique awaits him. The nurse whispers something into his ear and he smiles. She opens the door and Aristides gets his first look at Dominique lying spread eagle on the bed. "Fuck me with a cucumber!" exclaims Aristides. "It must be my motherfucking birthday. That's one fine virgin piece of pussy! Best forty-seven dollars I ever spent." He slams the door shut while taking off his shirt.

Henry keeps his eyes focused on the old man and his grandson and his grandson's wife. As loud moans and muffled screams seep outside the nearby bedroom, Henry can actually see the trio turning a paler shade of white. Time to stir it up, thinks Henry and says, "That's the problem with fucking. You can't always tell if their moans are from ecstasy or pain. In your little girl's case, I'd have to say it's a mixture of both. I seen that guy's cock.... Ouch!"

Henry tries to see the expression in their faces, but they won't look at him. Well, that's a kick in the crotch, thinks Henry. He sits there for a full ten minutes, trying to figure out how to make this sadistic situation even more painful. The answer is so obvious that it makes Henry cringe for not thinking of it sooner. He gets up, walks over to the bedroom door, pounds on it with his fists, and shouts, "Turn her over, and fuck her up the ass!"

Old Judge Andre is to his feet in a heartbeat and charges straight at Henry. Blinding rage has overridden the old

man's infirmities. Without the aid of his walker, Andre runs up to Henry and starts throwing haymakers at Henry's chest and head. Henry bursts out in hysterical laughter. He tries to block some of the old man's punches, which do hurt when they connect, but his laughter messes with his concentration. After a minute or so, two police officers who are permanently stationed in the building for just such emergencies, tackle and cuff the old judge. As they roughly pull the elderly man to his feet and begin to drag him away, he cries, "I marched with Saint King! I marched with Saint King!"

Still laughing, Henry waves goodbye to him and shouts, "Goodbye, you old bastard! See you in the sensitivity training program!"

Once the judge is out of sight, Henry opens the bedroom door slightly and peeks in. He looks over his shoulder to see if the girl's parents are watching, but they have turned their backs to him. Looking through the crack, Henry watches the live, X-rated show for awhile. He wants to savor this moment, but something is wrong. The satisfaction isn't there. Where is the joy, the elation of winning? Vengeance, where is thine reward?.... Nothing.... It all means nothing.... Everything is nothing.... Henry goes home.

Contrary to the popular consensus, one man cannot make a difference. Henry is just a microbe on the back of an elephant. And who is he to say what is right and what is wrong? If everyone says up means down and down means up, then in fact, up is the word you'd use to describe going lower. And down is the word you'd use to describe going higher. Maybe everyone gets what they deserve. Maybe the weak have somehow earned their misery in life, and the powerful have been rewarded for their strength. Or maybe, everything happens for a reason, and we're too close to see the big picture. But Henry's life experiences have led him to one conclusion. Life is just the journey that takes you to your death. You can resign yourself to your fate and go peacefully. Or you can make a last, futile gesture and spit in the face of your executioner. Henry decides to take the latter route.

Luckily, even while drowning in the depths of depression, Henry had the foresight to have smuggled his pistol and gun-belt from the backwoods. Now, the weapon seems to call for him from its concealment. Wrapped in a blanket, it sings like a siren to a sailor. Wisely, Henry used his discretion and leaves it in its hiding place beside his favorite recliner. Earlier, Henry had swept his apartment for surveillance devices. Nobody was spying on him, probably. But why take a stupid risk and pull out the outlawed weapon and get caught? It is there, ready for a final showdown. And that's all that matters.

Henry stays up late. He is far too excited to sleep. His spirit is re-energized. Ironically, the thought of facing a certain death has given Henry a lust for life which he'd never had when looking at a long, depressing future. He plots, schemes, and plans while visions of exit wounds flood his brain. It isn't about changing the system or striking a blow for a self-hating race who refuses to stand up for itself. No, this is about forcing the powers-that-be to give him, his preferred ticket out of life. Henry cannot live like a cowboy, but he sure as hell can die like one, in a hail of gunfire.

Early the next morning, Henry makes a trip to the bank. At first, the bank manager huffs at the nonsensical request Henry makes, but when Henry offers him ten percent of his passbook account, the man cannot do enough to try to please Henry. The bank manager calls the Russian embassy to inquire whether they have any accounts set up to receive humanitarian aid. They give him the account numbers, and he wires eighty percent of Henry's money into the accounts. Ten percent of Henry's passbook money is wired into Teresa Hall's savings account. And the remaining ten percent is transferred into foreign accounts bearing the bank manager's name. Virtually penniless, Henry exits the bank with a feeling of total euphoria.

A few days later, Henry is sitting on the doorsteps of the United World Church waiting for the doors to open and for the Sunday morning service to begin. The spiritualist leader unlocks the doors from the inside, and she is almost knocked down as Henry barrels for the front pew. "You're certainly in a hurry for church to start this morning, huh, Henry?" says the female preacher.

You don't know the half of it, thinks Henry as he sits on the front pew. "That's Mr. White to you, woman!" shouts Henry setting an ominous tone for the upcoming service.

The United World Church fills to capacity as usual, its being the only legal church in every town, state, country, continent, and world. The pews are packed with one notable exception. The left front bench is empty, save for a scruffy looking, western dressed, spur wearing, ex-millionaire named Henry White. Nobody wants to sit next to him.

The spiritualist leader starts her sermon much like she starts every sermon. We all love everyone, blah, blah, blah. Everybody's the same on the inside, blah, blah, blah. The most cardinal of all sins are hatred and prejudice, blah, blah, blah. She gets to the part about how good always wins over evil in the long run when Henry starts shouting, "Show your tits! Show your tits! Show your tits!"

After recovering from the initial shock of Henry's outburst, the spiritualist leader responds, "Hen.... Mr. White, your taunts are both inappropriate and offensive. Will you please be quiet?"

"No, I will not, priestess," answers Henry rising to his feet and walking up to the pulpit. "For years I've been sitting out here looking up at you looking down on me. A common, honky bitch lecturing me on right and wrong, good and evil. Well, I got tired of that, and that started me thinking about those sweater puppies. I can tell you got a what: large C cup? small D cup? Then I started trying to guess what color nipples: pink? reddish-brown? dark-brown? The way I see it, you owe me a peek at them bad boys."

"I... L... leave me alone. Please go away," pleads the woman.

"Look here whore. You ever hear of the sexual reorientation program?" says Henry getting in her face. "Either I see them tits, or next week you're going to be choking down a donkey dick.... If you don't believe me, ask Laquita."

The trembling preacher looks over her horrified flock trying to find Laquita's face, but Laquita stares at the floor, avoiding eye contact. The spiritual leader breaks down, crying hysterically. Her weeping echoes off the high sidewalls and the cathedral ceiling. Henry takes her by the hand and walks with her behind a column. The poor woman is so distraught that Henry has to help her undress, pulling her blouse over her head and unhooking her brassiere. Standing there naked from the belly button up, the spiritualist leader shakes and shivers and cries uncontrollably.

As tears stream down her face, Henry doesn't bother looking at her breasts, instead he looks deeply into her watery eyes. There it is, thinks Henry. Her eyes tell the story of her shattered spirit. Her fairy tale morality got a dose of shit life reality. Henry leaves her there and walks down the aisle while parishioners rush to help their spiritualist leader. Henry pats himself on the back for a job well done.

Back in his apartment, Henry sits in his favorite chair with the loaded blanket on his lap. He watches an old cowboy movie on the TV. After his return from the wilderness out west, Henry couldn't think about anything western, but now that he is going to die with his boots on, the old movies relaxed him. At any second the front door will burst open and a SWAT team will shoot him dead. No problem, but Henry wants to fire at least one shot at his executioners.

Seconds tick by, but still no cops. Minutes turn into hours, but still no cops. The morning sun rises, and the odds of a sneak attack evaporates. What did I do wrong, thinks Henry? I was sure that church thing would have prodded them into action, and what about wiring money to the Russians? Don't they still secretly execute traitors? Maybe, I'm being a little too subtle. Now what would be guaranteed to rile them up? Hmm....

It's high noon at the City Hall when Henry walks up the front steps, newspaper in hand, concealed weapon under his shirt. He finds the perfect spot halfway between the top step and front doors. Henry drops his pants, squats, and commences to take a shit while reading his newspaper. Passersby laugh and the building's security guards watch impotently. Collectively they think, should we do something? This is that crazy, orphaned King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. Nobody wants to be charged with any sort of prejudice or racism. Best to wait for a supervisor before taking any action.

Leisurely, Henry finishes his business and goes home.

Once again, Henry sits in his favorite chair with the loaded blanket on his lap. They have to come for me tonight, thinks Henry. If they don't break down that door, I'll... I'll... I don't know what I'll do. They have to come for me; they just have to....

This night, Henry sits in the dark, TV off. He can barely make out the door; nevertheless Henry's eyes are fixed on where the doorknob should be. At precisely one AM, the door falls inward, bathing the apartment in ambient light from the outside walkway. Two burly men step inside holding their knife-sticks at the ready. A short man, garbed in African clothing, walks in behind them and turns on the light. They are startled to see Henry sitting there, waiting for them. Henry says, "Welcome, come on in. Make yourselves at home. Jamaal Tubbs, chief administrative officer of the E.E.O.C., what brings you here at this late hour?"

Jamaal strolls around the room, admiring the collection of western gear. Jamaal says, "This is quite an impressive display, Mr. White. It must have taken a lot of ingenuity and effort to put this collection together. Do you suppose all of these things drove you to madness? I could put a ban on all things cowboy. Come to think of it, cowboys were racists. They killed all of those defenseless Native Americans and stole their land."

"Where do you think the land on which you're now standing came from? Are you planning on giving it all back?" asks Henry as he notes the cops' positions. Each policeman has his club pulled and ready in his hand, but their semiautomatic pistols are still holstered. Not much sport in shooting these sitting ducks right now, thinks Henry. Might as well listen to what shorty has to say.

Jamaal sits down on the couch adjacent to Henry, crosses his legs, and drapes his arms over the back of the couch. He says, "I'm not going to try to justify the way things are. And you're not going to guilt me out of my birthright. All you need to understand is that we have the power of life and death over you. We tell you: what to think; what to buy; what to believe; what to do. Don't you ever watch television? We've preached right and wrong twenty-four/seven since the 80's. It's not overt, but even a moron should catch on after a while.... You do know the only reason you're still breathing is out of reverence for your ancestry, don't you?"

Henry sits for a few seconds in silence and says, "Don't let that stop you. Do your worst."

"I intend to do just that," states Jamaal. "You give your money to the racist Russians, albeit for humanitarian causes. Then you assault a spiritualist leader in her own church. Then you take a shit on the front steps of City Hall. Either you are fucked up in the brain, or you're a race traitor. And what I cannot understand is why? Most crackers would cut off their right arm to be in your shoes, but you don't care. Our people have fought and clawed and bitched our way to the top of the heap, yet you're jumping off the roof and trying to take the rest of us with you. Well my brother, your rampage is at an end. Tomorrow at noon, a plane leaves for Russia, and your ass is going to be on it. Since you love the one-eighth honky blood flowing through your veins so much, you can go live among them. But that's not the kicker, I'm going to personally make sure you still receive your monthly stipend payments in Russia. You think we act barbaric, wait until those Russian racists find out you're a King, wrongfully taken from the African Motherland and enslaved by the white devils. They'll torture you in ways that the devil himself hasn't thought of. Don't blame me. Don't blame your race. Blame yourself. We have bent over backwards to accept you into the fold, and you repay our kindness with grief. Soon you'll see how your honky kin, treat our people."

"Probably, not much different than our people treat them, given the chance," says Henry. "Now if you'll leave, I can start packing.... Pick up the door on your way out."

"You want me out of your homestead, Hoss?" asks Jamaal. "You don't seem to understand anything but cowboy, so I'll speakum country. You be at the airport at eleven AM, else we're going to form us an old-fashioned posse at the police station and hunt you down like a mangy dog. That airplane ain't leaving without you on it. Even if we have to tie you to a pole and tote it at both ends. What's that thing called, Tex?"

Henry stares right through Jamaal and doesn't say a word.

"OK, be that way, Bubba," taunts Jamaal getting to his feet. "You be there at eleven sharp, or we'll come get you at one minute after eleven sharp. Let's get out of this dump, fellas."

They leave Henry's apartment, and on their way out, one of the guards turns off the light just to be funny. Henry stays sitting for a couple of minutes to make certain that they've actually left. Now, he convulses with laughter. Stupid assholes, thinks Henry. I couldn't come up with a better death if I tried. It's going to be a classic ole' west showdown, except it'll be at eleven instead of high noon.

At precisely 10:30 AM, Henry walks over his apartment's fallen door and out through its frame. He is dressed in western attire from head to toe. He wears a dark ten-gallon hat, dark bandana around his neck, dark rodeo shirt, a Texas belt-buckle holding up faded denim jeans, and freshly shined boots with silver spurs. There is a clanking noise every time one of his boots touches the sidewalk. He carries his weapon underneath its blanket. Halfway to the police station, he drops the blanket and buckles the gun-belt around his waist. He rotates his right shoulder and arm to stretch out the muscles. He practices his quick-draw technique, rapidly drawing the pistol out of its holster, aiming, pretending to fire, and repeats the entire process again and again. He is ready for action as the police station comes within sight.

True to his word, Jamaal has what appears to be every cop in the state, lounging outside of headquarters. The entire block is bumper-to-bumper in police cruisers. Remarkably, nobody notices Henry as he gets closer and closer.

Henry's heart beats so loud and strong, he fears it will explode inside his chest. He is closer to the pack of cops than he was to the pinecones in the backwoods. He stops.... He coughs. Suddenly, every cop dives for cover behind patrol cars. At least one hundred guns are instantly pointing at Henry.

Jamaal is the one exception. He doesn't dive for cover. He doesn't run. He doesn't even spill his coffee. Jamaal says, "Well, well, well, lookee who's here. You don't listen too good, do ya boy? You're supposed to be at the airport not the police station. Damn, you're one dumb cracker. What's that, a peashooter? How in the hell did you get a gun? It doesn't matter. I'll give you to the count of ten to put down that gun, or else; these officers will do their sworn duty and blow you to hell and back....

One....

Henry has to choose a target, but who?

Two....

Jamaal would be a super-great target, but he's off center. It would be a difficult angle. The bullet might miss.

Three....

No, it has to be the cop's head, directly in the straight line of fire, peeking over a car's hood.

Four....

I bet this guy never dreamed he'd die today. Too bad, life's a bitch.

Five....

Should I fire on the count of ten or nine?

Six....

I'm the bad guy in the BLACK hat, so I'm shooting at nine.

Seven....

I hope he doesn't have any kids....

Eight....

God, forgive me....

Nine.

"BLAM!!!"

Henry fires the first shot, but as he looks to see if the bullet finds its target, he only sees the sky. Funny, thinks Henry as he hits the ground. I'll never know if I hit him or.... not.... Bright light.... heaven?..... or.... hell?....??.....

The End