

# The Magic Light

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To My Grandfather Loren Berry  
An Advertising Man

"The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. To be your own man is a hard business. If you try it, you'll be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself."

Rudyard Kipling

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## 1. The Advertising Club in May

It is the end of May in the Bay Area, five months before a presidential election. Everyone says the election is the most important in the nation's history but the country is divided more than anyone can remember. The collective psyche of the nation is under a spell of unrelenting paranoia and suspicion that lingers everywhere. It is thick like summer fog in the Bay Area. It seeps inside homes and infiltrates offices. It is everywhere yet like around fish. It is a great pervasive medium containing and influencing everything in it.

John Jenkins is happy his advertising business is out of politics as he walks towards the luncheon meeting of the advertising club in downtown San Francisco. He is the founder of ImageHouse Advertising, the hottest advertising shop in town and senses these strange times more than most, his mind a radar screen of the current zeitgeist.

Headlines in the newspapers along the street scream about political scandals and a large video screen on one of the buildings has a scrolling review of news. A new terrorist bombing in Oregon. The Yellow Flea virus is spreading outside of Texas. And the two presidential candidates, the billionaire businessman Dan Harris of the Libertarian Party and Senator Claire Wilson of the Progressive Party, are running neck-and-neck in polling.

The street is crowded with the business lunch crowd who rush past him looking down at their smartphones rather than the video screen on the building. Jenkins thinks it's amazing people don't run into each other.

\* \* \*

The San Francisco Advertising Club is located in an old brick building without parking so everyone has to park in one of the big city garages and walk to it. It has leaded windows and a big brass knocker on the door. The brass knocker is a tradition and everyone has to knock on the door when they arrive. Jenkins lifts the knocker and gives it a few taps. The door opens and an elegant man dressed in a butler's outfit appears and leads him down the hallway and into the lunch room.

A crowd of advertising people is gathered in the dining room of the club. There is a noticeable stir when Jenkins walks into the room. He is the hero of the hour, the superstar of advertising in San Francisco, the recipient of the Advertising Firm of the Year Award.

Miles Cameron, the CEO of Omni Communications, the largest advertising firm in town, is the first to reach him. It doesn't surprise Jenkins. After all, Jenkins used to work at Omni and Omni has been his toughest competitor since he left to start ImageHouse.

"Congratulations," Cameron says. "Getting the SPEAK account was a real coup."

"Thanks Miles but I don't call it a coup," Jenkins says.

Miles Cameron smiles.

"Your connections to the President didn't hurt," Miles says. "Your work on the President's campaign when you were with Omni."

"That was eight years ago," Jenkins says.

"People don't forget things like that," Miles says.

"What are you driving at?" Jenkins asks.

"I mean, everyone knows Hassan Mohammad at SPEAK is close to the President," Miles says.

"You're just jealous Omni didn't get the account," Jenkins says.

"Always jealous," Miles says.

"At least you have Wilson's account," Jenkins says.

"Our next President," Miles says.

"I hope not," Jenkins says.

Miles wanders away into the luncheon crowd.

Bob Thompson, an old friend and head of Thompson Advertising, wanders up to Jenkins.

"I've seen you look better," Thompson says.

"It's tough creating the hottest shop in town," Jenkins says sarcastically.

"You don't look as happy as you did when we first met at the club six years ago," Thompson says.

"Right after I left Icon doing political campaigns," Jenkins adds.

"And started your own little advertising firm with Catherine," Bob Thompson says.

Jenkins looks off at the wall of the advertising club.

"Those were the days," he says to the wall.

Half an hour later, after business talk over salad and roast chicken, the president of the advertising club takes the podium to introduce John Jenkins for the advertising award. He gives the usual short bio on Jenkins.

“Most of you know a little about the background of our award recipient today but let me briefly recap some of the highlights of John Jenkins’ career,” he says. “After graduating from Cal, he joined Omni Communications in San Francisco eight years ago that was handling the presidential campaign of a relatively unknown state senator in California. Most know about the legendary advertising campaign he created for the state Senator who became President. The new President asked him to join his administration but John Jenkins declined and left Omni to start ImageHouse Advertising. Starting from just two people, ImageHouse now is a fifty-person advertising firm with a collection of clients most would die for. Two months ago, ImageHouse became the advertising firm for SPEAK, as everyone knows, the largest corporation in Silicon Valley. There’s a lot more to tell you about John Jenkins but I’m sure he doesn’t want me to ramble on.”

The president of the advertising club presents Jenkins a silver trophy with some type of mythic creature exploding from the top of it. There is a standing ovation and when the applause dies down Jenkins steps behind the podium. He sees old friends and enemies out in the lunch group. There are a lot of new faces out there and Harvey Edmonds, a well-known president of Bay Area corporation. As usual, he

hasn't prepared a speech and talks in his stream of consciousness style about what is on his mind at the moment.

"Presidential election years are a strange time for advertising," he says. "The whole nation is a little off its' game. Consumer trends different than normal. Divisions grow as the election nears. People become paranoid about things and suspicious of each other. Traditional product categories go through strange convolutions. Advertising cycles are thrown out of whack."

His talk meanders on for another five minutes about the type of services his firm ImageHouse offers clients. It is somewhat of a modified sales pitch for his advertising firm as Jenkins is always looking for new clients to add to the forty clients he already has.

During the question and answer period, one of the attendees asks him if he will ever get back into political advertising.

"I'm glad I'm out of political advertising," he says. "Once is enough for me."

When the lunch is finished Jenkins introduces himself to Harvey Edmonds, President of Soft Technologies in Cupertino. They talk for a few minutes and then exchange business cards. Jenkins tells Edmonds he'll call him and

set up a meeting. As he puts Edmonds' card into his wallet he thinks ImageHouse might add another client so lunch is not a total waste of time.

Everyone is gone except for Miles Cameron who follows Jenkins outside.

"You weren't serious when you said you're out of politics?" he asks as they stand in front of the advertising club.

"I'm in advertising now," Jenkins says. "Not politics."

"When are you going to learn they're both the same," Miles says.

"Maybe for you they are," Jenkins says. "But not for me."

"They were the same eight years ago when you created your advertising campaign for the President," Miles says. "People are still talking about it."

"That was eight years ago," Jenkins says. "In my younger, more idealistic years. My idealism is gone now. Gone like the idealism of a lot of others who worked to get him elected."

"You're back in politics," Miles says. "Whether you want to be or not."

"Just what is that supposed to mean?" Jenkins asks.

"Have you seen the breaking news?" Miles asks.

"No," Jenkins says. "What's going on?"

Miles smiles.

"Check the news," he says. "I think you're back in politics."

Miles Cameron is gone before Jenkins can ask him what he means.

On the walk back to his car he catches the breaking news on the building's video screen.

"SPEAK Corporation charged by FTC of bias in their search rankings."

## 2. Breaking News

ImageHouse Advertising is located on the top floor of a converted warehouse in the Embarcadero area of San Francisco. The large back windows of the warehouse look out on Telegraph Hill and the front windows on the piers of the Embarcadero and beyond them the Oakland Bay Bridge and Treasure Island. The room is busy with activity this morning and might be the city room of some newspaper at its heyday. People scurry about and short meetings quickly materialize and evaporate around desks throughout the big room.

Jenkins sits in his corner office with his partner Catherine Cummings watching a breaking news report on his flat screen wall television.

"The world's largest Internet company SPEAK is facing allegations their search algorithms are biased towards presidential candidate Claire Wilson and against candidate

Dan Harris. But SPEAK CEO Hassan Mohammad adamantly refutes these charges."

Jenkins hits the mute button on his remote.

"Miles Cameron was right," Jenkins says. "I'm back in politics after all."

"I warned you about SPEAK's relationship with the White House," Catherine says.

"Hassan says it's no more than technical consulting," Jenkins says.

"That's a bunch of BS," Catherine says. "Thirty meetings this year is more than technical consulting. You're again letting the size of the account cloud your view. You're doing it more and more these days."

"So we're into politics again," Jenkins says. "We handle this problem for them and that's all."

"It doesn't work like that," says Catherine.

"I'll make it work," Jenkins says.

Jenkins' cell phone buzzes.

He looks at the number on it.

"Hassan Mohammad calling," he says as he answers it.

"Yeah, we're watching the news right now," he says.

Jenkins listens for a few moments.

"OK, we're on our way," he says.

"Let's go," he says to Catherine. "Hassan wants to see us right now. The bias allegations are driving him crazy."

"We're getting into a hornet's nest," Catherine says.

"A hornet's nest that's 75% of our business," Jenkins says.

### 3. SPEAK

The headquarters of SPEAK is a little south of Palo Alto off 101. It looks more like the campus of a university than one of the world's largest corporations. Tourists visiting Palo Alto mistake it for part of the campus of Stanford University. The strange SPEAK logo, composed of what looks like colorful hieroglyphic scribbling's, is on all of the white SPEAK buildings. The guard at the front gate smiles and waves Jenkins through. He has been down here a few times since ImageHouse got the SPEAK account and he is getting familiar at the company.

A woman meets Jenkins and Catherine at the front desk of SPEAK and takes them to Hussan Mohammad's office. They walk through a great atrium that looks like the entry to some international airport. Everything is painted white and accented with aluminum trim and the company colors of red, yellow and green. They enter an elevator and go to the top floor of the building and down a wide hallway into Hassan

Mohammad's corner office. There is a television on in the office and people gathered around it. It is the same news report Jenkins saw in his office about SPEAK.

Hassan Mohammad is from India and in his early thirties. He is a slim man with short hair and thick, square-rimmed glasses. He wears a polo shirt and jeans. In the corner of his office is a skateboard he uses to travel around the company. When he sees Jenkins and Catherine he waves the people out of his office and closes the door. Hassan is one of the calmest people Jenkins has known but this morning he is clearly agitated.

"You've seen the news," he says. "The Federal Trade Commission is asking questions about whether we've abused our dominance in the search market. There's a rumor we might be investigated as a monopoly. It's a PR mess right. We've got to create a response."

"How did all this get mixed up with the presidential campaign?" Jenkins asks.

"Dan Harris and his Libertarian operatives from his campaign are behind this," Hassan says. "They went to the antitrust officials at the FTC claiming we're biased in our search results in favor of Claire Wilson."

"Are you?" Jenkins asks.

"Of course not," Hassan says.

"All the meetings you've had at the White House are no secret," Catherine says.

"As I've told you, the President has appointed me to his Technology Committee," Hassan says. "It's no surprise the government needs technology advice. The President's looking to revamp government computer systems. He wants to put more government departments on the Internet."

Hassan rises from his desk and picks up a golf putter next to the skateboard. He drops a golf ball on the floor and carefully lines up a putt. The ball goes toward a golf hole device and clinks into it. Jenkins and Catherine watch Hassan put his putter back and sit down behind his glass desk. There is a moment of silence.

"I want your firm to focus on refuting the charges with some positive communication message," says Hussan. "We can't afford to be seen as running a biased search engine."

"Damage control," says Jenkins.

"Damage control is not the right way of looking at the situation," Hassan says. "I like to view it as an opportunity to educate more people about our services. Update them on our products and services. Open up our company to more transparency."

"Perhaps we invite people from the Harris' campaign to come here for a presentation on how your search system

works," says Catherine. "Have some members of the press at the event. Mix things with a tour of the company and a nice dinner."

"Yes," says Hassan. "Something along these lines is what I'm thinking about. A positive event to show we're not biased. Something to stop the FTC investigation."

Catherine turns to Jenkins.

"What do you think?" she asks him.

"Get going on it," Jenkins says.

"I'll need to work with your PR department," she says.

"You've got anything you need from us," Hassan says.

"You've got all the assistance you need from us," Hassan says. "But you need to get on this immediately before it gets out of control."

"I'll have something to show you in a few days," Catherine says.

"It can't be too soon," Hassan says.

\* \* \*

Jenkins and Catherine are ready to go but Hassan gets up and grabs his putter again, drops a golf ball on the floor, lines up his putt and taps the ball. It rolls towards the device but misses it. He walks up to the ball

and taps it into the hole device. He picks up the ball and puts his putter back and moves the golf ball around in his hand.

"There is something else I want to talk to you about," he says. "Something that's one day going to be a lot more important than our search business."

He goes to a filing cabinet and presses some buttons and the file drawer springs opens and he extracts a file from it and hands the file to Jenkins.

"Much of the stuff in this file is public information," he says. "Garnered from business magazines and blogs. Still, it's important you don't discuss this with anyone else."

"We're good at keeping things between the two of us," Jenkins says.

"You know we're putting a lot of our efforts into artificial intelligence and virtual reality," he says.

"We've heard about this like most people have," says Jenkins. "But you've never discussed it with us."

"Lots know we're moving in this direction," says Hassan. "Big moves like this is hard to keep quiet. But few know about what's in the file in front of you."

"The tech world has created lots of incredible devices," says Hassan. "Computers. Smartphones. Cars that

drive themselves. But the future of technology is not in creating more incredible tech devices but in creating new environments. The next big step in technology will be for the idea of a device to fade away to be replaced by a particular type of environment. The fate of the computer will move from being device to service assistant. Over time, the computer itself - whatever its form factor - will be an intelligent assistant helping you through your day. Instead of online information and activity happening mostly on the rectangular touch screens of smartphones, artificial intelligence will power increasingly formless computers."

"I've never heard the idea talked about like this," Jenkins says.

"It's much more than an idea," says Hassan. "It's becoming a reality. The file you have is about a start-up company called Magic Light we've made a substantial investment in. I'm on the board of the company. We're close to introducing it as a new product. I want you to review the file and meet with the founder of the company Quin Ridgely and experience Magic Light first hand."

"What is Magic Light?" Catherine asks.

"It's hard to tell you what it is," he says. "It's something so new it hasn't been put into a category yet. We're calling it mixed reality for now simply as a way of

distinguishing it from the other virtual realities. But it will probably get another name in the future."

"Virtual reality is a big thing these days," Catherine says. "What's the difference between virtual reality and mixed reality?"

Hassan smiles.

"There's a world of difference," he says. "To simplify things for you, virtual reality creates digital environments that shut out the real world. VR places users in entirely new locations. Whether these locations are computer-generated or captured by video, VR blocks off the user's natural surroundings. Something called augmented reality puts digital content on top of the real world. Like the glasses developed a few years ago. The visible natural world is overlaid with a layer of digital content. But Magic Light is creating this new mixed reality where digital content reacts to one's real world. Virtual objects are integrated into and responsive to the natural world."

Catherine and Jenkins are silent. Neither can think of another question to ask Hassan.

The intercom on Hassan's desk buzzes.

"They're in the meeting room now waiting for you," says a voice over the intercom.

"Be right there," Hassan says.

"Our lawyers are here to talk about the bias allegations," he tells them. "Got to run. Review the file then meet with Quin Ridgely and experience Magic Light. Get back with me after you've done this. I don't want to put my spin on all this until you've experienced the technology first hand. Quin Ridgely has made some amazing recent breakthroughs and we're ramping up our launch date. I have some things in mind to discuss with you when we meet again."

#### 4. Beyond Damage Control

Jenkins and Catherine get back to San Francisco in the late afternoon and decide to grab an early dinner at one of their favorite Italian restaurants in North Beach. It is located off the busy river street of Broadway in the little backwater of Washington Square. Jenkins is excited about meeting Quin Ridgely and seeing the new technology called Magic Light.

"This could mean a new area for us," he says. "We could be the first advertising firm involved on a big scale with mixed reality."

"It sounds interesting," Catherine says. "But Hassan Mohammad has never been one to show his hand of cards to anyone. I've never trusted him for a minute."

"You're too skeptical of everything," Jenkins says.

"And you're too trusting of everyone," Catherine says.

"It's not hard trusting someone who represents three quarters of our business," Jenkins says.

"That's not my criteria," Catherine says.

"It should be," says Jenkins.

"Someone in this firm has to have a conscience," Catherine says.

"We'd never be where we are today if we picked clients based on your criteria," Jenkins say.

"I'm not asking you to accept my criteria," she says. "Just consider there might be some criteria."

"We wouldn't be the hottest shop in town if we had all these criteria for choosing clients."

"I'm not interested in rules for choosing clients just seeing you get some passion back in your work," Catherine says.

"What do you mean by that?" Jenkins asks.

"I mean that you had passion when we first started out with just a few clients," Catherine says. "And I've watched you trade passion for the passionless work of adding more clients and money to our firm. As we've grown in number and size of clients, the passion applied to each of them has have gotten smaller and smaller."

"And just look what all that passion I had helped produce," Jenkins says. "A President that's created a nation on the verge of a revolution."

"You had no idea of what he was going to do," Catherine says. "No one did. He fooled everybody."

"Politics is a dirty game," Jenkins says. "I don't want to have to guess what people are going to do once I help get them elected. I don't want any part of it."

"Well we've gotten back into politics bailing SPEAK out of the fix they're in," Catherine says.

"It's not a matter of politics, Jenkins says. "It's a matter of going to bat for a client that represents three quarters of our business."

"I don't think you heard a think I said," Catherine says.

\* \* \*

The search bias allegations against SPEAK dominate much of the news and Catherine's work in the next few days. Catherine reluctantly begins working on the PR event for SPEAK. Catherine puts her top assistant Marilyn Benson in charge of running things for her while she works on the SPEAK event.

She is upset Jenkins has gotten the firm involved with this huge client. Besides her mistrust of Hassan Mohammad she feels that ImageHouse is putting too many "eggs in one

basket" as she tells Jenkins. But Catherine is the ultimate professional and one of the best at what she does and before long she is working at top speed for the SPEAK event. The file on Magic Light Hassan gave them to read is pushed on the back burner until the plans for SPEAK PR event is finalized.

Catherine identifies a group of media people to invite to the event and contacts some officials with Dan Harris' presidential campaign. They are suspicious but willing to come to SPEAK and hear a presentation on how the search results are arrived at. She contacts Hassan and arranges for a few of his top tech executives to make a presentation at the event.

But all work is not for the SPEAK. There are the firm's other clients and new prospects to approach. It is a busy time for the advertising firm. After receiving the advertising firm of the year award they are contacted by a number of other companies that want to discuss retaining them.

Jenkins sets up a meeting with Harvey Edmonds who he met at the advertising club lunch and they drive down to his company Soft Technologies in Cupertino one morning to meet with him. The next day they drive up to Sonoma for a presentation to a winery. They go to Oakland to make a

presentation to a software firm. Business is rushing into the advertising firm after their recognition as the top advertising firm in the city.

Back in the office, there are a number of client campaigns for Jenkins and Catherine to review, some commercials and web ads to finalize and the branding to approve for a new tech client in Silicon Valley. A number of friends call wishing Jenkins congratulations for winning the advertising award.

One morning, Catherine comes into Jenkins office to discuss final plans for the SPEAK presentation. She shows him the confirmed guests at the SPEAK event. As they discussed, it will go far beyond just damage control but serve as a publicity event for the company. Hussan Mohammad will make a presentation and give the visitors a tour of the company.

Jenkins calls Hassan and over the speakerphone the three discuss the plan. Hussan is pleased with it and says he will get to work with his people. Catherine says she will create a PR release about the meeting and blanket the media with it. The meeting is planned in a week. SPEAK will cover the cost of travel for the group and put them up at an elegant little boutique hotel in Palo Alto. It will almost be a vacation for the guests.

When the call ends, Jenkins goes over to his bar and opens a bottle of wine from the winery they just made a presentation to. He pours two glasses and hands one to Catherine and raises his glass in a toast.

"Great work on setting the meeting up," Jenkins says.

After the toast, he hands the file on Magic Light to Catherine.

"Have any plans tonight?" he asks.

"I guess not now," she says.

"It's time to get into the Magic Light stuff," Jenkins says. "Take a look at the files today and be at my place at seven tonight. We're going to talk about Quin Ridgely and Magic Light. I'm making dinner. You get to experience my new barbeque sauce."

"Lucky me," she says.

## 5. The Berkeley Hills

Jenkins leaves the office early but not early enough to avoid the huge traffic jam on the Oakland Bay Bridge which is terrible. The radio says the traffic jam is caused by the big rally for Dan Harris at the Oakland Coliseum. The radio news talks about how the campaign of Harris is filling stadiums with avid supporters as the populism of Harris' Libertarian Party continues to grow around the nation. The radio says police and National Guard have surrounded the coliseum due to the clashes between supporters of the two presidential candidates.

Jenkins' home is an old home of Spanish architecture in the hills of Berkeley. It is on one of those narrow streets that wind back-and-forth above Berkeley where you can barely pass another car. The backyard looks out over Berkeley and San Francisco in the distance across the bay.

It is still warm out and Jenkins takes a shower and gets into shorts and t-shirt and takes out a few steaks, opens a bottle of wine and turns on the television. There are helicopter shots above the Oakland Coliseum of a growing riot outside the stadium as the Harris and Wilson groups clash. It is becoming a regular scene on the evening news.

Catherine appears on time as usual. She is dressed in her 60s look wearing a peasant top with beads and cut-off jeans.

"The old hippy," Jenkins says to her as he opens the door.

"I don't like the word old," she says.

They have wine outside on the patio while Jenkins barbeques the steaks. The sun has slipped below the Golden Gate Bridge and the lights of San Francisco sparkle ten miles away. The only light on the patio is the yellow flickering candlelight from two-hurricane lamps.

"So, what did you find out about Magic Light," Jenkins asks.

"We're dealing with either a genius or a maniac," she says. "Maybe both."

"Sounds like one of our clients," Jenkins says.

"Quin Ridgely founded the company five years ago,"

Catherine says. "It's not located in Silicon Valley where you might suspect it to be but in Ubiquity just down the coast from San Francisco."

Catherine pulls her iPad out of her purse and turns it on.

"And look what they say on the company's website," she says, pushing her iPad at Jenkins.

Jenkins looks at the iPad.

"We're storytellers, rocket scientists, wizards, gurus and more," the tagline says under the Magic Light heading. "And we're here to make magic real for you."

"Quin Ridgely is not your typical high tech entrepreneur," Catherine says as she reads from her notes. "As a kid growing up in Nebraska, he was enthralled by science fiction, music and robots and gravitated toward robots as a career. He attended the University of Nebraska and received a Master's in Biomedical Engineering. He was the weekly cartoonist for the school paper (*The Daily Nebraskan*), DJ for the school radio station and a member of UN's varsity track and field team where he threw the javelin. He was a member of Tau Beta Pi fraternity and organized some pranks that got the fraternity put on probation. Most people found his cartoons in the school paper more weird than funny. They were stream-of-

consciousness doodles featuring alien creatures, annotated by tiny inscriptions that included secret messages to girlfriends. They did not appear to come from the mind of an engineer."

"Just an average college kid," Jenkins says. "Remind me of my college days."

"Listen to what he did after college," Catherine says. "After graduating from UN, he moved to the Bay Area and founded a company called Phoenix and spun out the robotics group of the company to create Pacific Surgical Corporation that built robots for surgery. It became a publicly traded medical device company that manufactures and markets surgical robotic arm assistance platforms. Their most notable product was the ROS (Robotic Orthopedic System) as well as orthopedic implants used by orthopedic surgeons for use in partial knee and total hip arthroplasty. They became known for their intellectual property of devices and have over 300 U.S. and foreign patents and patent applications. The company won numerous awards, including being named the fastest growing technology company last year on Deloitte's Technology Fast 500. Four years ago, Quin Ridgely's ROS and its Board of Directors accepted a deal to merge with Johnson Medical for \$1.65B. The deal closed in December three years ago."

"And Ridgely has been working to develop Magic Light since then?" Jenkins asks.

"Yes, working on developing it," Catherine says. "But he didn't get into it by a very straight path. He first started Magic Light Studios. It was more of a special effects studio than a tech firm. The company was working on a graphic novel and a feature film series and had a relationship with Thompson Workshop, the company behind the amazing props and creatures in many of the fantasy and hero films today coming out from Hollywood, *The Trinity* and *Mountain 10*. Augmented reality didn't seem to be the goal at the time. The prominent comic book duo of Charles and Daily had signed on to help flesh out the idea."

"The guy was going through one hell of a growth spurt," Jenkins says.

"Two years ago, Magic Leap was morphing more into a tech company rather than a film studio. At Comic-Con in July two years ago, it released an augmented reality app called Hour Blue, a first step towards a new goal to 'bring cinema into the physical world.' At the Comic-Con, Ridgely is captured on video explaining his concept for those who might be able to decipher it. It's a weird video."

Catherine passes a DVD to Jenkins.

"Here's an interesting DVD of Quin Ridgely you should

watch," she says.

Catherine hands the DVD from the file to Jenkins. "It's got Ridgely on a video from Comic Con," she says. "Two years ago he gave one of the strangest TED Talks in the history of the technology talks. Delivering something that was more performance art than conference speech, it began with two furry green and pink monsters called Naggles, who started faux-fighting to the *Space Odyssey* theme song. Eventually, Ridgely joined people onstage at the TED talk. He is wearing a strange animalistic spacesuit that has some type of spiked dinosaur tale on it. 'A few awkward steps for me,' he said flatly, 'a magic leap for mankind.' Behind him, a live band erupts into a clash of sounds and screams, singing, as the Naggles start throwing around cards bearing the word 'chocolate' and dancing wildly, swirling around the stage and suddenly turning into dervishes as the music changes to a strange middle eastern music in difference keys and scales. Hypnotic. Mesmerizing music. A chant. Snake charmer's music. Over and over again."

"You can see the weird appearance of Ridgely and his band on the clip on the DVD from YouTube," Catherine continues. "The weird theatrics of Ridgely fit in pretty well with a rock band Ridgely founded called Mr. GreyHound

& Friends. Ridgely has never abandoned his childhood love of music. Mr. Greyhound & Friends is comprised of Ridgely, a few of his employees sometimes Roy, his son. The music is strange. I listened to it in my office today. I wouldn't wish this on anyone."

Catherine puts the DVD in front of Jenkins.

"You owe it to me to listen to it," she says.

"You're always trying to mess up my environment," Jenkins says.

"Someone has to mess up your environment," she says.

Catherine pulls out a Bluetooth sound cube from her purse and sets it on the table.

"In fact, let's hear some of it now," she says.

Weird fills the night air.

"Mr. Greyhound & Friends," Catherine says.

They listen to the music for maybe a minute.

"Sounds like a hybrid between Stereo Lab and Thomas Dolby," Jenkins says.

"Toss in John Cage and Brian Eno," Catherine says.

"Quin Ridgely possesses an unusual mixture of interests and experiences contained in one person," Catherine says. "A wealthy inventor of a leading robotic surgical company. A rock musician. A performance artist. A new type of filmmaker. A former college cartoonist. An

innovator of medical technology. Medical robotics in surgery. What new direction would Ridgely chart out next? Listening to Mr. Greyhound & Friends and watching his performance at the TED Talk are not confidence nor inspiring things. But Ridgely had never changed much from that original way he was."

Catherine pushes part of the notes she has typed out about the file under the candlelight and reads by its flickering light.

"In October two years ago, Ridgely tells David Power at *New Company* what his technology is *not* rather than what it *is*. 'It's not holography, it's not stereoscopic 3-D,' Ridgely says. 'You don't need a giant robot to hold it over your head, you don't need to be at home to use it. It's not made from off-the-shelf parts. It's not a cellphone in a View-Master.' Perhaps the best description of the Magic Light technology came from the company's press release that describes the technology by asking people to use their imagination. 'Using our Lightfield Signal, imagine being able to generate images indistinguishable from real objects and then being able to place those images seamlessly into the real world.' This is what Quin Ridgely said about his product a few years ago."

Catherine continues to read from the notes she has

made on the file.

"Last year was filled with a number of press visitations to Magic Light headquarters in California followed by some 'Wow' type of articles' on them. Not only members of the tech press were coming out to California to see the hot new tech company but executives from most major media and tech companies were also making the pilgrimage to experience for themselves Magic Light's futuristic synthetic reality. But still, there was no product and the crowd outside waiting for the 'show' to start began to get antsy and skeptical that they were being taken for a grand high tech ride. One person even posted the following online comment after one of the articles on Magic Light: 'Maybe it's real magic is raising over a billion dollars from investors?' was the title of the post."

Catherine closes the file.

"And that's where everything stops for Quin," she says. "Hassan has written a note on the last page of the file to us: 'Have Quin tell you about the last year and a half' it says."

"Nothing about what Hassan wants to do with it?" Jenkins asks.

"No," Catherine says. "Everything is speculation now. I searched all the articles I could find on the Internet."

No one knows about the future of Magic Light.”

“Strange,” says Jenkins.

“Yes,” Catherine agrees.

Catherine goes back to something she had typed in her notes.

“Things had not changed much for them until the time that SPEAK bought them,” she reads. “An article in last February’s issue of the *MIT Tech Review* noted that Magic Light had over \$1 Billion in the bank and still no product. But the article noted that Magic Light is spending plenty of money on other things like building a team that includes some notable names, such as science-fiction author Bob Jones, who’s the company’s chief futurist, and longtime video-game developer Sam Johnson, who’s its chief creative officer. Jones is an American writer and game designer known for his works of speculative fiction. His novels have been variously categorized as science fiction, historical fiction, cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk. His work explores subjects such as mathematics, cryptography, linguistics, philosophy and the history of science. He also writes non-fiction articles about technology in publications such as *Wired*. His breakout novel was the 1995 *Summer Crush*. He writes of his work with Magic Light. ‘It is here that I am most likely to continue working on the sorts of transmedia

projects that I have been interested in for many years' he says."

Catherine pushes her iPad in front of Jenkins.

"The Magic Light team is displayed on a company webpage with various toys representing team members," she says. "Click on the various toy icons and find the employees of Magic Light. Read their bios. The most brilliant people in AI. In April of this year, another article in the MIT Tech Review noted Magic Light had a type of VR headset but that its technology is still mysterious. Posted on YouTube in April of this year is a look around the Magic Light offices using the technology. Also, a tour of the offices given to a senior writer at *Byte* magazine."

"A few months ago, Magic Light was the cover story in *Hi-Tech* magazine in a long, encompassing article written by legendary tech author and founder of *HiTech* Brian Henderson. The article is one of the best ever written on the current state of virtual reality. Henderson's new book *Understanding the 10 Technology Forces of the Future* is due later this year and it seems a sure bet that mixed reality of Magic Light will hold a prominent place in it."

Jenkins gets up with the DVD.

"I want to see the DVD of the TED talks," he says

heading into the home.

Catherine follows him inside.

Jenkins puts the DVD into his television and they watch it.

The first scene is in from outer space with the earth in the background. The scene moves towards earth and through clouds. The camera then floats over a layer of clouds on the earth with a setting sun about to dip into them. Then, the music of Richard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra* inspired by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and used in the film *2001 A Space Odyssey*. The scene moves through the clouds as the music becomes louder. Then, the camera backs up and they see that the screen is above a stage with the TED logo on it. There are a number of characters on the stage in what looks like dinosaur costumes dancing around to the music of *Zarathustra* like they're participating in some type of ritual. The characters pick up guitars and begin playing ethereal music that sounds like a Brian Eno song crossed with a David Bowie video. When the song is over, the band leaves the stage. There is no talk, just the strange film and the music on stage.

"That's the strangest TED Talk I've ever seen," Jenkins says. "And I've seen a lot of strange ones."

"I told you he's a strange bird," Catherine says.

"Somewhere between psychotic and neurotic."

"Exciting stuff we're getting into," Jenkins says.

"I call it scary," Catherine says.

"Exciting and scary," says Jenkins. "They're the same thing. I wonder what Hassan's plans for it are."

"Much more than he'll ever tell us," Catherine says.

## 6. Magic Light

Two days after their dinner in Berkeley, Jenkins and Catherine drive down Highway One for a meeting with Quin Ridgely at Magic Light. The company is headquartered along the California coast south of San Francisco in the little seaside town of Ubiquity. It is a warm spring morning and Jenkins navigates his BMW at high speed along the coast. As usual, his driving drives Catherine crazy.

The music from Mr. Greyhound & Friends blares over the stereo system. Jenkins is still trying to place it in his system of music classification. There is the ethereal music of the TED Talk. Neither one of them says anything trying to decode the music like a piece of evidence. But it is making them cringe the way scraping one's fingers on a chalkboard makes one cringe.

"What we do for clients," Catherine yells at Jenkins. "And I wish to hell you'd slow down a little."

The BMW roars over the hills north of the town of Ubiquity. Behind them, a thick wall of fog moves onto the coast from the Pacific Ocean. The downtown area of Ubiquity is little more than a stoplight and a congregation of buildings. A fish restaurant. A gas station. A small grocery store. They turn left at the light and go towards the bright green mountain rising above the town. In a mile, the road moves upward and then curves in a steep incline. At points they can see a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean in the distance below them.

A white fence appears in the mountainside and eventually there is an entrance into Magic Light. There is a good-sized guard station at the entrance.

"Seems a lot of security for a tech company," says Catherine.

They drive up the long driveway of the company and stop in front of a large white building that looks somewhat like George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch. It is a huge Victorian structure in brilliant white with a large red tile roof.

A woman meets them and takes them into the building. They walk through a big room full of technology and scientists in white lab uniforms working on various projects. It is like a great laboratory. The music of Quin Ridgely's strange rock-n-roll band comes through the sound

system of the building. They can see large flat screens around the room and they all feature the same video of the band playing the strange music. They are dressed in the strange costumes they appeared in at the TED Talk.

They are led into a large white room. In the corner is Quin Ridgely and his band Mr. GreyHound & Company on a small stage playing the music they have heard over the speakers in the building. A crowd of employees in white uniforms are gathered around the band. Their arms are raised and they sway back and forth in synch to the music. Many hum along with the music of the song. They seem to know the music well.

When the song is over the crowd dispenses and Quin Ridgely walks towards Jenkins and Catherine. He is a short, heavysset man with a beard and long hair dressed in some toga-like outfit with sandals and lots of jewelry. He is wearing sunglasses even though they are inside. He takes his sunglasses off when Catherine and Jenkins walk towards him and they can see his eyes flicker like the blue flame of an oven pilot light.

"The advertising people," he says. "Follow me." He leads them outside onto a wide patio in the back of the building. The patio faces the slopes of a green mountain.

They sit at a table on the patio and Jenkins and Catherine introduce themselves.

"SPEAK thinks we need advertising," Ridgely says. "I disagree."

"All products need advertising," Jenkins says. "Especially new types of products like Magic Light people haven't heard of before."

"It won't need advertising once people have experienced it," Ridgely says.

"Word-of-mouth advertising only goes so far," Catherine says. "It will need some type of branding and communication. It will need publicity."

Quin Ridgely shakes his head in disagreement.

"Hassan Mohammad has given you a little information on my background and my company?" Ridgely asks.

"He gave us a file to review," Catherine says. "A short bio on you. A CD of your music. Your appearance at the TED Talk."

Ridgely laughs.

"The YouTube video is up to four million hits," Ridgely says. "You must think I'm a mad scientist."

"You have an unusual background," Jenkins says.

"I've created an unusual product," Ridgely says. "A product the world has never seen before. A product that's going to change the world."

"Hassan stopped the file he gave us a year ago and asked us to have you tell about the past year," Catherine says.

Quin Ridgely smiles and shakes his head.

"He would do something like this," he says. "Have me try to explain to you what the hell is happening."

Quin gets up and walks around the patio and looks up at the green hills sloping upward into the Coastal Range of Mountains. A bright blue sky against the brilliant green with a few spots of white clouds in it.

"I always thought I could do everything myself," Quin says. "The conceited thoughts of a nerdy, mad genius type of kid no one ever understood. Who was always apart from other kids. A lonely childhood. Last year, this crazy thing I started called Magic Light had evolved into something I didn't recognize. And, draining a lot of the money I didn't have."

Quin Ridgely turns around and looks at Catherine and Jenkins.

"That was when I met Hassan Mohammad," Quin Ridgely says. "It wasn't too long after he had read an article in

the *MIT Technology Review* 'Magic Light Needs to Create A Miracle' noting that to make its prototype augmented-reality idea a product, the company will have to scale up silicon photonics. It would not be an easy task, the article argued as heavyweights like Intel have struggled to do this. We met at his office and I invited Hassan to come down and experience Magic Light firsthand. He took me up on my offer and that was when we began negotiations for SPEAK to have an interest in it."

"What does Hassan want to do with Magic Light?"

Jenkins asks.

Quin smiles.

"That is such a difficult question to answer," Quin says. "At times, I thought he was truthful with me and I was sure I knew his plans. But then I realized he was little more than a master manipulator of other people out to establish something new in the world."

"What is your biggest challenge today?" Catherine asks.

"Realizing the purpose of what I created Magic Light for in the first place," Quin Ridgely says.

"And what is that?" Catherine asks.

Quin shakes his head.

"That is something I don't talk about," he says. "At least not now. Maybe later. But beyond the big purpose of Magic Light I would say that while the technology for mixed reality might be close at hand, it still needs a type of invisible interface to it. The goggles idea has been a failure. They will not do. The new type of artificial reality or augmented reality needs its own form of 'mouse' device for you communicating with it. For it communicating with you."

Quin Ridgely paced back-and-forth on the patio behind Magic Light for a few moments.

"Finding an invisible interface with the user and Magic Light technology is what's holding us back from creating that first product of Magic Light," Quin says. "It's been a subject of speculation in a lot of high-end business publications and blogs like the *MIT Technology Review*, *Wired*, *Gizmodo* and *Wired*."

"We're down here to experience this product of all the speculation that'll change the world," Catherine says.

"I won't keep you waiting any longer," Ridgely says.

"Do we get to wear some funny-looking goggles?"

Jenkins asks.

Ridgely is not amused.

"Goggles are things of the past," he says.

He takes out two yellow plastic bracelets and hands one to Jenkins and Catherine.

They are like the plastic ID bracelets a hospital puts on patients or one attendees get at an event.

"Put them on your left wrist," he says. "Then, hang on."

Catherine and Jenkins put the bracelets on their wrists.

Ridgely pulls a device out of his pocket that looks like a smartphome and pushes a button on it.

The world suddenly changes.

## 7. A New Reality

The change is not like entering the strange new, alien world of some video game. It is nothing as dramatic as this. The world is still the same but something seems to have changed. Some butterfly has landed on a flower ten thousand miles away and somehow changed the entire scale on the world. It is like putting on a new pair of glasses and seeing a hyper state of reality: the colors are brighter; the sounds sharper, the smells more intense. Everything happens in a split-second and the crease between the two worlds is subtle and invisible.

Nothing has changed. Ridgely still is across from them at the table. The mountain still behind them. The sound of an airplane overhead. Yet everything is different in some way. They can sense it and try to define what it is. But it is no use. It seems a state somewhere between a psychedelic drug and a vivid dream. Still, it is different from this.

It is a new experience altogether and there is no classification in Jenkins' mind he could place the experience in.

Jenkins and Catherine feel their bodies dissolving and merging with the world around them, their identities and personalities fading into something larger. Quin Ridgely sits in his chair observing them. Jenkins looks at him. Ridgely seems to float just a little above the patio like some mystic yogi. He hasn't changed yet he is something new and different.

Jenkins can see Catherine wandering off on a path up the mountain behind the Magic Light headquarters.

"People want their minds to look exactly like the world," Ridgely says. "It is the sign of the times we are living in. They want their minds to look like photographs of the world. It is what they strive for. The idea that they can invent something themselves is terrifying to them. The fear of being outside the world. They do anything to become part of it."

Jenkins tries to put sense to these words but they trail off like smoke circles, evaporating into the morning air. Jenkins rises from his chair and walks up the path into the mountain. He has a feeling of being part of the world, his own personality and psyche dissolving into it

and disappearing.

For a brief moment he feels like he once did when working on the President's campaign eight years ago. It is a feeling that the world is becoming one from all of its constant battles between groups of people, between nationalities. Languages. Races. Religions. Social groups. Everything merging into one. The feeling all the distinctions in the world are consolidating into one great mass. Everything imploding inward into a great Black Hole of commonality rather than exploding outward into pieces from a Big. This is what globalism feels like he thinks to himself but it is no more than a thought that comes and goes like a lightning flash and there is nothing more to examine when it is gone.

He finds a large boulder on the trail up the mountain and sits down on it to rest. Yellow flowers are on both sides of the path and look like liquid gold in the morning sunlight. Far ahead, he can see Catherine, climbing higher and higher up the mountain.

To the west, the Pacific Ocean sparkles brighter than he has ever seen it before. To the north, a thick blanket of fog rolls in over the coast. Jenkins sits on the boulder for a while and then continues walking up the path. He wants to catch up with Catherine. This seems to be the most

important thing in the world. Finding Catherine and asking her what she thought about this experience.

\* \* \*

Catherine has found a spread of yellow flowers on a ledge of the trail up to the top of the mountain. She lays in the flowers and looks up at the brilliant blue-sky overhead. No clouds are in sight except for the mass of fog rolling in over the coast to the north.

She tries to think about what is happening but as it is with Jenkins, no thought comes so that everything is just blankness. She can sense she is still in the old, real world. Yet she somehow knows she is in some other world. This other world is not something that bowls you over like a wild video game. Rather, it is a subtle new world that comes over you with the subtle force of a summer breeze.

Catherine wonders about who this crazy magician is who can put a bracelet on your wrist, push the button on some device and make the world change like this.

She looks down the mountainside at the headquarters of Magic Light and can still see Quin Ridgely sitting on the patio. And she can see Jenkins coming up the trail.

"What the hell's going on," he says as he falls down into the patch of yellow flowers.

Catherine looks at Jenkins. She sees him in a new way. Not some distinct personality but some appendage of her personality, a part of her psyche. It reminds of a time long ago when she first met him. She tries to put words together but it is no use. There is no coupling between them and each word seems to wander off with the freedom of an early American pioneer on the frontier.

"I've never experienced anything like this," she says.

"Neither have I," says Jenkins.

Jenkins looks at Catherine, her profile against the Pacific Ocean and the blue sky above, her straw blond hair against the two shades of blue. The great sea a sparkling landscape of blue with pinpoints of silver reflections. Under the steady bright blue of an almost cloudless sky. He sees Catherine in a new way but it is impossible to tell her what way this is. He tries once but fails and decides it is better to be silent right now and cut his losses.

The two sit in the patch of yellow flowers on the ledge of the mountain. It seems the only place in the world, the only place to be at this moment. A very Zen feeling that you would pay a lot of money for at Esalen no more than fifty miles south of Ubiquity.

What is this new world Quin has created by just putting on a small golden bracelet?

This thought lives rent free in Catherine's mind for a while. Jenkins thinks about this too.

He looks at the golden bracelet on his wrist.

Time passes. A few minutes. An hour? It is impossible to say. They find themselves walking down the trail and then back to the patio of Magic Light sitting across from Quin Ridgely who is still sitting at the table and watching them. A hint of a smile is on his face. He removes the bracelets from their wrists and pushes the button on the device.

\* \* \*

The strange world disappears and the real one is back. But again, it is almost impossible to locate the seam between the two worlds.

"I trust you found the experience of interest," he says.

"More than that," Jenkins says. "I've never experienced anything like it before."

"Few have," Ridgely says. "Hassan, a few of my employees. That's all."

What about the media people who've come down here?" Catherine asks.

"They got the light version of it," he says. "Before it evolved into what you experienced today."

"The product has to be more than a small bracelet," Catherine says.

"It is and soon it will not require the bracelet," Ridgely says. "Soon the technology will be invisible. I can't tell you anything about it right now. SPEAK has invested millions in our patents. Maybe I can tell you more about it later but not now."

"What is the market for it?" Jenkins asks.

"Markets and advertising," Ridgely says. "Such old, outdated concepts. All I'll tell you is that it will help millions of people to live a better life. Millions who feel lonely and not part of the world."

Ridgely gets up from the table and motions them up.

"The world is close to experiencing Magic Light for the first time," Ridgely says. "Very close."

He walks them through the Magic Light offices and then out to the front driveway. Someone brings Jenkins' BMW to

the front. When they are both in it, Ridgely leans in the driver's window.

"Magic Light needs no advertising," he repeats.

After he says this, he takes the device out of his pocket again and pushes a button on it. When he does this, everything disappears. The Magic Light building. Quin Ridgely. Everything is gone and they are sitting in the BMW at the dead end of a road running up the mountain from the town of Ubiquity below. Jenkins and Catherine get out of the car and walk to where the building had been. But there is no indication of the building. Only the thick green vegetation of the coastal hills going up the side of the mountain. But even the trail up the mountain is now gone.

They get back in the car.

"Let's get the hell out of here," Catherine says.

Jenkins speeds down the hill.

They are relieved to see that the little seaside town of Ubiquity is still there and that Quin Ridgely has not made it disappear also. The single traffic light in town is still changing colors. An old couple is coming out of the grocery store. Some seagulls are flying low over the Pacific Ocean.

They drive up Highway One towards San Francisco and into the thick bank of fog. Neither one says anything.

There is too much information to process and words are inadequate anyway. The strange, hypnotic music of Mr. Greyhound & Friends plays over the car's sound system.

When they go over a large hill, the skyline of San Francisco pops into view.

"I'm just happy San Francisco is still there," Jenkins says.

"It's a stupid thing to say," Catherine says. "But it doesn't seem stupid now."

The BMW heads towards San Francisco with the sounds of Mr. Greyhound & Friends blaring over the speaker system.

Both are quiet caught up in their thoughts.

The strange music has a new meaning for them it didn't have before.

## 8. Pier 46 Café

When they get back to the office, neither of them can concentrate on work. The images and experience of Magic Light is impossible to put out of their thoughts. When the fixed reality of daily life becomes disrupted with some event that unfixes daily reality and throws the Hero or Heroine into not some new physical scenery but rather a new dimension of time, this is what Catherine and Jenkins both feel after the incredible experience of Magic Light but also an experience that neither one can share with the other one. Not yet that is.

There is an advertising campaign to sign-off on and Catherine sits in the meeting room listening to her assistant Marilyn Benson go through the plans but she can't get the experience at Magic Light out of her mind. Jenkins is the same way. He goes through the motions of looking at some market research for the new winery they are pitching

up in Sonoma but his mind is still on the experience at Magic Light.

In early afternoon, he goes into Catherine's office.

"Let's grab lunch," he says.

"I'm ready to get out of here," she says. "I'm not getting anything done."

They walk down the Battery Street and over the wide Embarcadero Street to Pier 46 Café. They sit on the deck overlooking the bay. The morning fog has lifted and ferryboats come and go from the pier docks filled with tourists. It is the height of the tourist season in the city.

"I need a good stiff drink," Catherine says.

"I'm with you," Jenkins agrees.

They order a couple of martinis with lunch.

"I owe you an apology," Jenkins says. "You're right to be skeptical about SPEAK."

"There might be some innocent purpose for Magic Light," she says. "But I can't envision it right now."

"It's a scary experience," Jenkins says. "After the initial amazement, this is what I'm left with. Mysterious. Scary. What's your take on Hassan's involvement in the whole thing?"

"We know he's involved with the Whitehouse," she says. "I mean thirty meetings in a year is involvement. I've never believed his story he's just a tech advisor for the government. There's much more to it he's not telling us."

"You might be right," he says.

"Of course I'm right," she says. "Open your eyes Jenkins. It's obvious."

"I think it's a good idea to play along with him for some time," Jenkins says. "Follow-up with a meeting discussing Magic Light. See what he has in mind."

"I agree," she says. "Hassan won't show us his hand. We won't show him our hand."

"In the meantime, you move ahead on the PR event for SPEAK," Jenkins says. "This changes nothing with that event."

"It's coming up this Friday," she says. "Everything is ready to go."

"I'm going to contact my brother Zach and see if he can throw some light on Quin Ridgely and Magic Light," he says. "They're working on virtual reality technology like SPEAK is."

"Zach said you were getting into a can of worms taking the SPEAK account," Catherine says. "You need to listen to your brother more."

"My brother's a big corporate guy," Jenkins says. "He never takes chances."

After lunch, they order another round of martinis and sit looking out at the bay. The Sausalito Ferry comes in to the dock nearby full of tourists and screaming kids. They sit looking at the ferry but not seeing it. Both are still thinking of the Magic Light experience. It is impossible to get it out of their minds.

"Everything was so strange," Jenkins says. "We both saw it. I've never seen anything like it before."

"There has to be some trick to the whole thing," Catherine says. "Something done out of our sight, offstage like the trick of a magician. I think it's a form of control technology. I think it's being developed with the government. Some big event is about to happen with the election coming up and the nation close to revolution. I have some funny sense Magic Light is part of it."

## 9. Los Altos Hills

Jenkins' brother Zach is a Vice-President at Google, SPEAK's major competitor. Jenkins calls him and arranges to have dinner at Zach's home in Los Altos. Zach offers to take him to his favorite restaurant in the area but Jenkins says it's best the two of them are not seen together since he is handling the SPEAK account. Zach tells him he will have his cook make dinner for them.

He goes over the Dumbarton Bridge and south on 101 through Palo Alto and past the Google complex just north of SPEAK. Jenkins thinks it is amazing that the great Google has been surpassed by another company. But one thing he has learned from spending time in Silicon Valley is that technology is always changing in a constant game like musical chairs.

The town of Los Altos is in the hills west of Palo Alto and one of the wealthiest towns in the nation. Many leaders of Silicon Valley have homes here. Zach's home is a

big Mediterranean style place on top of a hill behind a stone wall and iron gate. Anywhere else, it would stand out but in Los Altos it is just another big mansion in the hills.

Zach is a graduate of Stanford and MIT. After MIT he went to work for a small firm called Google involved with that strange new activity called Internet search. Through the years he became one of the VPs of Google. Like others who have been with Google since the earlier years, Zach is well off, a beneficiary of the company's fortunes.

Zach has been helpful in helping his brother understanding the tech industry and has introduced him to a number of tech companies in the valley. Jenkins called on his advice a number of times to understand technology. The two used to be close and went hiking and camping together in Yosemite. But, Zach is not happy with his brother not taking his advice not to take the SPEAK account. In the few months since he got the account, they have only gotten together one time for dinner and this was when Zach told his brother about the novel his father was writing.

It is another warm summer evening in the Bay Area and they sit on the patio of Zach's home that slopes half an acre into a group of trees. His Chinese cook has made another great dinner. There is small talk about work. Zach

congratulates his brother for getting the advertising firm of the year award.

"So what's on your mind," Zach asks when dinner is over as he pulls out a few cigars and a bottle of brandy. "You didn't come down here to smoke a cigar and hear me congratulate you on getting the big advertising award."

"Catherine and I met with Hassan Mohammad the other day over handling the PR mess on the bias allegations SPEAK has been charged with," Jenkins says.

"Of course you know they're all true," Zach says. "Everybody knows they play around with their algorithms. They've been doing it for a long time."

"We're putting together a PR event at SPEAK this Friday," Jenkins says. "Catherine's handling it. She's scheduled a lot of media and people from Dan Harris' campaign at the event. Hassan is putting on a dog-and-pony show for everyone to show them they're not biased."

"SPEAK is in bed with the President and Claire Wilson's campaign," Zach says. "Everyone in the valley knows this. I've been telling you this for a long time."

"They also represent three quarters of my business," Jenkins says. "But the PR stuff is not what I wanted to talk with you about. Before we left the meeting the other day, Hassan pulls out a file on a start-up they've invested

a lot of money in called Magic Light. He asks us to review the file and meet with the founder of Magic Light and see the technology. Hassan told us Magic Light was close to a product launch and needed an advertising campaign."

"He let you in on their big development project," Zach says.

"Catherine and I drove down and met Quin Ridgely a few days ago," Jenkins says. "A strange guy."

"You saw his appearance at the TED Talk a year ago?" asks Zach.

"Bizarre," says Jenkins.

"Wild stories circulate all the time about him," says Zach. "He's a legend in the valley."

"He put these gold bracelets on us and pushed a button on a device and bang, everything changed," Jenkins says.

"You're one of the few people who've experienced the technology," Zach says.

"It's an amazing experience," Jenkins says. "And a frightening one too. Catherine and I are still trying to make sense of it. What do you think he's planning on doing with it?"

Zach does not answer immediately but is silent for a few moments.

"There's rumors going around the valley," he finally

says. "Rumors the President has made Hassan one of those unofficial 'Czars' in his administration."

"What type of Czar?" Jenkins asks.

"The Technology Czar," Zach says. "The leader technology in the nation. Silicon Valley is his fiefdom."

"Technology is not political," Jenkins says.

Zach just smiles and shakes his head.

"You've bought the standard line," Zach says. "Of course technology is political. Just like the media is political. Just like education and science are political. You've heard how the media has been called the Fourth Estate of power after the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government? If media is the Fourth Estate of power, then technology is the Fifth Estate of power. The President's making Hassan the Technology Czar is a recognition of Silicon Valley as a key center of power in the nation."

"But it's important technology is not viewed as another source of political power," Jenkins says.

"Right," says Zach. "Politics simply draws attention to things and it's important that attention is not drawn to the politics of technology. SPEAK has tried to hide their politics but have been caught at it with the bias allegations from the FTC. Of course they're biased but it's

important for them to show they're unbiased. SPEAK represents the current state of Internet technology and people much believe the Internet is not political. You remember the media theorist Marshall McLuhan observed that the medium is the message. Technology is the *medium* influencing all the *messages* of media inside of it. But it needs to be viewed as an unbiased medium. Of course it is not. All technology has a political bias."

"What is Hassan planning on doing with this power?" Jenkins asks.

"You should contact the old man," Zach says. "You haven't seen dad for a long time. He is always asking about you when I see him. He has some theories about all this."

"Like what?" Jenkins asks.

"Conspiracy theories things are about to change in the nation," Zach says.

"In what way?" Jenkins asks.

Zach shakes his head.

"He's never told me," Zach says. "Maybe he'll tell you. But it's all behind the reason he moved up into the mountains five years ago. The reason he tries to live off the grid. The reason he started that militia group. You need to ask him yourself. He thinks something big is coming and he wants to be prepared for it."

"He thinks I'm some sort of traitor for selling out to the Progressives and working to put the President into power eight years ago," Jenkins says. "You know the fights we had after that."

"I think all that's in the past for the old man," Zach says. "Memorial Day weekend is coming up. I know he'd like to see you. Give him a call."

"Maybe I will," Jenkins says.

"Let me know what you hear from him," Zach says. "I can sense something big is about to happen."

Jenkins thinks about his father on his drive home. The two had hardly spoken to each other since Jenkins left Icon six years ago. When Jenkins gets home, he goes to his garage and digs through dusty boxes and extracts a few old scrapbooks from takes them into his house. He opens a bottle of wine and sits at his office desk going through the scrapbooks. He reflects on his father and his life for the first time in many years. The reflections run through his mind like an old home movie.

William Jenkins was from a poor family in the central part of California. Through hard work and native intelligence, he got a scholarship to USC and then went onto a successful career in the Army rising to the rank of Colonel. He met a young woman from a wealthy family back

east before retiring from the Army and settled down in LA where his father got a job teaching history at a small college. The marriage between his father and mother was not exactly a "match made in heaven" but somehow it worked and John Jenkins and his brother Zach inherited the mixed essence from the relationship.

When he was fifteen, his mother was killed in an auto accident and his father took over raising his two sons. Bill Jenkins, or the Colonel as everyone called him, was a man who had a profound love for the country that he worked to instill into his sons. They lived in a home on the west side in LA and the Colonel flew an American flag in front of it all year long. The Colonel made sure his sons were active in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and took them hiking many times where they would backpack up in the High Sierra Mountains with just bare necessities.

Despite the Colonel's wishes, John Jenkins went to college at that radical, anti-patriotic place called UC Berkeley. This was the beginning of the two of them drifting apart. John participated in a number of questionable events during his student days and took a number of courses from radical professors. He ran for student body president in his junior year and won. He put together a campaign they still talk about on the campus.

From the experience he learned that he had a real genius for advertising.

The pictures are all there in the scrapbook documenting the above periods in his life. Jenkins closes the scrapbook and pours another glass of wine and drinks the glass in one motion. Then he takes out his cell phone and calls his father.

"Hello," the gruff, familiar voice of his father says.

"Dad, it's me," Jenkins said. "Your son John."

The old man is surprised to hear from him. He has plans for the Memorial Day weekend but says he can fit his son into them. Jenkins will drive up to see him this Friday when Catherine is at SPEAK with the PR event.

## 10. A Berkeley Night

If Jenkins and Catherine were running a small detective agency, they could have sat around the office the next few days and figured out what their next step would be in all of this. But there is the business of a fifty-person advertising firm to deal with and a number of things need attention.

The next days are filled with constant meetings. There is final approval of the campaign strategy for the hot App firm they have taken on. There is another review of a media plan for a new client. There is the further development of a brand image for the wine company in Sonoma. They spend the better part of the afternoon meeting with a new client on the peninsula.

Catherine works to finalize the PR presentation at SPEAK but there is no new information turned up on Magic Light from Zach. One afternoon, Jenkins gets a call from Hassan Mohammad who wants to meet them about Magic Light

and hear their reactions and thoughts. Jenkins begs off a few more days until after the PR event at SPEAK and the long Memorial Day weekend. Hassan agrees but says it is important they meet soon after the weekend. They set up a meeting at SPEAK for the Tuesday after the long weekend.

When he gets off the phone Jenkins goes through mail on his desk. He subscribes to a publication called *The Berkeley Express*, one of those free weeklies that mixes radical politics with entertainment news. He loves jazz and looks for some live music in the East Bay. He needs to relax a little and get away from the pressure of everything. He turns to the entertainment section of *The Berkeley Express* and that is when he sees it.

"Mr. GreyHound & Friends Live at the Watering Hole."

Quin Ridgely and his strange band will be playing there tonight.

He tears the announcement out of the paper and walks into Catherine's office. It does not look like she is having one of her better days. He puts the announcement on her desk and she picks it up.

"I think a little music might cheer you up," he says. "And I know how much you like the music of Mr. GreyHound & Friends. We're going to hear them tonight at the Watering Hole in Berkeley."

"You really know how to make a girl happy," Catherine says.

\* \* \*

The Watering Hole is only a few blocks from the UC Berkeley campus and has been a Berkeley landmark for almost fifty years. Jenkins knows it well. He hung out there a lot when he was a student at Cal listening to jazz and rock. There is a pub type of restaurant upstairs and live music in the dark basement where they serve cheap pitchers of beer and bring tubs of shelled peanuts to your table.

At nine o'clock at night, the homeless are in full force near the Watering Hole. Even the Bubble Lady is in operation, twirling about like a dervish and making giant bubbles with her bubble loop and saying funny things to herself. The buildings are plastered with posters and signs supporting the campaign of Claire Wilson. Dan Harris and his populism and anti-government politics is not very popular in Berkeley. It seems funny to Jenkins. When he was at Cal, the radicals rebelled against the government. Now, the radicals support the government.

In the basement of the Watering Hole, they can see Mr. Greyhound & Friends playing to a handful of people. They take a table in a dark corner and order a pitcher of beer. It comes with a big bucket of peanuts. They shell the peanuts and sip the beer and force themselves to listen to Mr. Greyhound & Friends. The group is dressed in animal costumes with tails and they wear masks that make their faces into the long noses of greyhounds. Quin Ridgely dances a strange ritualistic dance in front of the band's keyboard player and drummer and waves a guitar shaped like a triangle.

They almost go through a pitcher of beer and a tub of peanuts before the band takes a break. Quin Ridgely walks over to a table where a boy is sitting. He rubs the boy on the shoulder and sits down at the table and starts shelling peanuts from the tub on the table.

"Wait here," Jenkins says getting up to walk over to Ridgely's table.

The man in the strange looking animal suit looks up when he approaches and recognizes him.

"So you didn't disappear after all," Jenkins says to him.

Quin Ridgely smiles.

"I never thought you were a fan," he says.

"I live up the Berkeley hills and saw you guys were here tonight," Jenkins says. "So I thought I'd check out the band."

"A Berkeleyite," Ridgely says.

"Yeah, ever since I went to Cal," Jenkins says.

"I love Berkeley," Ridgely says. "Almost situated our office over here."

"You're certainly dressed like a Berkeley resident," Jenkins says.

Jenkins could see the other person at the table is swaying back-and-forth, making sounds that are not quite words. He is a young boy, maybe fourteen or fifteen. Even in the dim, yellowish light, Jenkins can tell there is something wrong with him. But he seems happy and has a smile on his face.

"This is my son Roy," Ridgely says. "Roy was in an accident a number of years ago. Damaged his brain."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Jenkins says.

"Nothing to be sorry about," Ridgely says. "He's doing fine. He has special powers other boys don't have. He can sense things before they happen."

"My associate Catherine is here with me," Jenkins says. "We'd love to have you join us if you can leave Roy for a few minutes."

"Of course," says Ridgely. "Your lovely associate. How can I pass up that offer?"

Quin Ridgely gets up and tells his son he will be back soon. He follows Jenkins to his table.

"See Catherine," Jenkins says. "Mr. Ridgely didn't disappear after all."

"I've been around the block a few times," Catherine says. "But I never experienced anything like Magic Light before."

"You're one of the few that's experienced the latest version of it," Ridgely says. "We're still working on it. Soon it will be an invisible technology."

"Invisible?" Jenkins asks.

Ridgely eats a few peanuts.

"I can't tell you more right now," he says. "But the technology will disappear just like everything disappeared on your visit."

"We're meeting with Hassan next week to discuss plans for Magic Light," Jenkins says.

"Good," he says. "Maybe he'll let me know what his plans are."

"You don't know what they are?" Catherine asks.

"Hassan is a secretive guy," Ridgely says. "In case you haven't noticed."

"But he must have told you something about his plans," Jenkins says. "Given you some idea."

"In a vague way," Ridgely says.

As Ridgely says this, Roy comes up and puts his hand on his father's shoulder. The light is dim in the bar but Catherine and Jenkins can both see the yellow, plastic bracelet on Roy's wrist. Ridgely sees they notice the bracelet.

"Roy's brain injury was my inspiration for developing Magic Light," he says. "After the accident, his world closed in on him. He was once a popular kid. Overnight he became the loneliest kid in the world. But the brain injury came with a special power. Roy is able to sense things that others can't sense. See things a little in advance."

"There's nothing in your files about this," Catherine says.

"It's a private matter," Ridgely says. "No one needs to know about it."

"What about Hassan?" Jenkins asks.

"Except Hassan," Ridgely says. "That's the reason I entered into the agreement with Hassan. I told him about Roy and my dream for Magic Light. That Magic Light was created to help people like Roy."

"And what did Hassan say?" Catherine asks.

"He agreed," says Ridgely. "But he hasn't given me any more information on his plans for it. You're his advertising firm. Hasn't he told you anything about his plans?"

"He's told us nothing so far," Jenkins says.

One of the band members comes over and tells Ridgely it is time for their next set.

"Stick around for the next set?" he asks.

"We've got to take off," Jenkins says. "Past our bedtimes."

"Maybe you can let me know what you hear from Hassan," Ridgely says.

"We'll keep in touch," Jenkins says.

Jenkins and Catherine leave the club and walk down Telegraph Avenue to the parking structure.

The Bubble Woman is still at it, swirling around and creating huge bubbles that drift up towards the golden Mercury vapor lights.

"That was interesting," Catherine says. "What kind of partner doesn't tell his partner what he is doing?"

"We're also partners of Hassan and look how much he keeps from us," Jenkins says. "But we might have found out something very important tonight about the original purpose of Magic Light."

"It'll be interesting to hear what Hassan tells us at the meeting next week," Catherine says.

"I have a feeling he won't have much to say about the Roy's of the world," Jenkins says.

## 11. Final Plans

The presentation at SPEAK is on Friday of the Memorial Day weekend. Jenkins and Catherine meet on Thursday afternoon in the conference room of the advertising firm to review final plans for the event.

Catherine has arranged for the advertising firm's top commercial director and a film crew to film the event at SPEAK. They will use the event to make a commercial for SPEAK about how open, transparent and unbiased SPEAK is. A small luxury bus from SPEAK will pick up all the guests from the airport when they arrive Thursday evening and take them to the boutique hotel in Palo Alto she has arranged for them to stay at. The next morning, the bus will take them to SPEAK. Hussan Mohammad will meet them at the front entrance to the building and take them to a reception area where they will have coffee, fruit and pastries. Next, they will go to one of the conference rooms where he will open

the day with a short speech. Catherine has written the speech for him.

After the introduction by Mohammad, a few of SPEAK's top technology people will explain how algorithms work and how top search items are chosen. There are a number of slides to go with the presentation. The advertising firm has prepared the slides. There will be an extended question and answer period and then lunch and a tour of the company. Then, a cocktail reception in Hassan's boardroom and a dinner at one of the top restaurants in Palo Alto. The next morning, the custom bus will take everyone back to the airport.

In the next few weeks, the commercials of the event will run on national media. Catherine has scheduled Hassan Mohammad to appear on the top news shows. The goal of the entire bias episode is to move beyond mere damage control and have SPEAK garner a lot of positive free publicity that will clear-up any doubt that their searches are biased in any way.

Jenkins is pleased with the plans.

"The event should pull SPEAK out of a lot of the hot water they're in," Jenkins says.

"Maybe we'll get a new reputation for this type of thing," Catherine says. "The advertising firm to go to for positive damage control."

"I hope not," says Jenkins. "I don't like damage control and I'll be happy when we get back to just regular advertising."

"Or to the Magic Light project," she says.

"Yes," says Jenkins. "Seeing Ridgely and his kid was emotional. Maybe I'm getting soft in my old age. I usually know the playing field. This Magic Light stuff is different. It's created a new playing field altogether. We'll know a little more about the playing field next Tuesday after meeting with Hassan," Catherine says.

"Maybe," Catherine says. "But I doubt we'll know much more. We're being used for something."

Catherine gets up.

"I'm staying at the hotel in Palo Alto tonight," she says. "I want to get on the road down to Palo Alto before all the traffic. So you're visiting your dad over the Memorial Day weekend? That doesn't happen often. Are you negotiating a truce with him?"

"It'll be good to see him after such a long time," he says.

"Knowing how much he hates the government, I don't think he'll be too happy to hear you're representing a company like SPEAK with close government ties," she says. "He'll think you haven't changed much from your days running the President's campaign."

"As I told you, my brother Zach thinks the old man with all his connections around the country might be able to shed some light on Hassan and all of this," Jenkins says.

"It'll be an interesting weekend I'm sure," Catherine says. "I'll give you a call after the SPEAK event and let you know how it went. Maybe I'll hear something down there. But I doubt it."

\* \* \*

When Catherine is gone, Jenkins sits at the conference table. Outside is the sound of foghorns. He gets up and stands by the window and looks out over the piers of the Embarcadero. The Oakland Bay Bridge appears and disappears in the thick fog as a container ship goes under the bridge.

For years he was sure he was out of politics. Now he wasn't sure. But for some reason he feels good about the possibility of getting back into politics. Maybe Miles

Cameron is right that there isn't a difference between politics and advertising. Zach said technology is political. Maybe advertising is political also?

He can sense a new feeling about the world, moving towards him. The new feeling is coming over him slowly and silently like fog moving into the Bay Area until it is all around him like water around a fish, impossible to detect yet pervasive and encompassing. Maybe like technology today?

It is similar to that feeling he had long ago when he worked on the campaign for the President. There is something stirring inside. A new passion in his life? Perhaps even a sense of morality and even that conscience that Catherine talked about? A desire to do the right thing even if it was something that didn't gain more money and clients for the firm.

The fog is still thick when he drives home over the Oakland Bay Bridge in the afternoon. The fact that Quin Ridgely is also being played by Hassan puts things in a new perspective. He thinks about the young boy he saw in Berkeley and he thinks about this magic technology Ridgely has created and how much it really could change the world in a good way for so many people.

And, he also thinks what a horrifying technology it can be at the same time. He wonders what Ridgely means when he says he is working to make the technology invisible. He wonders what Hassan means when he talks about augmented reality that doesn't change the world but simply alters it a little.

This is maybe the greatest way of changing the world when one thinks about it. Mixing reality with non-reality in some form of alchemy so the two can no longer be separated from each other. Maybe this is the future of technology? Maybe this future is here right now but we don't know it has arrived?

## 12. Boutique Hotel

The thick fog bank hovers over the city as Catherine drives through the downtown streets of San Francisco and onto 101. The wall of fog ends abruptly after Potrero Hill south of the city. The traffic south on 101 is light and she arrives in Palo Alto at five and checks into the hotel. She meets with the hotel manager to make sure everything is set for the arriving guests of SPEAK. There is no event planned this evening so after dinner she goes to the bar and orders a glass of wine.

She sits at the brass bar and goes over the plan in her head. It is a tight plan. One of the tightest plans she has ever worked out. Everything planned to the last detail.

Everything except meeting a person in the bar by chance.

He is wearing a blazer over a t-shirt and jeans and he has a two-day shadow beard. In the dim light of the bar he

looks around her age, the mid-30s. He takes a stool at the bar next to her and orders a bourbon on the rocks.

"I don't want to be nosy, but are you here for tomorrow's event at SPEAK by any chance?" he asks.

"Yes," she says.

He extends his hand.

"Rob McCallum," he says.

The name sounds vaguely familiar to her but she can't put a label on it.

She extends her hand.

"Catherine Cummings," she says. "Are you here for the event?"

"Yes, kind of," he says. "I wasn't invited to it but I'm gonna' see if I can talk my way into it."

"Why would you want to do that?" she asks.

"There'll be a number of people from my group there," he says. "Maybe they'll let me in."

"What group is that?" Catherine asks.

"Staffers from Dan Harris' presidential campaign," he says.

He pulls a business card out and puts it on the bar top next to her.

"I'm the manager of Dan Harris' presidential campaign," he says.

"That's interesting," she says.

"And what capacity are you down here as?" he asks.

"I'm with ImageHouse Advertising," she says.

"John Jenkins' advertising firm," he says. "The ad firm for SPEAK."

"How'd you know?" she asks.

He laughs.

"It's not much of a secret," he says. "I thought Jenkins was out of politics. Then he takes on the SPEAK account."

"If you know anything about our firm you know we focus on high tech clients," she says. "Not political clients."

"You haven't done much of a job of avoiding political clients," he says. "I mean representing the largest company in high tech that's in bed with the government."

"I think you'll find this viewpoint refuted tomorrow," she says.

"It would be good if I could see it refuted first hand," he says.

"Consider you just got an invitation," she says.

McCallum's cell phone buzzes and he looks at the incoming number.

He tosses his drink down and puts a ten-dollar bill on the bar and gets up.

"Thanks," he says. "My boss calling. Got to take this. See you tomorrow."

When he is gone Catherine looks at the business card and wonders about that funny thing called coincidence. She looks at her watch. The bus from the airport with the SPEAK guests will be arriving soon. She goes out to the front of the hotel and stands by the front door. She feels like the hostess of a party, waiting for her guests to arrive.

She feels good though about this whole thing. Not the morality of it all. But in her own ability to carry it all off the way she wants to carry it off. The way she wants things to happen and not the way someone else wants to happen.

The hostess of a party she herself has set up.

Waiting for her invited guests.

She could think of worse things to get money for.

The feeling of being able to create it in the first place is a good feeling to her for some reason. Even if she was about to create a huge lie. Even if she was about to make a villain into a hero.

### 13. The Old Patriot

On Friday morning, the traffic on I-80 to Sacramento is thick with RVs, campers and SUVs full of kids and camping gear heading up to the mountains for the long weekend. Going to Tahoe or Reno for the parents to gamble. After Sacramento the traffic thins out as 80 begins to wind up into the foothills of the Sierras past old gold-mining towns like Auburn. In Auburn Jenkins gets on 49 North and drives the twenty miles through a collection of buildings called Dew Drop and then into the gold mining town of Grass Valley.

He arrives in Grass Valley in late morning. He has visited his father one time before when he first moved into this place. There was a big argument and he has not returned since then. That was maybe six years ago. He lost track of time. It was painful for him to think about the relationship.

The town has not changed a lot since he has been here. The narrow main street with the old buildings on both sides makes it look like a set for a western town in a Hollywood set. A biker group has gathered in the "downtown area" one might label the big collection of saloons squished tighter together than on the rest of the street. Big guys with leather and tattoos crowd the wooden board sidewalks in front of tourist shops selling rocks and souvenirs. They are drinking and they are not a quiet crowd and look like they might explode into violence any second.

Two miles north of Grass Valley is a rusted mailbox with a faded metal American flag on it. You turn at the mailbox and go a quarter of a mile until you come to this funny, adobe fort-like structure that sits on the top of a hill overlooking the foothills of the Sierra. The home is modeled somewhat after some famous old fort of American western lore. A large pole with an American flag is on top of the fort and under the American flag is a flag with the image of a coiled snake on it ready to strike. The name on the flag reads "High Sierra Constitutional Guard."

Colonel Bill Jenkins is sitting on the front porch situated in such a way it appears the flagpole is coming out of the top of his head. Making him all the more a symbol of patriotism. The colonel is wearing a camo outfit

with the same logo and words from the flag. He is in his early 70s but is in great shape from all the hiking he does. He is trim and fit and might be some retired fitness trainer. Jenkins takes his bag out of the car and walks towards him.

"It's been a long time," he says.

"Too long," says Jenkins.

They hug each other.

"Sit down and catch me up on yourself," he says. "Lots of water under the old bridge. I'll get us a few beers."

The Colonel goes into his house and comes out with two bottles of beer.

"Zach tells me you've gotten yourself back into politics representing SPEAK," the Colonel says.

"Not intentionally," Jenkins says.

"Everything's intentional," his father says.

"They're my biggest client," Jenkins says. "I don't have a choice."

"There's always a choice," the Colonel says. "I hear about them all the time on the news. They're in bed with the government."

"I'm starting to believe that after talking to Zach and others," Jenkins says.

"You shouldn't have to let others tell you they're part of the government," the Colonel says. "It should be obvious to you."

"I'm starting to see it myself," Jenkins says.

"Good," says the Colonel.

"Something else is happening though," Jenkins says.

"I'm getting passion back into my life."

"I haven't heard that word for a long time," the Colonel says.

"Maybe I'm trying to figure out how to mix passion with conscience," Jenkins say. "I had passion when I worked on the President's campaign. But I didn't exactly follow my conscience. I wonder what's more important? Being passionate about the wrong thing or having no passion about the right thing?"

"Of course it's better to have passion about the right things in life," the Colonel says. "But it is not an easy task to match them up together."

"I'm finding it a difficult task," Jenkins say. "The man I helped get elected President has changed from the man I helped create. It's a strange feeling. It feels like others have created changes to something I created and I can no longer return my original creation or even recognize it."

The Colonel smiles at his son.

"He never changed," the Colonel says. "Only showed his true colors when he got power. Just like they all do. You've become a Libertarian if you can see this."

"Passion and power seems all there is in politics," says Jenkins.

"Add money, sex and greed to the mix," the Colonel says.

"This whole thing with SPEAK has put me back into the middle of something. I never realized how much I had sacrificed my life to just making money and nothing else. I'm starting to see there's not much passion in it all and I'm starting to see how passion is so important to me."

"There's a new spirit in you I haven't seen for a long time," the Colonel says.

"I feel it," Jenkins says. "Politics are back in my life, matched with advertising in some new way. I'm not sure what way. I just know I'm ready to make some type of political commitment. It might not sound like much to you. But it's everything to me."

The two sit on the porch in silence for a few moments.

"I saw Zach the other night," Jenkins says. "He told me that you might know something about what Hassan Mohammad is up to."

"Zach called me and told me about your meeting with Quin Ridgely and Magic Light," the Colonel says. "Things are moving along faster than we thought."

"What do you mean by that?" Jenkins asks.

The Colonel does not say anything.

"What things are moving along?" Jenkins asks.

"The plan to take over the government," the Colonel says.

"What plan?" Jenkins asks.

"There's time to tell you about this," the Colonel says. "But let's get some lunch now."

They drive into Grass Valley in the Colonel's old Jeep. They go into an old western style saloon where everyone knows the Colonel. He gets a large table and a number of the men in the bar sit down at the table with them. Bill Jenkins introduces his son to the group. The men are all ages, from guys in their twenties to men older than the Colonel. They are a hardened, tough group. Former Seals and Special Forces and Green Beret veterans. Jenkins is impressed with the guys in the group. A hundred and fifty years ago, they would have been part of that invasion of these hills by the Forty-Niners. Two hundred and fifty years ago they would have been American patriots throwing bags of tea into the Boston harbor.

They order lunch and over lunch much of the talk is about the recent terrorist bombing in Kansas City and how the President is not doing nothing to make the country safe from these types of attacks. All the more reason for militia groups around the country. There is talk about the coming presidential election and how important it is that Dan Harris becomes the next president.

"Last chance to take back our country," Jenkins hears a number of times from men around the table.

On the ride back to his place after the saloon, Jenkins can look out over the sweeping hills of the Sierras and beyond them, the wave-like rolls leveling out into the great Central Valley of California in the hazy distance of a noon day of a California summer. Jenkins thinks the view is something similar to what John Muir might have seen on his way back from his first trip to the high Sierras over one hundred and fifty years ago.

When they get back to the Colonel's place the old man goes into his office and takes some papers out of a locked drawer and hands them to Jenkins.

"I don't know how you do it," he says, "but for someone who wants to stay out of politics you have a knack for putting yourself right in the middle of politics."

Jenkins browses through the papers.

"What is this?" he asks.

"You've heard of Edward Snowden and how he made public what's going on with the NSA?" the Colonel says. "Well, these papers are from another whistleblower. One of the greatest computer hackers in the world. You'll notice that his name has been crossed out in the papers you have. He joined one of the militia groups and gave them this material. It eventually got to me."

"What is it?" Jenkins asks.

"Emails over the past few months from Hassan Mohammad to a number of top leaders in Silicon Valley," the Colonel says. "It show that Hassan Mohammad is secretly plotting to become President of the United States through a coup before the election this November."

"The SPEAK bias allegations we're fighting are that Hassan Mohammad is behind Claire Wilson for President," Jenkins says.

The Colonel shakes his head.

"Claire Wilson is the President's choice as everyone knows," the Colonel says. "Hassan keeps the President off his back by using SPEAK technology to support her. But he is really supporting no one for President but himself."

"This sounds crazy," Jenkins says.

"We're living in crazy times," the Colonel says.

"Hassan Mohammad originally planned to run for President in four years when this new technology he's invested in called Magic Light is ready. But the hacked emails of his show that things have moved faster than he thought with Magic Light and he's making his move this year by a takeover coup. If he is successful, technology will own the political system."

"Who's going to stop him?" Jenkins asks.

"You'll see tomorrow," the Colonel says.

## 14. SPEAK Easy

Catherine is up early Friday morning in the café of the Palo Alto hotel meeting with her commercial director and his crew who arrived last night. He is one of the best in the business and has won a number of industry awards for commercials people talk about over and over.

At eight-thirty, she greets her guests by the bus in front of the hotel. Rob McCallum is there.

"I appreciate the invitation," he says to her as he gets on the bus. "No need to let others know who I am. I've already talked to my campaign staffers at this event. Let's keep things about me quiet. I don't think Hassan Mohammad would be too happy I'm here."

"No problem," she says.

They travel the five miles to SPEAK headquarters and stop in front of the main entrance where Hassan Mohammad waits for them in his usual t-shirt and jeans. A number of top executives at SPEAK stand behind him wearing t-shirts with the SPEAK logo on them.

There is coffee and introductions inside the building. Hassan Mohammad is all smiles telling everyone how happy he is to see them and how he looks forward to showing them the technology behind their search techniques. The director and his film crew wanders around the group getting a number of shots for the commercials.

At nine-thirty, everyone gathers in a conference room and Catherine takes to the podium and welcomes them and then introduces Hassan Mohammad.

"We are so pleased to have everyone here this morning and look forward to showing you our technology," he says. "It's technology that has allowed us to become one of the world's largest corporations. A technology that makes our world a better place for all of us."

Catherine has written all these words for Hassan.

There is a brief series of slides featuring milestones in the growth of SPEAK and there is a chart showing various divisions of the company. There is the new film company and the world's largest video game company they recently acquired. There is their Internet channel that has outgrown Google's YouTube. There are their new driverless automobiles. He talks about some spectacular new ventures of SPEAK but says nothing about Magic Light.

Then he introduces the VP of Technology at the company. He is a young man from India who has wire rim glasses and a t-shirt and jeans with black, high-topped sneakers. He might be a graduate student at some college. He isn't much older than the early twenties. He points things out in a number of slides.

Another executive at SPEAK takes the podium and gives some demonstrations of search using words and questions supplied from the guests.

At the end of the presentations, Hassan comes to the podium himself and goes through the basics of Internet search with slides Catherine's people have created. He talks about how the algorithms of the company are created. He makes it all sound so logical and straight-forward. Things rise to the top on the search engine by that grand action called democracy. Search is such a democratic process, a result of the freedom of searched words define trends and directions in the nation.

Hassan tells the group there are no tricks or maneuverings behind their rise to the top. Like politicians in a democracy, top words are "voted" to the top by the millions who searched using SPEAK. The company operates its product like a digital democracy. Leading words are the leading things of culture, the leading symbols of culture.

At the end of his talk, the group has a new attitude about SPEAK and feel more like they are in the presence of a great patriot. After an hour and a half, there is a question and answer period.

Some of the media people are tech savvy and ask some good questions about the way the algorithms are established. But the SPEAK people are able to explain them to everyone's satisfaction. At noon, lunch is served out on the big patio on the inside of the campus of the company. Hassan Mohammad and his top executives mingle with the guests and there is a light air to the whole thing.

The guests are taken on a tour of the buildings after lunch and at four the bus takes everyone back to the hotel where a cocktail reception and dinner is planned. The film crew gets interviews and candid conversations and shots of the campus of SPEAK and shots at the reception and dinner where Hassan Mohammad gives a talk at the dinner and thanks everyone for coming. Catherine knows they can make some great commercials from the footage they've shot. The day has gone very well.

Before Hassan Mohammad leaves, he stops by Catherine's table and congratulates her on putting together an incredible event.

"You're a large part of why ImageHouse is the hottest shop in town," he says.

"Thank you," she says. "I'll have some rough cuts of the commercials for you to review in a week."

"Good," he says. "We can discuss Magic Light when you and Jenkins come back to show them to me."

"That's fine," Catherine says. "I'll tell Jenkins."

When he was gone a number of people stop at Catherine's table and congratulate her on the job she did. After dinner, most of the group retires for the evening. It has been a long day and they're on early flights the next day. She goes into the bar of the hotel. A few of the guests linger. She sits at the bar and orders a glass of wine. She is ready to call Jenkins on her cell phone and tell him about the day when Rob McCallum sits down beside her. He orders a bourbon on the rocks and lifts his glass in a toast to her.

"A great show today," he said. "You're really a pro. One of the only ones I've ever seen. I see why Jenkins and you are partners. Why ImageHouse wins all the awards."

"I appreciate the compliment," Catherine says.

"You really put one over on everyone," he says.

"What do you mean by that?" Catherine asks.

"I mean how they gave us a lot of bullshit on how their technology works," he says. "And how everyone ate it all up. Brilliant. Congratulations."

"And you're the expert on the technology?" she asks.

"I learned a few things when I ran a software firm," says McCallum.

"A man of many talents," Catherine says.

"I suspected SPEAK was biased in their searches months ago but it was hard for us to get the FTC to investigate with the influence SPEAK has in Washington," McCallum says.

"So you're the one behind the bias charges?" she asks.

"I filed the initial materials," he says. "Others joined in later."

"So tell me what was bullshit about today's presentation," Catherine asks.

"There's nothing democratic about their search technology," he says. "They filter their search through a filter they didn't show us. Positive news about our campaign is given low search priority while bad news rises to the top. There is just positive news on our opponent Claire Wilson. The same for news about terrorism and jihadists. They push it to the bottom of their searches. It's obvious when you compare similar searches on SPEAK

with Google and other large search engines. The story they told today was full of holes."

"What are you going to do about it?" Catherine asks.

"It's hard doing something about them when the President has their back," he says. "Still, I'm going to press the FTC to send out a technical team to look at things. Maybe I'll be successful."

McCallum orders another bourbon on the rocks.

"Besides, there's a rumor going around that they're developing some secret new type of virtual reality technology to control people."

Catherine is quiet for a few moments.

"That's a bold allegation," she says.

"I have it from good contacts," he says.

"Besides pressing the FTC to investigate SPEAK more I'm going to do one more thing," he says.

"What might that be?" she asks.

"I'm going to ask you and John Jenkins to meet with Dan Harris," he says.

"In case you haven't heard, we stay out of politics," she says.

McCallum laughs.

"Right, with SPEAK as a client," he says. "Think about it. Our campaign is looking for a new advertising firm. The

current one is not doing the job for us. Talk to Jenkins about it and let me know if you want to meet with Dan Harris."

Catherine finishes her wine and gets up from the bar.

"I'll talk to him about it," she says. "And thanks for the compliments about the presentations today."

## 15. The High Sierra Constitutional Guard

The Colonel puts a tent and a few sleeping bags into his Jeep on Saturday morning and his son and him drive higher into the Sierra Mountains. The sides of the road become populated with Pine trees until they are driving through a thick forest of trees. The Central Valley of California is spread below them and they can see Sacramento fifty miles to the west.

The Colonel turns onto a few side roads and they are on a make-shift gravel road. They travel down the road a few miles and soon there are vehicles parked alongside the road. Large pick-up trucks with thick tires. Vans. Jeeps. They pass men dressed in camo gear walking down the road. They come to a gate and the men at the gate salute Bill Jenkins as they open it. They drive a little further and the forest gives way to a large meadow in a little valley.

The valley is filled with tents and hundreds of men. It reminds Jenkins of one of those Civil War re-enactments

his father has taken him to when Zach and him were boys. Everyone dressed in camo outfits or military uniforms. A path is open through the tents and the Colonel slowly drives down it, saluting the men by their tents as they salute him.

They drive to the center of the meadow where a stage is surrounded by American flags and the flags with the snakes in the front of his place. A huge banner behind the stage reads in block letters "Welcome to the 5<sup>th</sup> Memorial Encampment of the High Sierra Constitutional Guard."

The Colonel stops next to the stage and they get out of the Jeep. He waves his arm around the meadow, a look of pride on his face.

"I started the group five years ago," he says to Jenkins. "Never thought it would grow to this."

A number of men come up and salute the Colonel and there are some discussions about details of the meeting. They get the tent and sleeping bags from the Jeep and set up the tent. Camping is nothing new to Jenkins as the Colonel has taken Zach and him camping a number of times before. It's a nice reminder of that forgotten past life between the two of them.

The Colonel walks around camp introducing Jenkins to members of his militia group. Everywhere men salute the

Colonel and shake his hand. It is obvious the Colonel holds much respect.

At around ten minutes before one o'clock in the afternoon, a militia member in a camo outfit with a bugle walks on stage and plays *Reveille*. The group of men in the small valley begin moving towards the stage until they are all around it. At on one in the afternoon everyone faces the big American flag next to the stage and the Colonel leads the group in the *Pledge of Allegiance* followed by the singing of *The Star Spangled Banner*. After singing *The Star Spangled Banner*, the Colonel steps behind the podium with the symbol of the snake on it under the words "High Sierra Constitutional Guard."

"Welcome to the Fifth Memorial Day Rally of The High Sierra Constitutional Guard," the Colonel says. "When I started this group five years ago, there were only ten members. Now, we have 150 members and are one of the largest militia groups in the nation."

There is cheering from the group.

"But our growth is reflected in the growth of the number of militia groups around the nation," the Colonel says. "Five years ago, there were no more than fifty groups. Today, thanks to the current administration, there are over a thousand militia groups."

Cheering again.

"There's a reason for this," the Colonel says. "A big reason. At no time in our history has the nation been more threatened from traitors inside of it. The radical terrorists are a threat to the nation but they are not as much of a threat as those inside our government. We're living in the most dangerous time in our nation's history. There's been a takeover of our government in the last eight years."

The Colonel looks out over the men.

"We need to take our country back!!!" he shouts to the group raising his fist.

"Take our country back! Take it back! Take it back!!!" the group yells.

The words become a chant and the chant continues for a few minutes.

Jenkins looks around at the crowd. He has not seen this type of passion for a long time. Certainly not in the politically correct words and actions of the citizens of the Bay Area and the advertising community. He has not felt this type of passion since he was involved in the President's campaign eight years ago.

"Our politicians are out of touch with the people," the Colonel continues. "The government is taking away

freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. It's like a vampire sucking life out of its citizens. The Constitution means nothing to our President. It's up to us to protect it!"

More cheers.

"The whole thrust of modern civilization is making the individual extinct," the Colonel continues. "The individual today seems powerless, badly educated, adrift in technology, viewed as a unit tied to a massive collective. The individual is fundamentally at odds with the State. The State wants control. The State wants loyalists, adherents, joiners, conformists. The individual wants freedom."

Again roars of "Yes" and cheering.

"The basic makeup of the State is promoted as a We," the Colonel continues. "We want this. We need this. We deserve this. We all agree on this. The ubiquitous We is floated on purpose. The aim is to eradicate the I. The individual. The State wants all arguments to center on what We should get. Should We be given this or that? Should We have A or B? What is best for We? This is where all the trouble starts. The State is not going to solve that trouble because it is creating it. Their denial of the individual is their 'religion.' They want to vanish the individual entirely.

More cheers and "Yes!" shouted over and over.

The Colonel continues. "On the other hand, the individual who is free knows what he wants. Or can discover it. Sooner or later, he realizes that most of the people around him aren't free. Those people have embedded themselves so deeply in We that they can't see outside it. The very idea of being free is meaningless to them. Ultimately, when all the bets are in, when all the chips are laid down on the table, the State's game is going to result in a gain or loss for We. That's how the game is rigged. The individual is ruled out. He's obscured in the fog of the We. The roulette wheel spins, but it doesn't matter which slot the ball falls into. No slot is labeled 'individual' on the great roulette wheel."

"At the core of the individual is the energy of individual imagination," the Colonel says.

The Colonel pauses and waves his hand around the meadow.

"Imagination is high up here in the mountain, the High Sierra, where the rivers start," the Colonel says. "It ignites the flow. It births something out of nothing."

The group cheers.

"In all of the chaos today, one person represents a new hope and a new path way for the nation," the Colonel

says. "His name is Dan Harris. He is one of us. He's a former Navy Seal and a legendary businessman. Dan Harris must defeat Claire Wilson or the nation will be lost!"

"Dan Harris! Dan Harris!" the group chants.

"I'll be representing our group at a meeting of leaders from militia groups around the nation on July 4<sup>th</sup>," the Colonel says. "And Dan Harris will be the featured speaker at the meeting."

"Dan Harris! Dan Harris!" the group continues to chant.

The Colonel's talk ends among the continued chanting of "Dan Harris." The Colonel announces a number of "housekeeping items" for discussion. The Treasurer of the group gives a presentation about the finances and then another militia member comes on stage and announces various seminars on survival tactics in the afternoon. There will be some tactical military exercises during the next few days taught by members of the group who are former Navy Seals and Green Berets. There is a seminar on the Constitution.

Jenkins attends a few of the seminars and sees a passion and commitment in these men (and some women) he has not seen for a long time. They come from all walks of life. Most are from that group of men who don't go to an office

every day in coats and ties but rather men who build things such as carpenters, electricians, plumbers, flooring contractors, painters. Some are small businessmen in private industry but few have ever worked for a corporation or for the government. There isn't much different between them in so many ways yet so much difference in all those false titles modern society creates to separate them.

\* \* \*

When the evening comes, campfires appear and there is a dinner from freeze-dried rations at a number of tables set around the front stage. A number of the men bring homemade Moonshine, beer and wine and there is a cheerful mood in the group. Every now and then, shots are fired into the air. When darkness comes, the stage lights up as a popular country and western band begins playing patriotic songs from their new album and they play for a few hours.

Later in the evening, when most of the group have retired, the Colonel and Jenkins sit around a small campfire in front of their tent. Their faces flash in bursts of orange and yellow from the fire. A half bottle of Moonshine is next to them

"What do you think about all this craziness?" the Colonel asks.

"I haven't felt this type of passion for a long time," Jenkins says. "I didn't know it still existed."

"Oh it's out there in spades," the Colonel says. "But you'll never see it living in the big city."

"I had no idea you were so involved in all of this," Jenkins says.

"Of course you didn't," the Colonel says. "We've hardly seen each other for years."

"I want that to change," Jenkins says.

"That would be good," the Colonel says.

The Colonel pokes some embers in the fire with a stick and takes a drink of the Moonshine by lifting the bottle and drinking from it directly.

"Maybe I can knock some sense back into your head," the Colonel says. "Make you see you're working for one of the biggest traitors of all in Hassan Mohammad and that government front he runs called SPEAK. There's nothing good about them. Your brother Zach knows this. I wish you could see the light."

"I'm starting to see the light," Jenkins says. "It's becoming more clear to me."

"You've got to get rid of Mohammad or you'll be destroyed," the Colonel says. "And you will be destroyed. No one can touch him. SPEAK creates its' own version of news. It keeps culture a prisoner inside the rigged confines of their search engine server farms. Soon, he will be President if his coup is successful."

"And the militias of the nation are going to stop him?" asks Jenkins.

"What higher purpose could we have?" the Colonel asks. "The battle between the two sides in culture was first waged by political parties. But now the political parties are merely a distraction from what's really happening. They work like the actions of a magician that draw's the attention of the audience away from the magician's actions. The real magician is technology today and Hassan Mohammad represents technology."

\* \* \*

They leave the militia camp the next morning when it is beginning to break up. They go hiking in the hills behind the Colonel's home. It brings back many memories for Jenkins. His father has taken Zach and him hiking so many times in Yosemite. They have all hiked a good part of the

John Muir Trail before they went to college.

They reach a plateau at the top of the trail and walk out on a large piece of granite and sat down.

"I hope you can make it to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July meeting in the desert," the Colonel says. "Dan Harris and leaders of the key militia groups in the nation will be there. We will make plans at the rally to defeat Hassan Mohammad if he attempts his coup to take over the government. You can come up here before the 4<sup>th</sup> and we can drive down together."

"That would be good," Jenkins says.

"Maybe I can still knock some sense into your head," the Colonel says.

"It's been good being with you this weekend," Jenkins said.

"Yes, good," says the Colonel. "I'm glad you came up."

\* \* \*

On the drive down 80 back to the city he thinks about what his father told him about Hassan Mohammad and his plan to take over the government. Was it just another conspiracy theory? There was a lot of them going around these days. Maybe he will find out more at the upcoming meeting with Hassan. Maybe he should resign SPEAK as a client? Maybe his

father was right and Hassan could destroy him?

Yet it seemed important that he and Catherine continue playing along with Hassan. They alone were close to this new technology of his called Magic Light and they alone might be able to find out what Hassan was planning to do with it in his move to take over the government.

## 16. Magic Light Meeting

Jenkins meets Catherine at the office on Tuesday morning before the meeting at SPEAK and tells her about his meeting with his father and the militia rally in the mountains.

"I'm glad you got together with him," she says.

"We went to a rally of his militia group," Jenkins says. "The High Sierra Constitutional Guard. It reminds me of a club Zach and I started when we were kids. An incredible group of men. Men of passion and commitment. Something you don't see much of in the city. The old man is the founder of the group. It's impressive. Everyone calls him Colonel and he wears a military uniform all the time and has a flag with a snake on it in front of his home."

"You seem fired up about all this," Catherine says. "I haven't seen you like this for a long time."

"He told me something hard to believe about Hassan," Jenkins says.

"I'm sure there's a lot of things that are hard to believe about him," Catherine says.

"The old man says he's behind a coup to take over the government," Jenkins says. "The search stuff showing SPEAK's search results biased towards Claire Wilson is to keep the President happy and off his back. The only bias involved is Hassan's bias for to become the next President."

"And your father's group is going to stop him?" Catherine asks.

"His group combined with the other militia groups around the country," Jenkins says. "They're getting together for a big meeting on the Fourth of July at this abandoned air base in the desert. Dan Harris will be at the event. Leaders from militia groups around the nation will be there. I told the old man I'd be there."

"It's interesting Dan Harris will be there," Catherine says. "I met Rob McCallum, his campaign manager, at the SPEAK event. He was impressed at how I put the event together. He still thinks SPEAK is guilty as hell. He knows about you and wants to meet with us. Evidently, the Harris campaign is considering changing their advertising firm."

Jenkins ponders this a few moments.

"Another foot for us in politics," Jenkins says.

"It won't sit well with Hassan Mohammad," Catherine says. "Being the two are on opposite sides of the political spectrum."

"If Hassan is out of politics and unbiased like he claims he is, our relationship with Harris should not bother him," says Jenkins.

"I have a hunch this won't be the case," Catherine says.

"We'll meet with Harris quietly and explore things with him," Jenkins says. "Keep things under the radar."

"I think that's a good idea for now," Catherine says. "You sound ready to jump back into the election."

"The old man might have talked some sense into me," Jenkins says. "I think he's a true patriot."

"That's the first time you've used 'patriot' word in a long time," Catherine says.

"It's getting harder to stay out of things these days," Jenkins says. "Especially if you have any conscience."

Catherine just looks at Jenkins and smiles. Perhaps he is finally getting a sense of conscience?

They leave the office in mid-morning and drive to Palo Alto for their meeting with Hassan about Magic Light. They again go over what Hassan has in mind for Magic Light and their role in it. But neither can come up with any ideas. They know he is holding back on them but it is impossible to know what he is holding back.

"One thing I'm beginning to suspect is that Quin and Hassan are not playing on the same field, in the same ballgame" Catherine says. "Ridgely thinks Hassan is going to use Magic Light for some humanitarian purpose most likely related to his son's problems. But Hassan has a different idea. I think it's somehow related to the election and his desire to gain government control."

\* \* \*

Hassan is in a good mood from the PR event on Friday and congratulates Catherine.

"It went a long way to help our image," Hassan says. "You did a spectacular job."

"We got some great video footage," Catherine says.

She hands Hassan a DVD.

"Here's a rough cut of the commercial we made," she says. "I'll email you a media schedule in a few days. I've

scheduled you on key national news programs when the commercial begins to run."

"We're starting to put all of this behind," Hassan says. "So we can focus on important new projects like Magic Light."

"We went through the file you gave us," Catherine says. "Read Quin Ridgely's bio. Watched the videos. Listened to his music."

"A strange guy," Hassan says.

"A strange genius," Catherine adds.

"The Magic Light technology is incredible," Jenkins says. "I've never experienced anything like it."

"I thought you would feel this way," Hassan says. "I felt the same way when I experienced it for the first time."

"It's hard to think about advertising it when we don't know your thoughts about the market for it," Jenkins says.

"Before marketing it, we need to test it on a large scale," Hassan says. "As you know, ImageHouse handles the promotion for some large concerts. One of them, the Blues Concert in Golden Gate Park, is coming up soon. A few weeks away at the end of June."

"One of the largest events we promote," Catherine says. "A hundred thousand people. The biggest blues bands

in the nation at the event. Been our client for the past few years."

"That's where I want to test Magic Light," Hassan says. "At the concert. We'll give everyone the special yellow bracelets when they enter. We'll have Quin Ridgely there with the Magic Light device. I'll be there too. We need to see how it works in a large crowd. Quin will turn it on for a while and then turn it off. He'll be able to measure its effect on the crowd."

Catherine looks at Jenkins briefly. There is a look of concern in her eyes but she quickly hides it under a smile.

"That's exciting," Catherine says. "I can coordinate getting the wrist bands on everyone," she says. "You need to have them delivered to me two days before the event. I'll work out a place for you and Quin Ridgely to operate Magic Light from so that no one will see you."

"Good," says Hassan. "It's the first large test for Magic Light."

\* \* \*

A heavy rain had started and the drive back to the city was slow. Catherine and Jenkins talked in the car as streams of heavy rain hit the windshield. They were both

stunned by Hassan's plan to use Magic Light on a hundred thousand people.

"Can you imagine what might happen with a hundred thousand people under the spell of Magic Light?" Catherine says. "I had to fight to hold in my amazement at the boldness of the plan."

"Now I know why he needs us involved with Magic Light," Jenkins says.

"I still think he has more plans he hasn't told us about yet," Catherine says. "I don't believe for a minute Hassan will have Ridgely shut Magic Light off after the concert."

"Neither do I," says Jenkins. "Quin will have control over a hundred thousand people. The question is, what does he have in mind to do with a hundred thousand people spaced out with the Magic Light technology?"

"The most immediate question is what are we going to do?" Catherine asks. "Do we play along and risk unleashing Magic Light on a hundred thousand people?"

Jenkins is quiet for a few moments and there is only the sound of the swishing windshield wipers and the rain falling against the car. The traffic on 101 North into the city has almost come to a standstill.

"I think it's time to stop playing along with him," Jenkins says. "Time to go to the authorities. Catch Hassan and Ridgely red-handed at the event."

"Do we have enough evidence against them?" Catherine asks.

"As much as we're going to get before it's too late," Jenkins says. "It's the best option we have right now. Trying to sabotage the event ourselves can backfire and tip off Hassan we're onto him. Better that the authorities stop him than us."

When they get back to the office, the rain has stopped but it still is a dark day in the city under thick, low clouds. Catherine calls Rob McCallum sets up a meeting with Dan Harris. He is coming to town in a few days and they agree to meet in his hotel room to keep things as quiet as possible.

And Jenkins calls an old friend of his, a special agent in the San Francisco office of the Federal Investigation Bureau (FIB) named Max Brewer. He tells Max he needs to talk with him immediately, that it is very important.

## 17. Dan Harris

The next day in the early evening, there are a number of reporters in the lobby of the famous California Hotel on top of Nob Hill. Secret Service agents watch everything from the sides of the lobby. Catherine and Jenkins ask for one of the hotel managers at the front desk and follow him to a freight elevator in the back of the hotel. Rob McCallum has arranged this method for them to get up to Dan Harris' floor without causing a commotion with the reporters. They are searched by Secret Service agents when they get off the elevator on the Dan Harris' floor and then escorted by an agent to Harris' suite.

Rob McCallum welcomes them at the door and introduces them to Dan Harris. Jenkins has vaguely followed the activities of the billionaire businessman for a number of years. It is impossible not to follow him in some way since

the Harris name is on many hotels and resorts and golf courses around the world Jenkins has stayed at on vacations and business trips.

Harris is in his mid-60s and still has the athletic body of the famous halfback on the USC football team. He is dressed casually in a polo shirt and jeans. A television is on with Hassan Mohammad being interviewed on a news show by but the television is on mute. Catherine notices the interview and knows it is one of the appearances she set up for Hassan.

"I'm honored to meet a legendary businessman," Jenkins says extending his hand to Dan Harris. "Stayed in a number of your properties over the years."

"You're somewhat of a legend yourself," Dan Harris says. "I still hear people talk about the campaign you put together for the President."

"Something I'd like to forget it," Jenkins says.

Dan Harris turns to Catherine and extends his hand to her.

"So this is Catherine," he says. "Rob tells me you put together one of the best publicity presentations he's ever seen and he's seen a few."

"Thanks for the compliment," Catherine says. "I'm happy with how the event turned out."

Dan Harris motions everyone to sit down at the dining table in the suite. Rob McCallum opens a bottle of wine and pours everyone a glass.

"I've been watching some of Catherine's PR work on television," Harris says. "Looks like SPEAK and our friend Hassan Mohammad will come out of this whole thing smelling like roses."

"That's what we do for clients," Jenkins says. "We never asked to handle the bias problems SPEAK has. Hassan Mohammad called us and said they needed help. We help our clients and especially clients who represent three fourths of our business."

"A great cover-up of their lies," McCallum says. "Everyone knows SPEAK is attached at the hip to the government."

"And Claire Wilson's campaign," Dan Harris adds.

"We've been hearing this for some time now," Jenkins says. "But when we pitched SPEAK a few months ago for their business we had no idea of the extent they were in bed with the government."

"All Silicon Valley is in bed with the government," Dan Harris says. "I call the high tech industry the western branch of government."

Dan Harris looks at Rob McCallum.

"Give them the file," he says.

McCallum lays a thick file on the table in front of Jenkins and Catherine.

"Our current opposition research and information what our current advertising firm Winger Associates has done," McCallus says. "A small shop back in the Midwest."

"I know about them," Jenkins says.

"They were OK at first," McCallum says. "When Dan was one of seven candidates from the party. But after he secured the nomination, things got too big for them. Some dumb media buys on the schedule that doesn't fit our voter demographics. And not the right messaging. Everything's miss firing. We need to ramp things up quickly."

"I've seen some of the spots they've created," Jenkins says. "Mostly retaliating stuff against Claire Wilson's charges. Not much positive branding going on."

"That's a big problem," says Rob McCallum. "There are other problems. We're falling farther behind Wilson. The polls used to swing back-and-forth each week but she's starting to pull ahead. You probably know she has a powerful advertising firm out here behind her. Omni Advertising. The one you worked for when you ran the President's campaign."

"Don't remind me," Jenkins says. "I've stayed in touch with Miles Cameron for years. We give each other grief when we see each other at meetings of the advertising club."

"We need a firm to match Omni," McCallum says. "We need you guys to be our new advertising firm."

Jenkins looks at Catherine.

"What do you think?" he asks her.

"I think the offer comes at an interesting time for us with SPEAK as a client," she says. "But I think we should accept the offer."

Jenkins looks at McCallum and Dan Harris.

"You've got a new advertising firm," Jenkins says extending his hand to them.

"Great," says McCallum. "There's a lot of work to do with only a few months to the election."

"It won't be easy to cobble something new out in this amount of time," Jenkins says.

"We don't need something new," says McCallum. "We just need to have more people hear real Dan Harris story, know the real Dan Harris and what he really stands for. We need more people to understand the stakes involved in this election. We don't need to build a new brand for Dan. Just tell people what he's been all along. Tell the truth about

his career and not more of the lies Claire Wilson and her team spins."

"We can do that," Jenkins says.

"I want Catherine working with the campaign's PR director," McCallum says.

"That's OK with me," she says.

"Dan will be speaking at a big event in the California desert on the Fourth of July and I want Catherine to work with my campaign staff on coordinating this, McCallum says. "A week after the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend he'll be debating Claire Wilson in San Francisco. I need Catherine to work on his debate points. After the debates I want to break out a new advertising campaign. I want to get better media buys so that our target market hears his message. I want you guys to meet with our campaign staff here in San Francisco in a few days and get briefed on things and up to speed."

They discuss some ideas for the next half hour and Catherine and Jenkins leave by the freight elevator with the big file and quietly go out the back door of the hotel.

"You didn't mention anything about your dad's theory that Hassan is planning a government takeover," Catherine says.

"I didn't want McCallum and Harris to think I'm crazy," Jenkins says. "Besides, he's going to be caught red handed at the upcoming event in Golden Gate Park."

## 18. A Friend At The Bureau

The San Francisco office of the Federal Investigation Bureau (FIB) is on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of the big Federal Building on Golden Gate Avenue near the Civic Center. Like most federal buildings, it is a large concrete and glass building that is not going to win architectural awards.

Jenkins got to know Max Brewer when he was working for the President's campaign eight years ago and from time to time they have a few beers together and talk about the trials and tribulations of the Forty-Niners and Giants. Through the years, Brewer has risen within the ranks to be one of the top people in the agency.

His office is in one of the corners of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. Below on the streets, crowds are walking towards the big rally at the Civic Center for Claire Wilson at noon. Max Brewer is looking out the window at the crowds when Jenkins enters his office.

"We've got some people at the rally," he says to Jenkins. "There's word that people from the Harris campaign will be causing trouble."

"Exercising one's rights to free speech is becoming a dangerous proposition these days," Jenkins says.

"I've never seen it anything like it," Brewer says motioning to Jenkins to sit down.

"But at least the Giants are having a good summer," he says.

He leans back in his big green leather swivel chair.

"So you've got something important to tell me," he says. "I hope it's a tip on the Giants game tomorrow night."

"Even more important than that," Jenkins says.

Jenkins tosses the file Hassan gave him on Quin Ridgely onto Brewer's grey steel desk. Brewer picks it up and browses through it.

"You might have heard my ad firm got the SPEAK account a few months ago," Jenkins says.

"I saw news of it in the papers," Brewer says. "I forgot to congratulate you. Remind me to buy you a Guinness next time we go to John's Grill"

"SPEAK is our biggest client," Jenkins says. "Three quarters of all our business."

"Amazing how they've grown in the last five years," Brewer says. "Now even larger than Google."

"My partner Catherine and I met with Hassan Mohammad a week ago about a new product they're about to release," Jenkins says. "It's called Magic Light and it's a new type of virtual reality product invented by the guy in the file you have. His name is Quin Ridgely. Hassan asked us to meet with him and see what we thought about the Magic Light technology. SPEAK has a huge investment in the technology. We went to the Magic Light office and met Quin Ridgely and experienced the technology. You put on a plastic bracelet and Ridgely turns on some device and wham, you're in another world. Just like that. It was the most amazing thing I've ever experienced. But it's also scary as hell."

"What's your involvement with it?" Brewer asks.

"My firm is promoting the upcoming Blues Concert in Golden Gate park," Jenkins says. "Hassan wants to use it on the people at the concert. All one hundred thousand of them. He's got to be stopped. The technology has to be stopped until there's further research on it. It's dangerous."

"What about Hassan Mohammad and Quin Ridgely?" Brewer asks.

"We've arranged for them to be there at the concert," Jenkins says. "You need to have people there to arrest them and confiscate the bracelets and the device Ridgely has. Take it back to your labs and test it and see what I mean. I think Hassan's developing a powerful control device."

"What do you think his ultimate plan for it is?" Brewer asks.

"I'm not sure," Jenkins says. "I'm trying to string Hassan along and find out what the ultimate use of Magic Light is. The concert in Golden Gate Park is only a test for the product he'll introduce later. We're in an election year with two candidates running close to each other. You draw your own conclusions on what Magic Light might be used for. You've heard the allegations of SPEAK being close to the White House. Connect the dots."

Brewer slowly browses through the Magic Light file.

"I'll need to keep this," he says.

"No problem," Jenkins says. "I've made a copy of it."

"Have you told anyone else about this?" Brewer asks.

"No, you're the only one."

"Keep it that way," Brewer says. "I'll get together with my people."

"Hassan Mohammad has to be stopped," Jenkins says.

"I'll get going on this right away," Brewer says.  
"You'll owe me a ticket to a Giant's game for this."

Jenkins gets up and walks for the door.

"How's your old man?" Brewer asks. "Remember how we used to go to baseball games with him."

"He's doing fine," Jenkins says. "I'm going to see him on the Fourth of July at a big rally of militia leaders."

Brewer is suddenly interested in this.

"Militia leaders?" he asks.

"Militia leaders from all over the county," Jenkins says.

"Where are they meeting?" he asks.

"At an abandoned Air Force base out of Twenty-Nine Palms in the desert," Jenkins says. "Dan Harris will be there."

"Funny I haven't heard anything about it," Brewer says.

"They're keeping it very low profile," Jenkins says.  
"Few know about it."

"Interesting," Brewer says. "Thanks for coming in.  
Keep all this stuff between you and me."

## 19. The Harris Campaign

At the advertising firm the a few mornings later, Jenkins catches Catherine by the coffee machine and a conversation starts and continues into Jenkins' office. They both have read the big file Rob McCallum gave them and they've gone over research reports of Harris' campaign. Both have ideas on moving forward with the Harris campaign.

It is early in the morning when they like to get to the ad firm and get work out of the way before the chaos of the day. Jenkins lays on the couch in his office and Catherine sits in the red chair in the corner of the office. The sun is peaking over Treasure Island three miles to the east throwing a golden light into the office so that it looks like a color scene out of a noir detective movie.

"Harris' patriotism has been pushed into the back," Jenkins says. "We've got to bring it back up to the front. There's a strong connection between Harris and lots of people in the country afraid to speak up. He has the

support of patriots around the nation. There was a lot of talk about him up in the mountains with the militia groups. There's millions of voters out there who are patriots and sympathize with the militia but are afraid to step up to the government."

"That's not surprising," Catherine says. "Look at what the government's done to Libertarian groups and whistleblowers like Edward Snowden and the guy who made a documentary on the President."

"The progressives behind Claire Wilson are all about the future and globalism," Jenkins says. "Harris needs to remind voters about the nation's past and its nationalism."

"Maybe we position Harris with images of the American west," Catherine says. "Against the trendy modern logos and taglines of the future Wilson uses. The type of heroes who made America great. Looking back at what the nation has been rather than at the present at what it has become. Or, forward to the future at what its becoming."

"We need to invoke some symbolism my father always talks about," Jenkins says. "Harris represents the opposite symbol of Claire Wilson. She is no more than a continuation of the President's programs, another Washington insider. Harris is an outsider. It's a battle between symbols. The

two founding American symbols. Feminine equality against masculine freedom.”

“Your old man has always seen things in a different light,” she says. “I’m happy you’re listening to him. I haven’t heard this kind of stuff from you for a long time.”

“I’ve done a lot of thinking since seeing the old man over Memorial Day,” Jenkins says.

“I’ll put together a plan by next week,” Catherine says. “Put our top people on it. Maggie in research. Carlos in copywriting. Have Carrie create some visual images. Tell Sam to start working on social media. Get Tommy on board for a series of hard-hitting commercials.”

Jenkins now sits behind his desk making notes on his Mac laptop.

“Magic Light is something else though,” he says. “I don’t know what will happen with them. As I told you, I went to my friend Max Brewer on the Golden Gate Park event and the FIB is investigating the whole thing. But I haven’t heard anything back from him yet.”

“I half believe Quin Ridgely when he says he wants to help people like his son Roy,” Catherine says. “As crazy as that sounds. I don’t think he’s aware of the real plan Hassan has for Magic Light.”

“I agree,” Jenkins says.

"Do you think he suspects us?" Catherine asks.

"I don't know," Jenkins says. "It's hard to tell. I don't put anything past him. The head of the world's greatest tech company has a lot of ways to find out what we're up to."

Jenkins walks to the window. The morning sun sits above Treasure Island and his face is bathed in a golden color from the morning sun.

"All I know for sure is that it's a new day," he says. "When reality and virtual reality are getting harder to distinguish."

## 20. Invisible Technology

A black car with government plates on it drives down 101 from San Francisco in the early evening. It turns off 101 just north of Palo Alto into the exclusive community of Atherton. It is another wealthy little suburb like Los Altos Hills where many of the leaders of Silicon Valley live. Only it is even more exclusive than Los Altos Hills and the homes even larger. The car travels up into the hills where huge mansions occupy acres of the most expensive real estate in the nation.

The car stops at a gate with a gateman at it. The driver shows the gateman his credentials and the gateman opens the gate and the car proceeds through it and up a long, curving driveway past ponds and gardens and towards a great home sitting on top of a hill. The car stops in a circular driveway in front of the home and Max Brewer gets

out and walks up the steps to the front entrance of the home.

A Chinese man opens the door and takes Brewer through the huge home and into the den. Hassan Mohammad is in the den with Quin Ridgely. They are at a table waiting for him.

Max Brewer walks over to the table and sits down.

"I'm glad you called about Jenkins," Hassan says. "I thought I could trust him but you never know about these things."

"What are we going to do?" Brewer asks.

"I'm calling him tomorrow and telling him we've decided to hold off on testing Magic Light at the concert at Golden Gate Park."

"He'll be suspicious," Brewer says.

"I'll tell him we're still perfecting it," Hassan says. "Besides, it'll buy us more time to set things up for the July 4<sup>th</sup> event in the desert. Testing it at an event with militia leaders and the Libertarian candidate for President is a gift to us. Getting the information on the event from Jenkins was a real coup."

"Still, you have to get the bracelets on the attendees at the July 4<sup>th</sup> event to use Magic Light," Brewer says. "How do you plan on doing this?"

"Technology continues to evolve," says Hassan. "Quin has been busy working on making the technology invisible. He's just had a breakthrough. We no longer need to put bracelets on people for them to experience Magic Light."

"It's now able to be delivered by electromagnetic waves," says Quin Ridgely.

"A major advancement in the technology," Hassan says. "From the bulky goggles of Google to invisibility."

Quin Ridgely pulls out a small black box and places it on the table.

"This controls the new version of Magic Light," he says. "It is able to cover a mile radius."

Brewer touches it.

"The bureau could find a few uses for this," he says. "What's the plan for the July 4<sup>th</sup> event in the desert?"

"You escort Quin out to the event," Hassan says. "Have your contacts investigate the base and find a place for Quin to set up Magic Light. Probably inside one of the abandoned buildings on the base. Arrive out there a few days before the event and get everything set up. Quin will turn Magic Light on when everyone is there and the event starts. Dan Harris will become a babbling idiot."

"When will I turn it off?" Quin Ridgely asks.

The hint of a smile forms on Hassan's face.

"There is no need to turn it off," Hassan says.

"You're dealing with a number of national militia leaders and a presidential candidate with Secret Service men," Brewer says. "They'll know something's wrong with them."

"They won't know a thing," Hassan says. "Tell him Quin."

"I've not only perfected an invisible application of the Magic Light technology but also an invisible effect from it," Quin says. "One feels the effect the moment they're put under it but they can't remember they've been under it."

"They can be influenced while they're under the Magic Light influence," Hassan says. "Influenced in ways they are not consciously aware of. Like being a hypnotic trance. Suggestions can be made to them and the suggestions followed. Did you ever see the movie *The Manchurian Candidate*?"

Brewer ponders what Hassan has just said.

"How many people know about July 4<sup>th</sup> plan?" Brewer asks.

"Just us here tonight," Hassan says. "We need to keep it this way."

"This can have a huge effect on the election," Brewer says.

"That's my hope," says Hassan.

"Dan Harris will be a babbling idiot in the debates with Claire Wilson a week after the Fourth of July," Hassan says.

## 21. Suspicion

Jenkins and Catherine are having lunch at Pier 46 Café the following day. The fog has left the Bay Area and it is a clear day without a cloud in the sky. Jenkins tells Catherine he went to his friend Max Brewer at the FIB and told him about Hassan's plan to use the technology at the concert and how Hassan and Quin would get caught red-handed using it. So far he has not heard anything from Brewer about what the bureau is going to do.

That's when the cell phone buzzes with Hassan calling.

"The Magic Light technology is still being perfected and we're not ready to use it at the concert," Hassan tells Jenkins. "We'll be ready to use it at some later event but not at the concert."

"It looked pretty perfected to Catherine and me," Jenkins said.

"We're making it better," Hassan says.

And then Hassan is off the phone.

Jenkins looks at Catherine.

"That's strange," he says. "Hassan is cancelling using Magic Light at the Blues concert in the park."

"Do you think he's suspicious that something's up?" she asks.

"It's strange he's cancelling it at the last minute," Jenkins says.

Back at the office, Jenkins calls Max Brewer but Brewer's secretary says he is out and she will have him call Jenkins when he gets back into the office. The rest of the afternoon is full of advertising business. The people from the winery up in Sonoma are in the office for a presentation of their advertising campaign. There are final plans to go over for the concert in Golden Gate Park in a few days. There is a media plan to finalize on a software firm in Oakland.

Towards the end of the day, Jenkins and Catherine meet with Tommy Jones, their commercial director for a final review of the commercial he made from the SPEAK event. He has done a brilliant job of turning a damage control event into a glowing commercial for SPEAK. There is a brief interview with Hassan and then footage from around the magnificent campus of SPEAK.

"Great stuff," Jenkins says.

"We've been running it in all the major markets during evening prime time," Catherine says. "Hassan is appearing on news programs. Sarah is handling all the social media communications."

When Tommy leaves the conference room Jenkins shakes his head.

"Covering up for Hassan," he says. "I hope this is the last time. I think we should be making commercials against SPEAK not for them."

"Maybe one of these days we will after they fire us for exposing Magic Light," Catherine says.

"It might not be far away," Jenkins says.

## 22. Grass Valley

The big concert in Golden Gate Park comes off without trouble. Catherine has her top assistant Marilyn Benson plan it and she has done a spectacular job. Jenkins and Catherine attend the concert with Marilyn and it is a fun day for all of them and a relaxing one for Jenkins and Catherine in the middle of all the stress they are going through.

"I sometimes feel Marilyn is a Mini-Me," Catherine says to Jenkins. "Someday we need to consider her for a partnership in the firm."

"I've got no problems with that," Jenkins says. "She knows our business as well as anyone."

A few days before the July Fourth event in the desert, Catherine and Jenkins drive up to the Colonel's home. The Colonel puts some steaks on the grill and opens some

bottles of his home-made beer. They sit on the back deck of the Colonel's place eating and drinking the Colonel's beer.

The Colonel has met Catherine a few times before over the years and is enchanted with her.

"I think you two should get married," he said.

They laugh.

"We almost got married some time ago," Jenkins says.

"That's another story," Catherine says.

"I'd like to hear it," the Colonel says.

"Maybe another time," Catherine says.

"I've got some exciting news to tell you," Jenkins says. "Last week we met with Dan Harris. His campaign manager Rob McCallum was impressed by the job Catherine did at the PR event at SPEAK and asked us to meet with them about being the new advertising firm for Harris. We met with them and worked out a deal. We're now representing Harris in his presidential campaign."

"That is exciting news," the Colonel says. "You're finally back on the right side of the fence."

"Or rather both sides of the fence with SPEAK still as a client," Jenkins says.

Jenkins and Catherine talk about their advertising strategy for Dan Harris and the Colonel listens and adds comments. They are great comments and Catherine pulls out

her laptop and writes them down. Bill Jenkins then shows them the plans for the Fourth of July event in the desert. There will be a hundred militia leaders at the event from the leading militia groups around the nation. Dan Harris will address the group the first day of the event on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

"He's running neck-and-neck with Claire Wilson," Jenkins says.

"Your friends at SPEAK are doing everything they can to move Wilson ahead of Harris," the Colonel says.

"As I told you, Hassan has his own plans," the Colonel says. "He doesn't want to see Harris or Wilson as the next President. He wants to see himself. We are planning to stop him and will talk about this in the desert."

"You really think the tech sector is taking over power in the nation?" asks Jenkins.

The Colonel looks at his son.

"Of course it is," the Colonel says. "Can't you see it? Everyone focuses on the power within the two political parties. But the parties and power operate inside this technology. Those who control technology control the nation. Why do you think I came up to the mountains to get away from? It was technology. The hacked emails about

Hassan's plans to take over the government are not surprising to me."

"The militia groups around the nation are on standby," the Colonel says. "We've been on standby for a year now. We thought the President was going to impose martial law more than once with all the terrorist bombings. We continue to wait for something big to happen. But in all of this, Hassan Mohammad is the real grand puppeteer behind Claire Wilson. He controls everything as the President's appointed Czar of Technology. You and Catherine are in the eye of the storm."

That night, they sit out on the porch of the Colonel's home. It is a clear night and stars overhead are brighter and sharper in the mountains.

The Colonel points at the stars overhead.

"Those up there are another reason I moved up to the mountains," the Colonel says. "To be closer to them, to see them more clearly. The lights of the heavens rather than the lights of the earth. There's much to learn from them."

"I've never believed in astrology," Jenkins says. "All that daily advice that some people run their lives by."

"You've got to see the larger view of things," the Colonel says. "It's not about daily predictions or advice but changes over thousands of years. The astrological age

is moving from the sign of Pisces to the sign of Aquarius. It's all relevant to what's going on in this crazy period before the presidential election. The sign of Pisces is the fish and the sign of Aquarius is the water carrier. Or, someone who carries water containing fish."

"What does this mean?" Catherine asks.

"For a few thousand years we've been like fish in water," the Colonel says. "The fish swims in the content of water but has never been able to get out of water and carry it. Technology is this water. It's been invisible like water is invisible to fish. But we are moving into an age when it will no longer be invisible, when we will be able to see the context around us, the technological ecology that surrounds us like water surrounds fish."

"That's an interesting way to see things," Catherine says. "Hassan is this water carrier about to carry all of us 'fish' into a new age."

"Yes, a new age," says the Colonel. "Unless he can be stopped."

"It's hard to stop the arrival of a new age," Catherine says.

"Yes," says the Colonel. "That's why we have a difficult task."

The three of them spend the next day hiking. It is something that Jenkins misses and he is glad that he can show Catherine the High Sierra country around his father's home. They leave for the desert in the late afternoon and plan on arriving in the early morning hours.

## 23. The Set-Up

A few days before July 4<sup>th</sup>, a black car with government plates on it speeds east on Interstate 10 through the great pass between Mt. San Gorgonio and Mt. San Jacinto and into the Coachella Valley through the forest of giant windmills near Palm Springs. It turns off I-10 onto 62 outside of Palm Springs and starts up the long incline into the high desert through Desert Hot Springs, Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and finally into Twenty-Nine Palms.

In Twenty-Nine Palms the car is met with a military escort that takes it to the abandoned air force base ten miles outside of Twenty-Nine Palms. For years it was used as a training location for troops going to fight in the deserts of the Middle East. The thing that makes it an ideal place for the militia meeting is its isolation from civilization.

The black car follows the two military jeeps through the gates of the old base and over crumbling runways buried in sand and sagebrush. It stops in front of a small building that has been a storage location for base machinery. Max Brewer gets out of the car with Quin Ridgely and follows the military men into the building. They have cleaned off a table and put some cots into the room with a portable refrigerator and stocked it with food and water. An air conditioner is working throwing cool air into the room. Max and Quin will be confined to the room for the next few days.

The Magic Light device has been made smaller and now is no larger than a smartphone contained in a dull black titanium shell. There are flashing lights on it and some control nobs. Quin adjusts them until he is satisfied it ready.

\* \* \*

The next day, the first of the organizers appear at the base. They come on one of the back roads through the desert to the base so that they will not be noticed going through the desert towns. The others will come in this way also. They come in military jeeps and pick-up trucks with

big tires and gun racks. They are leaders of a few of the militia groups in Montana who have driven straight through to the base. They bring PA equipment and the flags of their unit. They also bring a large American flag and set the flag next to a large tent they construct. The entire event will be based around the tent and it would be taken down so that no one could tell that anyone had been here.

The following day, the pick-up trucks and SUVs from the militia groups around the nation begin pouring into the base from the little back road across the desert. Flags from the different groups are set up next to tents from the group. By evening, there are a hundred and fifty militia leaders on the old base.

Late in the evening, a caravan of Secret Service SUVs shows up with Dan Harris and Rob McCallum. Harris is an old military man and wants to spend the evening on the base with the men. The group has constructed a tent for him and he uses it to change into old military fatigues and then starts talking to the men gathered around the encampment. He tells them what true patriots they all are. The group from Tennessee has brought some "Militia Moonshine" and everyone enjoys it over campfires in the warm night of the upper desert.

Quin Ridgely and Max Brewer look out the small window in the building they are in and can see the activity and campfires.

Everything is ready to go for tomorrow.

## 24. The Abandoned Base

The Colonel drives the jeep down old Highway 99 through the heart of California's Central Valley and the big farming towns of Modesto and Bakersfield. A little south of Bakersfield there is something that sounds like a shot and the Colonel fights to control the jeep as Jenkins and Catherine brace themselves. He brings the jeep to a stop on the side of the road and discovers they have blown a tire. There is no tire in the spare tire area of the jeep and the Colonel gets on his cell phone and calls the auto club.

A truck comes in half an hour but doesn't have a tire to fit the jeep so they are towed into Bakersfield. It is the middle of the night and all the tire places are closed so they get a few rooms at a motel and plan to get the tire fixed and get off in the early morning for the rally when the Dan Harris will address the group. The colonel is upset but there isn't much he can do.

They are at the tire place when the old man opens it at nine the next morning. Jenkins pays the old guy who owns the tire shop three times the price of the tire to get him to even open up on July 4<sup>th</sup>. They get off from Bakersfield a little after ten and by two in the afternoon they are going down the little backroad into the base.

They see the cars and tents and flags of the event and the group of militia leaders surrounding a makeshift stage. They park and walk for the crowd. Jenkins sees Rob McCallum standing next to the stage where the Dan Harris is talking to the crowd and tells him what has happened to them.

McCallum nods his head but seems to only vaguely hear Jenkins.

Dan Harris is talking to the group from the small makeshift stage they have set-up. They listen to him. His voice lacks passion and he is different from the person who has been giving fiery speeches around the country. The crowd of militia leaders around the stage are strangely subdued. The Colonel walks around the crowd greeting militia leaders he knows but they also seem passionless, like the speech of Dan Harris.

Then, Jenkins and Catherine see Quin Ridgely and Brewer come out of a building about a hundred yards away and quickly walk towards a car. They watch them from behind

a parked car without being seen. Quin is carrying a box. They get into a car and speed away.

Jenkins looks at Catherine and the Colonel as they walk toward the group gathered around Dan Harris on the front stage addressing the group.

"That was my FIB friend Max Brewer with Quin," Jenkins says. "He's the agent I went to last week told him about the event in Golden Gate Park and down here."

"Brewer must have tipped Hassan off about the Golden Gate set-up and the desert rally," Catherine says. "This is the perfect place to test Magic Light. It takes out a Presidential candidate and a group of militia leaders at the same time. What could be a better place to test it? Much of the opposition is wiped out. Quin leaves without turning it off. Everyone is still under its influence."

"We were supposed to be here earlier," Jenkins says. "Under the influence of Magic Light like the rest of them."

"We need to get everyone out of here," the Colonel says. "They're sitting ducks down here and there's no telling what Hassan has planned. We go up to my place in the mountains and disappear for a few days. We go in groups so we don't attract a lot of attention."

"It's one thing for the militia people to disappear for a few days," Jenkins says. "But what happens when a candidate for President disappears?"

"I'll handle it," Catherine says. "I'll get the word out that Harris has taken a few days off the campaign for rest at an undisclosed location. I'll get everyone to buy into that."

"That's a PR challenge for you," Jenkins says. "We'll set up a type of communications center at the Colonel's place."

"Let's get going," the Colonel says. "I'll start gathering the militia leaders together."

"I'll talk to Harris, McCallum and the Secret Service agents," Jenkins says.

When Harris finishes his speech, Jenkins goes up to him and Rob McCallum.

"Quin Ridgely was here with his Magic Light technology," Jenkins tells them. "You're under its influence right now and we're going to get you out of here and into hiding for a few days. No telling when they might be back and what they have planned for you when they return."

Both McCallum and the Harris have quizzical looks on their faces.

"There's nothing wrong with us," Dan Harris says.  
"I've never felt better. We're under no type of influence of this Magic Light you're talking about."

"I'm afraid you are," Jenkins says. "It's part of the technology that it's invisible to those under its influence. Catherine and I went through the whole thing and know about it."

"What should we do?" McCallum asks.

"We hide-out at my father's place in the mountains for a few days and figure out what to do," says Jenkins. "We take all the militia down here with us."

"That's a crazy idea," McCallum says.

"It's the only idea we have right now," says Jenkins.  
Dan Harris ponders this answer for a few moments.

"Tell the Secret Service people we're heading up into the mountains for a few days," he says to McCallum.

"What do I tell them?" McCallum asks.

"Tell them Mr. Harris is taking a few days off the campaign to rest," Catherine says. "Tell the agents no one is to know where he is."

"How do I convince them of this?" McCallum asks.

"No problem," Jenkins says. "You'll find them pliable as putty."

Jenkins is right and the secret service agents listen to what McCallum tells them and are amendable to going into the mountains and keeping everything quiet. There are no questions asked. Like Jenkins says, they are as pliable as putty.

The Colonel takes to the stage and announces they are moving the event up to his place in the mountains for a few days.

"It's safer up there for us," he said. "Our location has been exposed and we're not safe here any longer."

Like the Secret Service agents, the militia leaders are also agreeable to the plan without any disagreement.

"I know something's wrong with them," the Colonel said to Jenkins when he comes off the stage after his announcement. "Usually there is all types of argument in a militia group."

In an hour, the tents are packed into the vehicles and the first of the group to the Colonel's place starts out. They go in small groups of three or four vehicles so they won't cause a distraction on the roads up to the Colonel's home.

## 25. Max & Hassan

In the late evening of July 4<sup>th</sup>, Hassan meets Max Brewer at his big home in Atherton.

"It worked like a charm," Brewer says. "Everyone down there is under the influence of Magic Light."

"Jenkins and Catherine?" Hassan asks.

"I'm sure they were down there and got the full dose of Magic Light," says Brewer.

"So they're meeting for five days in the desert," Hassan says.

"Yes, they'll be down there making plans and organizing," Brewer says.

He pulls out a document and tosses it in front of Hassan.

"I got a copy of their agenda," Brewer says.

Hassan looks at it.

"Dan Harris moves on after the Fourth of July event," Brewer says. "He has a campaign speech in LA day-after-tomorrow. Then the big debate with Claire Wilson in a week."

"He's going to sound like a bumbling idiot in the debate," Hassan says. "I'll be at the debate. We'll see a quick rise in the polls for Claire Wilson after it."

"In a few days, the militia leaders will scatter to their homes around the country," Brewer says. "Everyone still under the influence of Magic Light."

"Under our control," Hassan says.

"Until Ridgely turns it off," says Brewer.

"Which is not going to happen," says Hassan. "You dropped Ridgely off at his home?"

"Yes, he's home now waiting for future instructions from you," Brewer says.

"You don't think he's going to say anything?" Hassan asks.

"Not with his kid in my custody," Brewer says.

"Things are coming together," Hassan says. "It's not what we originally planned. It's even better. We've taken out one of the candidates for President. We'll take out Claire Wilson soon with Magic Light."

"My people are standing by," says Brewer. "Should I tell them the coup has started?"

"We're going to wait until Quin Ridgely has conducted the Beta test of delivering Magic Light over the Internet," Hassan says. "Then the coup begins."

## 26. Hide & Seek

The Colonel's fort-like home in the mountains is turned into a communications center and it is a busy place. The militia leaders have set up their tents in the woods and field behind the Colonel's home. Their vehicles are hidden in the woods so that it looks like no one is at the Colonel's home. Dan Harris and the Colonel walk around talking to the militia men. A few Secret Service men follow them. Dan Harris was a Colonel in the Army and this reminds him of his military days. The Colonel reminds him of his own father he lost ten years ago.

McCallum and Catherine are inside the home making calls to the media and sending out emails telling the media Dan Harris is cancelling his LA speech tomorrow and that he will be taking a few days off the campaign trail to rest at an undisclosed location. Catherine needs to direct McCallum and Harris around almost like invalids from being under the influence of Magic Light. She can identify with them and knows how they are feeling and what they are going through.

The Secret Service men have set up an office inside the Colonel's home and are busy with a game of cards. Jenkins is on a cell phone handling the business of the advertising firm and explaining to his assistant they will be away for a few days. A few presentations need to be cancelled. Some lunches and dinners rescheduled. His secretary is good at this type of thing.

A television is on at low volume and the commercial that Catherine created for SPEAK is playing. It is a few minutes spot that makes Hassan into a hero. One can see he is beaming in the part as Hero. It is what he always wanted to be. Hassan then appears after the commercial on some news show. Radios are on with the news on them. Various stations and languages. Some laptop computers are set up and also on news channels and social media channels. Copies of some newspapers the Colonel has picked up in town are scattered around the office in the home.

Catherine and Jenkins watch the television in the living room of the Colonel's home. It has high ceilings and thick wooden beams and adobe walls three feet thick. Big rust colored tiles are on the floor and exotic plants explode all over the place.

"Impressive," Jenkins says to Catherine after watching the commercial and Hassan on the news show for a few minutes. "You've made a hero out of him."

"I've created a monster," Catherine says.

"We've got to do something fast," Jenkins says. "The big debates are next week and Dan Harris is in no condition to debate Claire Wilson on national television in front of fifty million people. He'll make a fool of himself that he'll never recover from."

"We have to contact Quin Ridgely and get him to turn Magic Light off," Catherine says. "There are no other options."

"And risk him going straight to Hassan and turning us in?" Jenkins asks.

"It's a risk we have to take," Catherine says. "I see no other way. And besides, I have a strong feeling there's friction between Ridgely and Hassan. I felt it strongly that night we saw Quin and Roy in Berkeley. I believed Quin when he told us he originally developed Magic Light to help boys like Roy. His story is much more believable to me than Hassan's story."

"You have to fly by instincts sometimes," a voice says from behind him.

Jenkins turns around and sees the Colonel has been standing behind them listening to their discussion.

"You're right," he says to the Colonel. "Instincts."

"I think you're getting your old instincts back," the Colonel says.

## 27. Magic Light Corrupted

Quin Ridgely paces his office at Magic Light in the coastal foothills above the little town of Ubiquity. Max Brewer sits in a chair watching him.

"Hassan told me the Magic Light test in the desert would only be for a few hours," he says. "He told me I would get Roy back after the test."

"Plans change," Max says.

"When will I see Roy?" Ridgely asks.

"Soon enough," Max says. "He's safe and being taken care of. There's nothing to worry about."

"He has special needs," Quin says.

"He's OK," says Brewer. "You just play along with our plans and he'll be back with you soon."

When Max Brewer is gone, Quin Ridgely continues to pace in his office, thinking.

He turns on the television in his office.

There is the SPEAK commercial on the television and then a clip of Hassan in an interview followed by a reporter.

"The charges of bias against SPEAK have been dropped," says the reporter. "Hassan Mohammad and SPEAK are experiencing unprecedented popularity. The group associated with Dan Harris have withdrawn their charge of bias with the FTC. Shares of SPEAK have shot up 10%."

Quin Ridgely puts the television on mute. He walks out of his office and onto the porch behind his office and then up the trail into the mountain foothills. He stops at the patch of yellow flowers where Catherine and Jenkins stopped a few weeks ago. It is a cloudy day and the clouds above the Pacific are agitated and swirl around like clothing in a washing machine.

His cell phone rings.

"Quin," this is Jenkins. "You did a terrible thing to a lot of people out in the desert. I thought you told us Magic Light was for people like Roy."

"Where are you?" Quin asks.

Jenkins laughs.

"I'm sure Hassan and his goons would like to know that," Jenkins says.

"They don't have to know," Quin says.

"You expect me to believe you?" Jenkins says.

"My technology has been corrupted," Quin says.

"And you went along with the whole thing," says Jenkins.

"I was forced to by Hassan," says Quin. "His people are holding my son Roy hostage."

There is silence on the phone for a moment.

"I almost believe you," Jenkins says. "Where is he being held?"

"At Max Brewer's flat in the city," Quin says.

"Where are you now?" Jenkins asks.

"At the office," Quin says.

"Stay there," Jenkins says. "I'm sending some people to get you and Roy."

"What do you want with me?" Quin asks.

"I want you to bring the Magic Light device with you," Jenkins says. "I want you to take the spell off the people you put it on in the desert."

"You're not under its spell," Quin says. "I can tell."

"We arrived late to your party," Jenkins says. "Just in time to see you and Brewer take off."

"I'll be waiting," Quin says. "I'll have the device with me."

"We'll be there in a few hours."

## 28. Night Rescue

The militia leaders at the colonel's home are virtually useless for any operations so the Colonel calls some members of his High Sierra Constitutional Guard and tells them they have a mission in the Bay Area. In half an hour, the militia group members arrive and the Colonel and Jenkins tell them the plan.

Four hours later, two black Humvees come up the road to Magic Light. The office is closed and everyone is gone except for Quin Ridgeley. He gets into one of the Humvees with his equipment and the Humvees head down the road through the sleeping town of Ubiquity and up the coast towards San Francisco.

Max Brewer's flat is in the outer Sunset area of the city south of Golden Gate Park. It consists of flats on a steady slope towards the Pacific Ocean. Jenkins has been to Max's place a number of times and has given the Colonel's

militia members the address. They stop the Humvees a block from his flat and approach on foot down the street. A few former Seals go around the back of the flat. One of the former Seals knocks on the door. Max Brewer comes to the door and is immediately taken down by the Seal and tied up.

They find Roy locked in one of the rooms and take him out to one of the Humvees where his father is waiting. Roy is happy to see his father and Quin excited to get his son back. In a minute the Humvees are speeding through the Avenues and then through downtown San Francisco and over the Oakland Bay Bridge and onto I-80, heading up to Sacramento and then the foothills of the Sierras and Grass Valley.

## 29. The Spell Is Lifted

The two black Humvees pull into the Colonel's home in the middle of the night.

Jenkins and Catherine greet Quin Ridgely.

"Get everything set up to turn off Magic Light," he tells Ridgely. "I'm going to round up everyone and get them together in one group."

Ridgely and his assistants bring their equipment and set it up on the porch of the colonel's home.

In half an hour, all the militia leaders stand in front of the porch. Dan Harris is with McCallum and the Secret Service agents. Jenkins, Catherine, Roy and the Colonel are behind Quin as he hovers over the black box device. Lights flash, things whir.

"It's ready to go," Quin says.

"Then let's go," Jenkins says.

Quin adjusts some knobs and waves a type of wand device over the group. There is shaking in the group as if the men have grabbed hold of some electric current. It goes on for maybe 10 seconds until the device is turned off.

There is silence for a few moments and you can hear sounds of crickets and the wind pushing through the big pine trees. Somewhere far off, there is the howling sound of a coyote.

Then, McCallum and Dan Harris twitch like they are coming out of a trance. The same thing is happening to the militia leaders gathered around them.

"That was a strange feeling," Dan Harris says.

There is cheering around the porch as the militia leaders realize they have been awakened from some powerful sleep. A buzz of conversation begins.

The Colonel steps to the center of the porch and addresses the group.

"There is work to do," he says. "Work we planned in the desert. But now it's even more critical. They will go to any lengths to silence us."

A cheer of "Yes" bursts out in agreement with what the Colonel has said.

"We now know that Hassan Mohammad was behind the attack on us in the desert. He attempted to silence us with

a new weapon he has called Magic Light. Everyone has been under its power for the past few days. Even Presidential candidate Dan Harris. But we have the creator of Magic Light with us right now and he is now on our side. I want Quin Ridgely and his son Roy to come up here."

Ridgely walk onto the porch with his son Roy and they stand beside the Colonel. Roy twitches like he always does and makes noises and lifts his hand and waves it at the crowd.

There are cheers again from the crowd of militia leaders gathered around the porch.

"Quin Ridgely's technology was meant to help people like his son Roy but it was hijacked by Hassan for his own purposes," the Colonel says. "We're going to make sure this never happens again, that it will be used to help people and not control them!"

The crowd cheers again.

"I'd like to have the next President of the United States say a few words to everyone," the Colonel says. "Words Dan Harris started to say in the desert until we were attacked."

Dan Harris has been standing next to the Colonel on the porch and walks to the center of the porch among cheering from the group.

"When I was a Marine, I had more trust in my fellow Marines than anyone in the world," Dan Harris says. "And they never let me down. Now, we're in a difficult time in our nation's history when trust and honor between men doesn't mean much. We've lost trust in our leaders, our institutions, our President. With your help and trust, I'll fight to get our country back from Czars like Hassan Mohammad and Progressives like Claire Wilson. I'll fight for that forgotten document called the Constitution. I'll fight for making our nation safe from terrorism. For making it a great nation again like it once was."

The crowd breaks into wild applause and cheers.

"But the fight will not be easy," Dan Harris says. "Even with technology like Magic Light on our side. Those against the nation have infiltrated all ranks of our leadership today. Congress. The judiciary. Media. Entertainment. Science. Education. Even sports. Now we see they've infiltrated perhaps the greatest power center of all. Our technology, the invisible power behind our world, that surrounds us all the time. That controls us without us even knowing it controls us. The fight will not be easy and that's why I am going to need the help of all the groups you lead across the nation. It will be a difficult fight but taking back our nation is more than worth the fight."

Dan Harris raises a fist to the roaring cheers of the assembled men.

\* \* \*

For the next few days, McCallum and the Harris are on their phones, rescheduling events and appearances on the campaign trail. The big event that looms ahead is the debate in San Francisco with Claire Wilson. It's a sure thing she is being prepped by her advertising people at Icon Communications and especially the CEO of Icon, Miles Cameron.

Catherine works with Dan Harris to create the right messaging for the debates. As usual, Catherine sees a unique way to present that "brand" called Dan Harris. Both McCallum and Harris are impressed. It is not something that has been tried before by the previous advertising firm.

Jenkins is on the cell phone talking to his advertising firm and clients, assuring them he will soon be back in town. He apologizes for missing a few meetings. He receives a number of calls from Hassan on his voice mail but he does not answer them as he is sure Hassan will have his call tracked.

\* \* \*

The Colonel works with the militia leaders. Often, Dan Harris joins him. There are almost a hundred of them from all over the country. Tough, backwoods guys. Plumbers. Carpenters. Lumberjacks. Almost all of them veterans. Now, they are men with families and common jobs in the heartland country of the nation. None of them have important "big" jobs like politicians in Washington DC.

They are uneducated in all the intricacies of the modern political correctness. To them, it is something that takes the maleness out of them and replaces it with new rules for bathrooms and genders. It makes them subject to the demands of others and not their own hearts and souls. They do not have jobs that produce little more than words and talk but rather jobs that make solid things of iron and steel. Most have little more than a high school education so they have fortunately avoided the brainwashing of the university system. Many have been home schooled by parents and fathers like the Colonel who have little trust in the current education system. In spite of their lack of a college education, most of them can recite word-for-word the Constitution or some tract by Walden or some libertarian document from a hundred years ago.

There are meetings about what is happening in the various chapters around the nation. Most of them had heard that a political coup by Hassan Mohammad was in the plans but they had no idea on how it would be started or implemented. Now, Mohammad had shown his hand.

"It's just one of Hassan Mohammad's hands of cards," the Colonel tells the men. "He has many other cards to play against us. We might have his Magic Light technology on our side at the moment but who knows what else he has in development. We can't forget that he is at the global center of technological power and political power today is fueled by technological power."

\* \* \*

Jenkins spends time the next few days following his father around and listening to what he tells the men. The Colonel moves around the meadow behind his home where the men have set up their tent camp. Often, Jenkins finds Dan Harris next to the Colonel talking to the men. Both of them are veterans like the men they talk to and both have that invisible connection it is impossible for other men to have. Veterans will always be the tightest knit group of men and women in the nation because they have lived with

each other under conditions of "life and death" each day rather than the "economic" ups and downs of some advertising firm or other business you find in downtown San Francisco.

Jenkins has never been in the service and can never have this feeling so he can only try to envision what it must be like. That vast community of veterans, always just a little beyond his grasp. What are they like? What kind of men are they? Who is this man this man called his father and the Colonel? He has heard so many stories about him over the years yet he still knows such a small part of the man.

One evening, Jenkins and Catherine sit alone on the front porch of the Colonel's home drinking some of the Colonel's beer and talk about what an amazing few days it's been up here in the mountains surrounded by patriots. Jenkins tells Catherine about his feelings for the veterans and his new love and respect for his father.

"I really think you've changed," Catherine says. "I didn't believe it at first but I can see that old passion and spirt coming back to you."

"We're resigning from the SPEAK account," Jenkins says.

"I've been waiting for you to say that," Catherine says.

"As soon as Hassan is locked up," Jenkins adds.

"That day might never come," Catherine says.

"Maybe," says Jenkins. "But the more we can string him along with us, the more information we might be able to find out from him."

"It's getting dangerous," Catherine says. "Once he finds out Quin and Roy are missing he'll know something is up."

"That's a chance we have to take," Jenkins says.

"There's too much at stake."

Catherine raises her glass to Jenkins and clicks it against his.

"Now I know you have changed," she says as she gives him a kiss on his cheek.

## 30. Back in Town

They have been at the Colonel's place for five days and everyone feels it is time to leave and take the battle into the outside world. There is a meeting between Harris, McCallum, the Colonel, Jenkins and Catherine. Quin and Roy will remain with the Colonel in the mountains guarded by the militia leaders and the others will return to the Bay Area.

Catherine, Jenkins, Harris and McCallum leave one morning and drive to the Bay Area with Harris' team of Secret Service agents. Harris and McCallum go to the home of an old friend of Harris' in the Sea Cliff area of San Francisco above Baker Beach. They keep a low profile so that no one knows they are there. At the home, Harris prepares for the big debate in San Francisco with Claire Wilson a few days away. Catherine and Jenkins return to the advertising firm. There is a number of events,

presentations and meetings that need attention after their absence.

Towards the end of the day, Jenkins and Catherine are reviewing advertising business when Jenkins receives a call from Hassan. He answers it as it does not matter if Hassan traces the call to his office. He puts the call on the speaker of his cell phone.

"Where did you go?" Hassan asks. "I called but just got voice mail."

"Sometimes I like to get away from things," Jenkins says. "Turned the phone off and spent a few days in Carmel."

"You weren't in the desert on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?" Hassan asks.

"Why would I be in the desert in the summer?" Jenkins says.

There is a moment of silence on the phone.

"Quin Ridgely has disappeared," Hassan says.

"When did that happen?" Jenkins asks.

"A few days ago," Hassan says. "I think he might have been kidnapped."

"Have you reported this to the police?" Jenkins asks.

"I've got our company security people investigating it," Hassan says. "You don't know anything about it do you?"

"I haven't seen him," Jenkins says.

"You realize how important it is to get him back," Hassan says.

"Of course," says Jenkins.

"Stay in touch," Hassan says.

"We will," Jenkins says.

Catherine smiles and shakes her head when the call has ended.

"He's playing a cat and mouse game with us," she says. "How would he know we were in the desert on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July? We never told him we were going down there. He doesn't know we saw Brewer with Quin running away from the event."

"Hassan doesn't know we know Brewer told him about the concert in Golden Gate Park and the July 4<sup>th</sup>," Jenkins says.

"Hassan did call you and cancel using Magic Light at the park event after you went to Brewer," Catherine says.

"Hassan told me the technology was not ready to be used," Jenkins says. "It was BS. He wanted out of the event because he knew I went to Brewer about it and was laying a trap for him."

"One thing Hassan does know," Jenkins says. "And that is we were not subjected to Magic Light like the rest of them."

"And who knows if he will believe your story about being in Carmel," Catherine says. "I think we continue to play cat-and-mouse with him."

"Two cat-and-mouse games," Catherine says. "Going on at the same time. There'll only be one winner."

### 31. SPEAK Talks Back

Hassan and Brewer are in the den of Hassan's home in Atherton.

"How much do they know?" Hassan asks Brewer.

"It's hard to say," Brewer says.

"No one saw you and Quin in the desert?" Hassan asks.

"Everyone was under the influence of Magic Light," says Brewer. "All were listening to the speech of Dan Harris. Ridgely and I left quickly. No one saw us."

"What about the other night when Quin's kid was taken from your place?" Hassan asks.

"There's no way of knowing if the guys that took him were associated with Jenkins," Brewer says. "Whoever they were they knew what they were doing. Military training for sure."

"I think Jenkins knows more than he's letting on," Hassan says. "We play along with him for a while. I think

he can lead us to Quin Ridgely. I want you to have some of your people follow Jenkins. Not you. I don't want him to suspect you if he doesn't already suspect you."

"Will do," says Brewer.

"Where the hell did Harris and all the militia people disappear to?" Hassan says. "A hundred people just don't disappear. Harris has to pop up soon with the big debate coming up in a few days."

"Wherever they are, they're all a bunch of zombies," Brewer says. "Quin never took them off of Magic Light."

"Yes," says Hassan. "Zombies. It'll be interesting to watch Harris make a fool of himself at the debate in front of the whole nation in a few days. If he even shows up in the first place."

## 32. Followed

One afternoon, Jenkins and Catherine leave the advertising firm and head west out Geary Boulevard to the Sea Cliff area. The homes are large with yards behind gates. The Golden Gate Bridge comes in and out of view from the bank of fog moving over the bay from the Pacific. The fog horn from the bridge moans like a dying animal.

They stop at the gate to the home Harris is staying at and wave to a few Secret Service at the gate who open it and let them through. The driveway passes gardens and stops at a big place with Spanish architecture. Another Secret Service man opens the front door and they follow him down a tile hall and into the den area of the home.

Harris and McCallum are busy working on Harris' preparation for the televised debate with Claire Wilson in a few days.

Outside, a car with one of Brewer's men in it has stopped a block away and waits. The man pulls his cell phone out and makes a call.

"Followed them out to a place in Sea Cliff," he says.  
"Looks like a few Secret Service guys at the gate."

"It's got to be Harris," Brewer says.

"Looks like it," he says.

"Stay with them," Brewer says. "Are you close enough to use the listening device?"

"Yeah," he says. "Maybe 500 feet away from the house."

"Turn it on and send me a live feed," says Brewer.

"Will do," the man says.

He reaches in the glove compartment of the car and pulls out a small device no larger than a pack of cards. He places the device on the dashboard of the car and points it at the home and turns it on, adjusting a few knobs on it until a conversation can be heard.

### 33. Conversation In Sea Cliff

Jenkins and Catherine are with McCallum and Dan Harris in the den of the big home in Sea Cliff.

"We're not sure how much Hassan knows," says Jenkins. "We're stringing him along for a while."

"And he's probably doing the same thing with us," says Catherine.

"For all he knows, Dan Harris is still under the influence of Magic Light," says Jenkins. "About to make a fool of himself in the debate. It'll be the end of Dan's campaign. Claire Wilson will rise by 20 points in the polls."

"I'm ready to debate her," Harris says.

"I know you are," Jenkins says. "But I have an idea Catherine and I have been talking about."

"We're listening," says Rob McCallum.

"Suppose you open the debate by exposing the whole plot with Magic Light to silence you," Jenkins says.

"You'll have a huge television audience."

"What about Quin Ridgely?" McCallum asks.

"We've already talked to him," says Catherine. "He's willing to testify against Hassan, to tell people he was forced to make Magic Light into a control device by Hassan who kidnapped his son Roy."

"Do you bring Quin back in town for this?" McCallum asks.

"No, for now we keep him at the Colonel's place up in Grass Valley," says Jenkins. "We'll bring him into town later after the debates."

## 34. Mountain Showdown

Brewer calls Hassan after listening to Jenkins' conversation. He plays the whole tape back to Hassan over the phone.

"I found out Bill Jenkins place is just outside of Grass Valley," Brewer says when the recording is finished.

"You need to go get him now," Hassan says. "He can't be out there ready to tell everyone what he knows."

"We're on our way," says Brewer. "What about Harris? You can't let him go to the debates and tell everyone about Magic Light."

"Harris is going to meet with a tragic accident before the debates," says Hassan. "We'll talk about it when you get back with Quin. Take Quin to your place and hold him there."

That evening, three black SUVs with Brewer and his men race up to Grass Valley. The men are former members of the

bureau and a few former members of the San Francisco Police Department. They are heavily armed.

It was a little after midnight and a full moon painted the night world in a soft blue luminescence. The Colonel is in bed and the militia leaders in the field and woods behind the Colonel's home are sleeping. Quin and Roy are in one of the bedrooms and Quin is sleeping.

Roy suddenly sits up in his bed. He has a disturbing vision in his head. Something is coming up the mountain to the Colonel's home. Coming for him and his father. It is one of those visions he often has about things about to happen in the future.

He makes a sound like a wounded animal and shakes his father.

Quin Ridgely sits up in his bed.

"What is it Roy?" he asks.

The boy continues to make sounds but as usual words never come to his lips. He picks up a piece of paper and pencil and draws a picture of three cars with faces in them.

"Cars are heading this way?" Quin asks his son. "From Hassan Mohammad?"

The boy shakes his head.

"To take us back?" asks Quin.

The boy shakes his head again.

Quin gets up and tosses on his clothes and runs down the hallway to the Colonel's bedroom and wakes him up.

"Some men are on their way here right now," he tells the Colonel. "They're Hassan Mohammad's people. Roy had another one of his visions. His visions are never wrong."

The Colonel gets on his cell phone and calls one of militia leaders in the woods behind the home.

"Get the men up and armed," he says. "But quietly. No noise or lights. We have visitors. Have them surround my home but stay in hiding until I give the word by calling you again. I won't say anything. It'll just be a call. When you hear the call I want everyone outside in front of my home, a big semi-circle, fully armed and ready for action."

Then the Colonel gets his .45 and sticks it into his concealed holster. He puts on his bullet proof vest.

"I want you and Roy to go back to your bedroom and get into bed," he says. "But turn the Magic Light machine on and be ready to use it."

The Colonel pushes open the curtain of the window in his bedroom. In a few minutes the headlights of the SUVs can be seen coming up the road below the Colonel's home. The SUVs turn off their lights and come down the gravel road and stop maybe a hundred yards from the Colonel's

home. The Colonel can see the slant of flashlight beams picking through the night.

In a minute there is a heavy knock on the front door. The Colonel goes to the door and when he opens it Brewer pushes him back as two of his men hold guns on him.

"We know Quin's here," Brewer says. "The sooner we get him the sooner we can get out of here."

"He's in the room down the hall," the Colonel says.

Brewer goes down the hall and into Quin's room with a few men.

When he does this, the Colonel pushes the button on his phone.

Brewer throws the bedroom door open and turns on the light. He sees Quin and Roy in bed apparently just waking up.

"Two for the price of one," Brewer says as Quin and Roy sit up in their beds. "Let's go. And be sure to bring the Magic Light."

They get out of bed and Quin gets his machine.

Brewer and his men push them down the hall towards the front room where the Colonel is with Brewer's other men.

Brewer motions the Colonel up.

"We're taking you too," he says.

The men leave the house with Quin, Roy and the Colonel.

They start to head for the SUVs when they see the circle of a hundred militia men with guns and assault rifles pointed at them.

"It wouldn't be wise to attempt anything right now," the Colonel says to Brewer. "Have your boys drop their guns."

Brewer surveys the huge group of militia men standing around him. He turns to his men and shakes his head.

"You heard the Colonel," he says to his men.

The militia men get the guns off the ground.

"Now I want all your people into a nice, tight, group," the Colonel says.

Brewer and his men move together into a group.

"Get the machine out," the Colonel says to Quin.

Ridgely pulls the device out of his pocket.

"You are about to experience Magic Light firsthand," the Colonel says. "Just like all of us did. Of course you won't recall any of this."

Quin Ridgely points the Magic Light machine at the group and plays with a few dials on it. The group of men shake briefly as if they have just gotten an electric shock. Then the shaking is gone and they look as if nothing

had happened and the group is passive and quiet under the full moon.

The Colonel pulls out his cell phone and calls his son and puts it on speaker phone.

"Sorry to get you up but I had some visitors," the Colonel says. "Brewer and his boys came up to take Quin and Roy back but we stopped them."

"They're up there now?" Jenkins asks.

"All here and all like little puppy dogs under the influence of Magic Light," the Colonel says. "I have Quin standing right next to me now."

"All subject to whatever Quin tells them to do," says Jenkins.

"Yes," says Quin. "All open to any suggestion I give them. Or ready to answer any question we ask."

"Good," says Jenkins. "Ask Brewer what their mission was."

Quin walks up to Brewer.

"What were you supposed to do up here?" he asks.

"My job was to get Quin," Brewer says.

"Tell them to get back in their vehicles and return to the Bay Area," Jenkins says to Quin. "Tell Brewer to call Hassan when he gets back to his flat and tell him his mission was successful and that he has Roy at his flat and

Quin is back at the company under the protection of his people. Brewer is to wait for further instructions from Quin on what to do. He is only to take orders from Quin. He is not to take orders from Hassan. He is to contact me if Hassan tells him anything. Will this work Quin?"

"Yes," says Quin. "They'll follow any suggestions I make to when they're under Magic Light."

Quin says to Brewer "I want you and your boys to get in your vehicles and go back to the Bay Area. I want you to call Hassan when you get to your flat and tell him everything went as planned and that you have Quin and Roy with you at the flat. You are only to take orders from me and not Hassan. But you can agree with what Hassan tells you to do. But you are not to do what he tells you to do. You are to contact me when you hear from Hassan and tell me what he tells you."

Brewer shakes his head in agreement.

"Let's go," he says to his men.

They walk towards their SUVs as the militia men create an opening for them to pass through.

"They're gone," the Colonel says into his cell phone.

"Good," says Jenkins. "Now I want you and a group of your men to leave right now and bring Quin and Roy down to my place in Berkeley."

"We'll be off in half an hour," the Colonel says. "You have something planned?"

"Yes," says Jenkins. "Something that just might catch Hassan once and for all."

### 35. Taken Care Of

It is early morning when Brewer and his men get back to the Bay Area and Brewer's flat in the Outer Sunset area of the city. He calls Hassan as soon as they are all inside the flat.

"Everything went as planned," Brewer says. "I've got Quin and Magic Light here at the flat. I've got Roy too. He is with his old man."

"Good," says Hassan. "Now listen carefully. Harris will have a tragic accident today. An accident he won't survive. He can't be at the debates. He's ready to tell everyone about Magic Light. He can't do this."

"I understand," says Brewer. "I'll work it out. I know where he is. He might drown down at Baker Beach. The current is dangerous down there this time of year."

A group of jeeps and pickup trucks carrying the Colonel, Quin, Roy and ten militia men follow Brewer's group back to the Bay Area and arrive at Jenkins home in

the Berkeley Hills around seven in the morning. They have all just gotten inside Jenkins' home when Quin's cell phone rings. It is Brewer calling and he puts it on speaker.

"It's Brewer," he says in a hollow, monotone voice over the cell phone speaker. "He wants me to murder Harris today and make it look like an accident."

"Tell Brewer and his boys to simply stay in his flat and not go anywhere," says Jenkins. "Have Brewer call Hassan in early afternoon and tell him he has completed his assignment and Harris is dead."

"You are to stay in your flat," says Quin. "Call Hassan around one today and tell him Harris is dead."

Jenkins leaves his home an hour later and meets Catherine in front of the gate to the big home out in Sea Cliff where Harris and McCallum are staying. She parks her car and waits for Jenkins by the front gate. When he arrives, she gets into his car and Jenkins waves at the Secret Service agents and they go up the driveway.

Harris and McCallum are on the back patio of the home. It overlooks Baker Beach below and in the distance the hills of Marin at the end of the Golden Gate Bridge.

"Lots of activity last night," Jenkins says to them. "Hassan's men made a run up to my dad's place to get Quin and Roy but the Colonel and his boys were ready for them."

Quin put Brewer and his boys under Magic Light and he is controlling them now. Hassan gave orders for Dan to have a fatal accident today before the debate."

"Hassan Mohammad plays for keeps says," says McCallum.

"There's too much at stake for him to play any other way," says Jenkins. "He knows Harris is planning on telling everyone about Magic Light at the debates tomorrow. He can't have this happen in front of a TV audience of millions."

"He'll be surprised to see me at the debate," Harris says.

"There's going to be someone else at the debate," Jenkins says. "Quin and Roy will be there and Quin will tell the audience he was forced to develop Magic Light into areas he never wanted to. We'll prompt Quin on all of this."

At one o'clock that day, Brewer makes a phone call to Hassan Mohammad.

"Everything's taken care of," he says. "Dan Harris had a tragic accident."

"No one is to discover the body until after the debate," Hassan says.

"Right," Brewer says.

## 36. The Debate

The debate is the first of five presidential debates between the Libertarian candidate Dan Harris and the Progressive candidate Claire Wilson. It is held in the main auditorium at the University of San Francisco on a hill in the western part of San Francisco a few blocks north of Haight Ashbury. In the flatness of the area, the university seems like it is on an island rising of the urban landscape.

The media trucks begin arriving in the early hours of the day and by late afternoon a number of satellite dishes are gathered around the auditorium and the debate moderators are getting into their places and going through sound and lighting checks. The audience for the debate is a mixture of local San Francisco residents and some big wigs from both political parties.

In the late afternoon, Jenkins and Catherine drive Quin, Roy and the Colonel out to the place in Sea Cliff where Harris is staying. They go to the debate location an hour before the debate is to start. Jenkins is careful Dan Harris is not seen when he arrives at the debate venue. He knows there will be a special guest in the audience who will be shocked to see Harris.

Hassan Mohammad sits in one of the first rows of the auditorium with his top executives from SPEAK. Hassan knows it will be a big thing when Dan Harris does not show up. He is pretty sure no one has yet discovered Harris' body in the surf at Baker Beach. In ten minutes Claire Wilson will appear on stage but there will be no Dan Harris. Sometime later, the body of the Harris will be found. Claire Wilson will be headed towards the presidency. And that's when Hassan will start his coup and use Magic Light to work its power. Nothing will be able to stop him.

At seven o'clock, everyone waits for the candidates to walk out onto stage. The television lights are on and a huge American flag hangs behind the two podiums. Claire Wilson comes out waving to the crowd. There is a pause for a few moments as everyone waits for the entry of Dan Harris.

Then, Dan Harris walks out onto the stage waving and looking directly at Hassan Mohammad.

Hassan is startled to see Harris and quickly gets up from his seat and heads for the exit. But a few of the Colonel's militia men grab him and hold him at the exit door. They turn him around so that he can see the stage.

The moderators welcome everyone to the debates and states the ground rules for them. Claire Wilson is called on first to make an opening statement. She says the usual things she says about how she will usher in a new era of government. Her speech has changed little since her campaign started a year ago.

Then, Harris is called on to make his opening remarks.

"I have something unusual to tell everyone," Harris says.

He looks at Hassan Mohammad in the back of the auditorium, held by a few of the Colonel's militia men.

"And I'm glad Mr. Mohammad is present to hear it," he says. "It concerns him."

## 37. The Big News

The startling revelation of Dan Harris about Magic Light and Hassan Mohammad makes headlines all over the world. Ironically, the words "Magic Light" and "Hassan Mohammad" are the top rated search words on the SPEAK search system the following days after the debates. Mohammad is taken into police custody immediately and Brewer's flat is raided and Brewer and his men arrested. The stock of SPEAK takes a nosedive and there is speculation in the press about the future of the huge tech company.

Hassan is questioned for hours by the FIB office in San Francisco. Max Brewer has been on Hassan's payroll for a few years and so are a number of other former FIB agents. An internal investigation is launched and a number of FIB agents set-up temporary residence at the campus of SPEAK. Thousands of emails and internal memos are gathered into evidence and hundreds of employees are interviewed. A trial

date is scheduled for Hassan and there is talk he might get life imprisonment.

Agents also appear at the headquarters of Magic Light and gather documents and interviews with employees. Quin Ridgely and his son Roy are held for a few days in protective custody and interviewed by FIB agents and then released. The evidence shows that Quin has been forced by Hassan Mohammad to use his technology for purposes other than what he originally developed it for. Jenkins and Catherine provide statements on behalf of Quin Ridgely. All information and patents on Magic Light technology are confiscated and sent back to Washington DC to be reviewed by the FIB. All of the Magic Light devices are confiscated and kept under heavy security at the FIB offices in San Francisco.

\* \* \*

A week after the debate event, Jenkins calls the acting CEO of SPEAK and tells him ImageHouse is resigning from their account. It is a decision Catherine and Jenkins have discussed and one they both feel good about even though it will mean they will lose 70% of their business.

The resignation of ImageHouse from the SPEAK account makes headlines in the business press.

After he gets off the phone with SPEAK, Jenkins raises his fist.

"Yes," he says. "That felt good."

"I'm proud of you," Catherine says. "Never thought I'd see this day."

On Jenkins' desk is a computer print-out of all the ImageHouse accounts.

"Get Marilyn," he tells Catherine.

Catherine brings Marilyn Benson into Jenkins' office.

"We're making some big changes," Jenkins tells her.

"We just resigned the SPEAK account."

Catherine and Jenkins study the reaction of Marilyn.

She smiles.

"I feel you did the right thing," she says.

"So, we're down to just forty-one accounts from all sorts of clients and all sorts of sizes."

"Something manageable again," Marilyn says.

"Yes, something manageable again," repeats Catherine.

"But not for us to manage."

"What do you mean?" Marilyn asks.

"Jenkins and I have decided to turn everything over to you and start something new," Catherine says.

"As of now, you are the new president of ImageHouse Advertising," Jenkins says.

"You've done a spectacular job here and there's no one else who we want for the new leader of the firm," Catherine says.

"I'm speechless," Marilyn says.

"We're offering you a partnership in the firm," Jenkins says. "Catherine and I will remain on the firm's board as advisors."

"I'm honored to accept," says Marilyn hugging both Jenkins and Catherine.

Late in afternoon of the following day, Jenkins gathers all the employees in the big room of the firm and tells them the SPEAK account has been resigned. Catherine and Jenkins are surprised that there is a wild round of cheers from everyone.

"Catherine and I are going to start a new firm with just a few clients and Marilyn Benson and we've selected Marilyn Benson to be the new president of ImageHouse. We'll still be involved as consultants."

After the announcement, the wine from their Sonoma winery client was opened and employees later recalled it was one of the best events the firm ever put on.

## 38. Downsizing

In a few weeks, Jenkins and Marilyn have rented a small office in North Beach above their favorite Italian restaurant in Washington Square. They feel similar to the way they felt when they first started ImageHouse six years ago. Now, they only have three clients: Dan Harris, Quin Ridgely and the High Sierra Constitutional Guard. It is enough clients for them, a manageable number from the 40 accounts they had before.

Dan Harris has does well in the remaining debates with Claire Wilson and is beginning to again run neck-to-neck with her in the polls. Harris continues to gather large crowds as the new advertising campaign Jenkins and Catherine created takes off. Even the Progressive media in the nation admits there is a new rise in the enthusiasm for the Libertarian populist Dan Harris. Catherine continues to work closely with Rob McCallum and Harris on crafting a new

PR campaign while Jenkins returns to his genius for creating political strategy for Harris.

When he returns to the mountains, the Colonel sends the militia leaders back to their homes across the nation. Jenkins now calls his father all the time, asking for advice and opinions on things. For the first time in many years, Jenkins is proud of his father and what he stands for.

The Colonel, though, is skeptical that anything can really change and is convinced Claire Wilson will win the presidency and the hellish regime of the past eight years will continue and the nation will slip further and further into globalism and socialism and lawlessness and racial division. It is a dark, hellish nightmare scenario but he believes it will happen. He continues to have regular meetings with his militia group and keeps in close contact with the national militia leaders. The Colonel feels something big is about to happen in the nation.

"The time for action might not be far away," the Colonel says to his son. "The government has not exactly gone away with Hassan Mohammad in prison."

Catherine and Jenkins are happier than they have been in a long time. Catherine sees a new passion in Jenkins, something she has not seen for many years. He is excited

with the work he has with their three clients and the lure of big dollars no longer motivates his actions.

And Catherine wonders if she and Jenkins can ever make a go at a relationship again. A few times, for a few moments, she feels herself pulled back into a nostalgic memory of those past years but then catches herself with snap, like the snap of one's head when they start drifting asleep in some public place. It's only a dream and dreams always end sometime.

### 39. The Advertising Club in July

One day at the end of July, three months before the presidential election, Jenkins and Catherine sit in the small conference room of their new office and listen to Rob McCallum and Dan Harris over the speaker phone on the table. Catherine has decorated the office in her retro hippy style and there is a large Jimi Hendrix poster on one of the walls. The smell from the Italian restaurant below is strong now with lunch hour approaching and the voice of the owner can be heard screaming something in Italian at his staff.

"Some of the incredible work of Catherine's PR efforts are beginning to kick in," McCallum says. "We're excited with the money we raised from the last few fund-raising events Catherine put together."

"I can second that," Dan Harris says. "You've done a great job Catherine."

"I think we're turning things around," McCallum says. "We're rising in the polls. The latest ones have us close to Wilson. So, the new set of commercials are all ready to go?"

"They're breaking in the top 50 markets in a few days," she says. "We're hitting her hard on that phony foundation she set up."

"Let's get together next week in San Francisco," McCallum says. "See where we are. It's still an uphill battle with the President and media behind Wilson."

"Tell us about it," Jenkins says.

After the phone call Jenkins and Catherine leave for lunch at the San Francisco Advertising Club. Jenkins is scheduled to introduce a strange guy to the group named Quin Ridgely who has a revolutionary product to help people have a better life.

They drive to the Financial District and park in one of the big downtown garages and walk down Sansome Street towards the advertising club. Office workers are spilling onto the street from the big skyscrapers. They glance at the large video screen on the building that scrolls the news of the day like a stock market ticker-tape. But the

stock market look is appropriate to the long, oblong video screen as the New York stock market probably goes up and down based on the news of the day. There is a terrorist bombing in France where 24 are killed. A police shooting in Iowa kills two. A militia group in Montana take things into their own hands after a dumping of immigrants into their town. Polls show the two candidates are running almost even.

But few people on the street see the news go by on the screen with faces glued to smartphones.

"I wonder if the country will ever wake up," Jenkins says.

"Maybe it'll just go peacefully into a hibernation state of sleep for a long time," Catherine says.

"Harris can wake them up," Jenkins says.

"Yes, he can," Catherine agrees.

"But it might be too late," Jenkins says. "The sleep too deep."

"REM sleep," Catherine says.

"I feel like I've been in it for the last five years," Jenkins says.

When they arrive at the advertising club, Jenkins bangs the big brass knocker and the same man who looks like

an English butler opens the door and they follow him down the long hallway of the club into the lunch room.

Many young up-and-comers of the local advertising community are gathered in the room mixed with a lot of the big players. Everyone is sipping their usual drinks before lunch and discussing the trials and tribulations of advertising in San Francisco. Jenkins spots Quin Ridgely holding court with a group of people.

A waiter brings two glasses of wine to them. The wine flows pretty good at these luncheons. In the first days he was a member, Jenkins often didn't make it back to the office and carefully navigated his way home in Berkeley over the Bay Bridge.

Miles Cameron approaches Jenkins and Catherine.

"Congratulations on the strategic downsizing of your firm," he says.

"There's no strategy in cutting loose your largest account," Jenkins says.

"But thanks anyway for the compliment," Catherine says.

"I'm sorry to hear about the SPEAK account," Miles says. "But you did the right thing in resigning it. I knew Hassan Mohammad was a bad apple all along."

"There's a lot of bad apples still running around in Silicon Valley and all over the place," Jenkins says.

"Whole branches of the government. Most politicians. Lots of business leaders. The technology part of the government has not exactly been reformed. Hassan just got caught. But there's lots others out there that haven't been caught."

"So, Dan Harris is your new client," Miles says. "Back into politics again."

"Back in politics," Jenkins says.

"But on the wrong side of the fence," Cameron says.

"It's going to be fun competing with you and your client Claire Wilson," Jenkins say. "The phony foundation of hers is enough to raise suspicion in a lot of people."

Miles Cameron laughs.

"Harris has not endeared himself to the women of the nation," Miles says.

"There's still a few months before the election," Jenkins says. "A lot can happen in a few months. Especially in this country."

"The door's always open if you get wise and resign the Harris account," Miles says. "You can get on board a winning campaign train. We're creating a political advertising department at the firm. I could use someone like you and Catherine to run it."

"We appreciate the offer but we're happy the way things are," Jenkins says.

When Miles Cameron walks away, a number of club members gather around Jenkins and Catherine. The recent resignation of the SPEAK account and change in the structure of their firm is big news and there is much interest in what Jenkins and Catherine are up to these days. There are a few offers to send clients and prospects their way but Jenkins shakes his head.

"We're satisfied with the accounts we have," Catherine says. "Maybe we'll build things up the again. Maybe not."

Their old friend Bob Thompson of Thompson Advertising walks over to them.

"I don't think I've seen you both this happy in a long time," Bob says. "And you - Jenkins - look so much better than when I saw you at the awards lunch a few months ago."

"You've got to stop by the office sometime," Catherine says. "We'll take you to lunch at our favorite Italian restaurant."

"You both remind me of when I met you at that club meeting six years ago," Thompson says. "Right after you started your advertising firm and it was just the two of you. You looked so happy then. Jenkins hadn't yet developed his cynical and sarcastic attitude in life."

"Thanks for the compliment Bob," says Jenkins. "It feels like that time six years ago. It's funny how a feeling comes back again after being absent for so long. We all try so hard to call back events and spark-like memories and go back and blanket yourself in old feelings from another time. Few are able to do it but when they can, it's an incredible feeling. Maybe the same type of feeling one has on a Time Machine? Maybe this is what the idea of a Time Machine is all about in the first place. It's something different altogether. Like an orphaned spirit. A neglected piece of nostalgia."

"You're waxing eloquently again Jenkins," Catherine says. "Maybe it's time to start writing that novel you always say you're going to write. Or that screenplay idea to send to your friend down in LA."

Quin Ridgely and Roy have wandered over to Jenkins and Catherine. Jenkins puts his arm around Quin Ridgely's shoulder and Catherine holds the shoulders of Roy in front of her.

"The old memories and feelings were brought back more real than when they first appeared," says Jenkins. "It happened when I first experienced this man's incredible invention called Magic Light."

"I need to try it," Bob Thompson says.

"You'll soon be able to," Catherine says. "Our first Magic Light product will be out soon."

"I'm just excited to see that old passion back in you again Jenkins," Thompson says. "It gives me back my passion too."

Catherine is holding court with a number of young advertising women. She is a super star to them.

"It's ironic sometimes how things turn out," she tells them. "I do a good PR job making a bad person look good. I'm finished with this type work for good. Never let yourselves get into it. No amount of money is worth selling out your soul."

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After the club's standard baked chicken lunch, small potatoes on the side with some kind of decorated cupcake thing for desert, Jenkins rises to introduce the short, heavysset man sitting next to him at the front table, Quin Ridgely.

"I could go on for days telling you about Quin Ridgely and his amazing product Magic Light," Jenkins says. "But most of you already know about him. So, I'm just going to introduce him and let him talk. Before I do this, I will

say that there are still many good people in technology today who are doing good things, trying to give people a better life, give them more freedom of their lives rather than impose more control. Quin Ridgely is one of these people. I'm proud he's one of our clients."

Quin Ridgely takes the podium and introduces his son Roy. The boy is disoriented with all the people and noise. He shakily stands up with the help of his father and makes a feeble wave to the group.

"Ten years ago, my son Roy was in an auto accident that took away his freedom and imprisoned him in a lonely world," Quin says. "I had just started a company called Magic Light Studios that was exploring a new type of virtual reality gaming technology. I started thinking about how this new technology might be used to help my son Roy have a better life. I made some money from a medical device company I started and with this money I was able to hire people and get an office. We made some incredible breakthroughs and soon a lot of people were visiting us and writing stories about us. But the money was running out. That's when Hassan Mohammad at SPEAK came to see me and was impressed and invested in our technology. That's when Magic Light was given a secret new goal by Mohammad to control people. Something he never told me about."

Quin takes the latest version of Magic Light out of his briefcase and sets it on the front table next to Roy. The little black device is not much larger than a deck of cards.

"Soon, we'll be selling Magic Light devices to the world," he says. "But first to those in the world who need it most, who need to have a better life rather than experience a more spectacular video game or movie."

There are a number of questions from the group.

"What's the real magic behind the device?" someone calls out from the lunch group.

Quin smiles and looks at his son.

"The real magic is not inside the Magic Light device," he says. "Rather it's inside one's heart."

There is a moment of silence after Quin says this and sits down. Then, everyone stands up and the room explodes in cheering and applause. Jenkins has never seen the club more excited about something. Usually, they are a quietly, bemused group as cynical about things as he used to be. They have seen everything out there in the way of new technological products from Silicon Valley and nothing surprises them. But now, they are excited like teenage girls at a rock concert.

Jenkins takes the podium to end the presentation.

"Stay tuned," he says. "We're going to be marketing Magic Light in a few months."

"Just in time for the new administration," someone says.

A nervous laugh ripples through the room.

"The new administration of Dan Harris," Jenkins says.

In a few minutes, most of the guests have left. It is not like the old days when the lunches went on all afternoon. Jenkins, Catherine, Quin and Roy are some of the last to leave the room. Catherine looks at Roy, still sitting at the table hardly aware that everyone has left.

"He needs a better world," she says to Jenkins.

"We all do," Jenkins says.