

GOD ON TRIAL

A SHORT NOVEL
BY

SABRI BEBAWI

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About the Author

The middle of five children, Sabri Bebawi was born in 1956 in the town of Fayoum, Egypt, where he attended Law School at Cairo University. He, then, left Egypt for the United Kingdom. He was invited by Oxford University, where he spent some time and never returned to Egypt. A few years later, after living and working in England, Italy, France, and Cyprus, he took refuge in the country he loved the most, the United States.

In California, the United States, he studied Communications at CSUF, then, obtained a Masters Degree in English Education. Later, he worked at many colleges and universities teaching English as a second language, Freshman English, Journalism and Educational Technology. He studied for more graduate work at UCLA and obtained a PhD degree in Education and Distance Learning from Capella University.

Although English is his third language, he has published many works on eclectic topics. It has always been his ambition to write novels. This is his first attempt. That English

is a foreign language to him, the task of writing a novel has been preoccupying and challenging.

As a child, Sabri Bebawi struggled to make sense of religions and their contradictions. He grew up terrified of the word God. As he grew older, and studied law, as well as all the holy books, he developed a more pragmatic and sensible stance; the word became just that –a word.

*“Is man one of God's blunders or is
God one of man's blunders?”*

Friedrich Nietzsche: (1844-1900) German-
Swiss philosopher and writer.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us have an inner child. Some of us, though, ignore that inner child, suppress him, and bury him. Those of us who do are not

free. They are forever imprisoned in a world of oppressed memories of a time long past.

This long time that some of us believe is long past is not past at all. Each of us is nothing but a collection of memories and experiences. These long-gone memories and experiences shape who we are as adults.

Some of these memories and experiences come back to life at one point in our adulthood. For some of us, they become vivid and real. At times, they even form our reality as adults.

For some of us, these long gone experiences, especially if they are not pleasant, or of health predicament nature, never leave us, and we become doomed to relive them over again on daily basis.

Not to evoke the ‘victim’ argument, we are all, indeed, victims of our own past and of our own minds and thoughts. No one dares to claim other than that thoughts come to our consciousness from unknown sources; they just come and leave each of us wondering: *“Where the hell that thought came from.”*

For this or these reasons, it is not wise to judge one another; one does not, and cannot, know what another is feeling, thinking, or experiencing. We each interpret the world around us differently; this interpretation depends uniquely on the experiences and memories each of us keep. That is why each of us is unique.

Religions have miserably failed to explain our existence or who we really are. Philosophy has never ceased trying. Plato was concerned with the ultimate reality and believed that reality does not exist in the real world. He believed that this world we live in is a mere imitation of the real world. He never believed in the physical world and taught us not to trust it. In essence he taught us that our souls (if there is such a thing as a soul) are captive of our bodies.

Philosophers, especially Plato, pointed out to us that the conflicts and tensions within us are not in harmony. We can only be serene if we can bring harmony to these conflicts and tensions. Who among us can do that?

Aristotle, on the other hand, focused on the existence of a soul without which we are incomplete. This writer finds no solace in either explanation.

The focus of this short fiction is to present a series of occurrences, episodes, and experiences that creates a surprising plot. Hypocrisy and duplicity, religious fervor and vehemence, corruption and depravity, wickedness and exploitation are the essence of the protagonist's world, with only diminutive disparities. In essence, and paradoxically, the protagonist abruptly finds himself mysteriously, but figuratively, in the unknown world of which some of us with psychological disorders are bewilderingly familiar.

There is a fine, very fine indeed, line between what is real and what is not. This line can easily and unconsciously be crossed. Once it is crossed, our world becomes what the great Stephen Hawkins debates, a mere possibility – all things are mere possibilities.

This short fictional novel addresses that. The protagonist lives a world of his own; a creation of his mind. His antagonist is out of the realm of reality. It is a major threat and obstacle that turns the protagonist's life inside out and upside down.

No moral judgment is made. It is only a mere reflection and a deeper look, using fictional characters, at the human condition. There is no intention to insult or defame any faith, religion, or belief.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNING

There is that tormenting feeling again. A feeling that he at times ignores; other times he descends into deep thoughts of yesterdays. He has grown so familiar with such disquieting emotions that occasionally he is not even aware.

The most amazing thing, he ponders, is the inner child's mind, thoughts, and hunches. The inner child that is residing peacefully in all of us that many of us ignore. He does not ignore. He recognizes, respects and nourishes his inner child.

He remembers. Though more than five decades have passed, it appears as though it were only last month, or, at the risk of romanticizing history, last week. Yet, it is, indeed, more than five decades ago.

He was born in 1956 and raised in the exotic, confused, and utterly blurred, world of Egypt. He was raised in an affluent family in a small oasis in middle Egypt named Fayoum. The name originated from Coptic, original Egyptian language, Efiom, which means the sea. Fayoum is 63 miles southwest of Cairo, the Egyptian capital.

He grew up in a family of five siblings. His father was a prominent criminal and constitutional barrister. His father was a functional alcoholic, an avid gambler, and was publicly branded as a philanderer.

Notwithstanding his father's such unusual eccentricities, he grew up with all needs, as well as wants, met. His father was still a great, honorable gentleman in a time when there were gentlemen on our beautiful planet.

His mother was an ordinary housewife who afforded her children love in abundance. He and his siblings learned

manners, discipline, and etiquette since infancy. His mother was the warmest and kindest of mothers; her compassion and love was unconditional.

That perturbing feeling comes again with vivid memories that are graphic and distinct. He is not sure whether he is awake or asleep. He sees and converses with the child in him. The child is only four years old. Then he is five; then six, then seven. He senses the continuity, the consistency, and he permanence.

He is feeling unwell. He is always not well. *"What is wrong, son? How are you feeling?"*

He factually hears his mother asking, just as she always has each time he is stricken by some bizarre illness.

"I am not well, Mom. I cannot move; I have a headache and I want to vomit."

He confusingly replies in a loud shivering voice that startles him for he hears himself. Now he is certain he is awake, or at least semi-awake. He is conversing with someone in the room, though he is alone, lying in bed in a semi-conscious state.

He feels her; she gently, as she does each time he is sick, checks his fever by inserting a strange looking long instrument into his rectum. The oddest thing is that he actually feels the thermometer inserted into his rectum right now.

“Oh! Lord Jesus, the Virgin Mary; your temperature is very high, son.”

His mother’s voice rings in his ears. He plainly feels her check his reddish feverish body. He hears her scream:

“We need to call Dr. Manoli right now.”

“Ah! Dr. Manoli.” He reminisces. Dr. Manoli was a Greek citizen; one who managed, and no one knows how to avoid President Gamal Abdul Nasser’s order to deport all foreigners and Egyptian Jews from Egypt and seize their businesses, properties, and all their assets. Dr. Manoli was a short, semi-heavy man with a bold head, small eyes, and a bulging abdomen. He spoke Arabic with a Greek accent, but was clearly understood. He was the family’s doctor and would often visit whenever needed.

His thoughts leap into a different direction not related to his illness. The name of Dr. Manoli makes him remember his neighbors Yolanda and her old mother the night before they were to be deported to Greece by order of the Egyptian government. His mother, grandmother and other people he cannot recall are around Yolanda and her mother trying to comfort them over tea. The government seized their villa and they were to leave the next morning with nothing but their clothes. He remembers how sad that evening was. He sees tears flowing from Yolanda’s eyes. He remembers her young beauty, her unique

accent and her long, blond hair that made her face sensual and her lips kissable. He mumbles, “*Damn politics; damn government; damn Egypt.*”

In his state of semi-consciousness, he is unable to understand why the government takes Yolanda’s father’s successful metal shop business, seizes their only residence and forces them to depart the place they have known for years. He feels heaviness in his heart and his body shakes in a sudden movement.

He sighs. His reminiscences rewind back to the situation at hand before his distraction by the thoughts of Yolanda and her family. He glances through the bedroom door and sees his mother pick up, as she has always done, the old black phone sitting on a dark brown table at one corner of the salon. She rolls the hand crank, and his father gets on the other end from his office.

“Call Dr. Manoli to come immediately. The middle one is very sick. He has a rash all over his body, a fever, a stiff neck, and he says he wants to vomit. He cannot walk. My baby cannot walk.”

His mother hangs up the phone and about fifteen to twenty minutes later, the doorbell rings.

Zakia, the nanny, opens the door and announces,

“Madam, Dr. Manoli is here.”

“Let him in, Zakia, thanks to the angels of God; blessed be the virgin.” His mom utters.

The doctor comes to his bed. He takes his stethoscope and other strange medical instruments out from his doctor's bag and he starts to examine him.

It all seems so real to him. He is still lying on his bed alone in his room; in his thoughts, he is not alone. All is in real time. The child in him is creative, imaginative, and, in a more subtle way, visionary.

Dr. Manoli listens to the heart; he checks the body all over; he asks him to open his mouth wide and take his tongue out. The doctor inserts something wooden and long into his mouth that makes him gag. He tells the doctor about his nausea, headache and his overall ailment. He sees gloom over the doctor's face; he notices worry on his mother's demeanor; and he sees fright in Zakia's eyes. Though he might be aware that was more than five decades ago, the experience is actual and tangible. He is now confused and fairly terrified.

Dr. Manoli puts his instrument back in his bag and asks the mom to go outside with him to speak with her. He could in point of fact hear his mom cry loudly and hears both Zakia and Dr. Manoli trying to comfort her.

It is baffling to him. How can an event of five decades that passed become so alive and real? He is certain, and his adult medical examinations prove, that this childhood

illnesses, including Meningitis, left him scared for life.

He now knows he is awake; he is neither dreaming nor hallucinating, he is merely reliving yesterdays. He is experiencing one of his unceasing trances. Fatigue and exhaustion of all this *jamais vu* takes him out of his trance and for a very short time he falls asleep.

In his sleep state, he recalls his religious mother pray non-stop to the angels, to the Virgin, and to all saints. Saints he knows about; others he does not. His mother has always believed, until this moment, that his survival was a direct result of her prayers.

His inseparable companion, insomnia, shakes him hard enough to awaken him. He is now fully awake again. He gets up, walks to his desk and lights one of his Dunhill cigarettes. He wonders why he is in and out of these unusual reveries.

CHAPTER TWO: ANXIETY

He is now five decades and seven. He has the demeanor of a strong-willed man whose pragmatism almost always overshadows any emotions he experiences.

Though he is an English teacher, he carries himself as a public prosecutor. Though he is feeble, he is never to admit his frailty. In secrecy, he confronts his meagerness and all around him see him robust and even, bizarrely enough, athletic. He and any kind of sport have never been compatible. At times he takes walks along the beach with a mind bombarded by thoughts that he is never able to hear the sound of the waves or even see all the seagulls hovering above his head or the little birds trudging by his feet

What happens in one's childhood never ever goes away; adulthood is impacted in every way, not merely psychological, but most significantly physical. This is part of the mockery of life.

Childhood dilemmas manifest themselves once again in his old age. First it was heart

glitches, then, it was cancer. To be in sync with life's absurdity, it never stopped there.

It was the summer of 2010. On a warm June evening at about 6:00 pm, he was having a pleasant dinner and wine with a dear friend at *Le Comptoir du Pantheon*, Pantheon, Paris. The restaurant is located next to the Pantheon and has a wonderful view of it; he sat on the terrace, so he had a good view of the Eiffel Tower and the Sorbonne. The place was bustling with locals and visitors as well. He had the soup of the day and the pan seared fish, which was heavenly delicious. It is not feasible for him now to remember other details. His friend and he shared a bottle of exquisite Bordeaux. They both appreciate high-quality wine, and Bordeaux can be fine.

That Saturday day of June second had been quite uneventful for him, since he visits Paris often, and he had lived there in his long lost youth. He had just been to *Jardin de Luxembourg*, and walked along *La Seine*. He had lunch at the famous *Fouquet's Restaurant*.

He has always felt restless about the appalling changes that globalization has imposed upon his beautiful Paris. That day, he was somewhat mortified by some of the scenes on *Rue de Champs-Elysees*; in essence, he was not quite himself at dinner at *Le Comptoir du Pantheon*.

After having had his dinner, he was relaxing discussing current affairs with his

friend while sipping on his Bordeaux. In Paris, as well as in most Europe, tables at restaurants are very close to one another. Sitting on his chair with his wine glass in his right hand, left hand rested on the arm of the chair, and his legs crossed, he suddenly and involuntary extended his right leg in a strong unexplained jerk and kicked the bottom of the chair next to him; on the chair, a large gentleman was sitting chatting with his party of friends. Understandably, the gentleman angrily got up, looked into his eyes uttering "*What the fuck!!*" The man was rightfully shocked. The incident was terrifying and astonishing. At that moment he imagined coming back to California with a black eye and possible concussion. His face turned yellow; his body was shaking; he was petrified at what had just happened.

He explained that he had no idea why his leg jerked in such a way and apologized fearing the large gentleman. He felt that the large victim recognized the shock and fear and allowed the matter to settle. The large victim sat down again, so did he and he, being the coward he is, was grateful his bones were still intact.

Though how his leg moved so violently and involuntarily was confusing, he did not make much of the incident and continued with his days as he normally would.

Life's ludicrousness never ceases. He left for Bergamo, Italy, about one hour from Milan. Monaco, Venice, and Bergamo are the greatest places he has ever visited. His companions and he were at *La Marianna* Restaurant. It is situated in a centuries-old building at the west end of the *città alta*. This family-run restaurant has a limited, but regularly changing list of options of local dishes.

He was sitting at a well-decorated round table; to his right, there were locals standing at the bar drinking and chatting. The music was intriguing. It was a breathtaking atmosphere. In front of him, there was a balcony filled with gorgeous flowers; beneath it, there were about seven tables each sits four people. Behind him, there was a stunning garden full of daffodils, flowers in all colors, burgundy, rouge, pink, yellow, red and white; all the colors of life for those of us who are alive. He could see mountains, scattered with green plants, on the other side of the garden.

At *La Marianna*, he ordered the tastiest wine on the wine-list to savor over some appetizers. And he ordered casoncelli alla bergamasca, and a filetto ai ferri.

The elegant waiter came with the bottle of Chianti. He poured a glass of the wine for him and all of a sudden, as he approached to pick up the glass, his right hand involuntarily extended in a stretched motion, hit the glass, and sent it flying toward the table next to him.

In shame and confusion, he immediately covered his face with both his palms; everyone was in disbelief, so was he. No apology was sufficient to ease the astonishment. It was only then that he realized something was dreadfully amiss.

Everyone was apologizing to everyone and confusion ensued. The waiter called upon someone to come and clean the mess his customer had just created. A girl on the table next to him had wine all over her dress; luckily, it was a reddish dress. Her companions took out their handkerchiefs and all attempted to clean the wine spilled all over her pretty elegant dress. He was not sure at that moment whether they were smiling or frowning. He was out of the moment and into his head.

“What the fuck is going on?”

He tried to forget and emerged himself in the beautiful music that was playing; the music was spirit lifting and took him on a trip on memory lane. He remembered the time he had lived in Italy long before. He relived several events; he conversed in his inner thoughts with old forgotten friends he had not seen in years.

He carefully watched and analyzed the patrons around him. Flowers merge with their faces and the pretty maidens' hair became golden and bodies transparent. It was as though he were in a museum filled with nudes. He thinks that was his way of dealing with his unusual dilemma.

He and companions took a taxi and left for the hotel. At the hotel, He prepared for his trip to Como the next morning. All his friends were excited; he was thinking about what was going on with his involuntary violent movements of his legs and arms.

His fears and confusion brought him back earlier than planned to California, where he lives. Throughout the rest of the year he experienced some leg and arm movements that he had to visit several neurologists. He was diagnosed with what the doctor called "*Myoclonic Seizures*."

It was becoming more and more confusing. His legs and hands were involuntary violently moving and his fingers twitching. He started experiencing tremor throughout his body. The symptoms started to take different forms and the attacks started to happen at different times. Neither his intimate friends nor he had a clue of what these involuntary movements meant. They were confusing, alarming, and somewhat sidesplitting. His intellect, demeanor, and sense of mental control have been gradually diminishing.

This, however, being the stubborn person he has always been, did not stop him from doing what he loves to do – travel. It was July the following year when he went to Venice, Italy. Ah!!! Venice, Venice!!! What an incredibly fascinating place. He had been in Venice many times thirty years prior. How strange that

when one is young, one does not appreciate beauty or elegance the same way one does in advanced age. Many writers have attempted to describe what Venice is; he is almost certain that no writer can truly describe it.

He arrived at the station and right in front of him was the pier where boats sail off to different destinations in beautiful Venice. He took a boat from pier eighty-two for only two stops to Hotel *Lanterna de Venicia*, in the *Rialto Area*. He walked off the boat and, according to the directions he had, turned right and passed several well-known shops; he was trying to grasp the beauty of Venice all at once. He felt it was a surreal moment as he experienced the same feelings each time he visited Venice in the 1970s and 1980s.

At the hotel, he was greeted by beautiful Lucia, a young pretty Italian woman who was warm, friendly, helpful, and, of course, deliciously sexy. Lucia took him and his friends to their rooms; how he wished she could stay with him in the room.

After he settled and freshened up, he walked to the famous *Piazza di Marco*, where most people go. He sat at a bar for drinks and some horderves; he was quite surprised that that restaurant in particular had a special coverage charge for listening to music. Amazingly, the band would play for ten to fifteen minutes, then go to the bar next door

to play for ten to fifteen minutes, then come back.

He had a wonderful time reminiscing and twisting to the music while enjoying his Chianti. He walked back to the hotel in the warm Venice night. He chatted a short while with his friends, and went to sleep; more accurately, he tried to sleep. As soon as he lay on the bed, his legs started moving, then his hands, then, and for the first time, his whole body. He sank into a trance and he did not know for certain whether he was asleep.

He is now back home, in California. It is another night. That tantalizing sensation overtakes his natural senses again. Growing up, he always felt a sense of discomfort not related to his illnesses. He is still feeling it now. At the beginning, he could not identify the sources of his severe and unusual discomfort. He wonders if it was his family, religions in general, or society with its unscrupulous culture.

He thinks of his parents.

"Alas! They were at odds." He hears himself utter.

"Rightfully so." His mother was at home taking care of the five kids, and his father was at work and play endlessly.

His mother had a tender soul. She was simple, loving, caring and provided profusion of love. The child in him sees her before him a pretty young woman with a fair skin, brown hair and big brown eyes. She stands by his bed

neither too tall nor too short, neither too slim nor too heavy, but mysterious. Though his mother probably never knew it, she has had an immense impact on his life that continues with him until this moment of certain hallucination.

He becomes fully awake. It is 2:25 AM. He gets up again and now he decides to make a cup of espresso forte. After breaking a couple of coffee cups, spilling coffee all over his kitchen counter and floor, using a few expletives and curses, he cleans up. Now he is calm; he now will taste the fruit of his coffee making adventure; he places the cup on his desk and starts to write:

I am not sure my parents' odd relationship had any effect on me. I was a happy child tormented by religion and religious people's hallucination. I was tormented by Egyptian hypocrisy. I have seen a great deal of hypocrisy, child abuse, infidelity, women abuse, government abuse, church abuse, and mosques' abuses.

He hears the voice of his mother; she, as she has always done during his growing up, reads to him in bed before he went to sleep. She reads from the Bible. In her wisdom and lack of awareness, she is reading from the books of Genesis and the book Revelations. This exposure to apocalyptic writing at a very, very young age has had a profound effect on him.

Being imaginative and in this phantasm state, he is now experiencing the same fright he had experienced as a child. He suddenly falls

asleep but shortly awoken by one of his many epileptic seizures. His body shakes uncontrollably and his limbs seem to have a mind of their own.

As his attack dissipates gradually, he thinks of the savagery of God and questions why a peaceful God would be so cruel and nasty. These thoughts made him feel more terrified and mortified. Since his childhood, he has been repetitively petrified of that entity referred to as God.

He recalls himself at the age of about seven or eight when he developed an obsessive-compulsive disorder. He would repeat to himself the phrase, “*God forgive me*” unceasingly all day until the time he went to bed. He kept this a secret because he had no idea how his mother, siblings or nanny, Zakia, would react. He remembers he would often go to Zakia, who was a Muslim, and ask that she hold him. She would and he would feel protected, even from that savage God.

He gets out of bed. It is 3:42 AM. He makes a cup of espresso forte coffee and sits at his desk thinking. Unexpectedly he starts writing:

This phase simply shaped my feeling about the existence of god and if it does exist. I often thought I would be better than him or her or it for I would not be as cruel, as brutal, or as malicious. Today, I have become an agnostic and I cannot get myself to understand why anyone would believe in such a

God as depicted in the holy books, including the Bible.

In addition to the bible, there were other sources of great damage. Egypt is an Islamic country. I was exposed and forced to learn about Islam and its holy book, the Quran, which is like the Bible in its catastrophic content. I was forced to learn about the Islamic Laws, Sharia, even though I was a Coptic. I did so in schools, and I did so in everyday affairs. I was even forced to memorize and recite verses from the Quran. It was another exposure that had a deep impact on me.

The daily prayers announced loudly in microphones coming from all directions were also a frightening experience for me. Everywhere in Egypt, between each mosque there is a mosque; and that was not enough. The radio would broadcast Quran readings repeatedly. It is until today that these sounds bring about deep downheartedness into my inner soul.

I remember Sheikh Abdul Rahman, the blind cleric who is in a New York prison now on terrorism conviction. His mosque was right behind our house. As I was a child, I remember Abdul Rahman's Friday sermons. He would curse the Christians, Jews and Americans (I do not know why Americans) publically in a loud microphone that would echo miles away. The Sheikh would scream in a screeching deafening voice:

"May god burn them, displace their children, and may God burn their houses"

*The congregation would repeat
“Amen.”*

The pattern would continue.

This would persist for a long time. We were so used to it that it had not bothered us much. The amazing thing is that Sheikh Abdul Rahman was a friend of my father's. He would visit my father at his law firm and spend hours with him talking. My father considered him a harmless kind man.

Well! For once, my father was wrong. The Sheikh had always been a terrorist and he had put his evil spirit into action. Fortunately, he is in prison. I hope he will never get out.

He stops writing for a minute and thinks to himself how the United States allowed that savage man to enter this country. Where was American Intelligence, or lack? Didn't they know how radical he had been? This was simply bizarre. But the United States does that so often that he now wonders if the word intelligence is fitting.

He becomes exhausted with the burden of thoughts. He cannot help his mind racing. He goes back to bed hoping for a few minutes of sleep. His hope materializes; he falls asleep or perhaps he thinks so; at least he is semi asleep.

CHAPTER THREE: A TURMOILED WORLD

Another night of unrest looms; his mind duels and battles with disordered thoughts and considerations. This time, it takes him to a rollercoaster of seizures. As he recovers from one, another is initiated. He is petrified and agitated. He is not afraid of death; he welcomes it anytime. He is scared of losing the most precious thing he has ever had, his mind.

He gets up, walks around his small apartment. He stands by the window watching the bay water; it is calm; the sky is clear with a few bright stars. Silence is deafening. He contemplates again. He looks above toward the sky and wonders where the fuck God is.

“He is certainly dead, just as all things do.” He mumbles. *“Yes, he must be dead; or perhaps he is in a permanent seizure since he sees nothing hears nothing and certainly does nothing.”*

He moves away from the window and walks around aimlessly. It is close to four in

the morning; he has not slept at all and he feels tired and fossilized.

He goes to bed with a new feeling of anger. He is angry at the entity that made life. Though he is certain it is neither a God nor a Demon; he is simply irate and enraged.

He lays his head on his pillow and focuses on sleep as though he were trying to reach a level of hypnosis. He knows if he does not get a few hours of sleep, he will start hallucinating for real, as if he were not.

Though most people would count sheep to fall asleep, he is counting the number of wars before and after his birth. He is thinking of the hungry children. He is thinking of the wars between men and women. He is thinking of evil and corruption throughout the planet. He is disappointed at the country he has loved the most, America. He is thinking of terrorists and their evil ways, killers and their cold blood, abusers and their wickedness, and he is revisiting America's blatant disregard for basic human decency and social responsibility.

He finally falls asleep. He does not know if he really is as his mind continues whirling.

He gets up startled and horrified again. He has just seen two American marines walking through Moscow airport; they face *Edward Snowden*, the man unfairly accused of simply telling the ugly truth about America's wrong doings. They blindfold him; they lay him down on a small body of wood and one marine

beheads him with an Arabian sword. Blood is everywhere. People at the airport are going about their business not caring or even noticing the horrifying scene.

After the beheading of *Snowden* at Moscow airport, the next scene he envisions is an unexplainable one. He sees a large number of skinheads, a group of priests and preachers, and faceless others holding large crosses chanting, dancing, and shouting:

“USA, USA, USA.”

They are celebrating the beheading of *Edward Snowden*.

He swiftly gets up with his heart pounding, his body shaking, and his mind misting. He looks at his watch; it is 4:14 AM. He has not had a continuous thirty minutes of sleep.

“*Shall I make a cup of espresso forte? Shall I open a bottle of wine? Wine at four AM! This is insane.*” He talks loudly to himself and opts for neither.

He has an infrequent urge to write; he rarely does. He sits at his desk with no idea about what he wants to write. He scribbles a few words. Thoughts of his years in law school invaded his mind. Perhaps it is because he feels he lives in a lawless world, and certainly a lawless country. He writes:

Although I have enjoyed my law study, I am not sure it is now serving or harming. I spent four years at Cairo University Law School, some time at Oxford University, England, and one year in California,

USA. Many years of reading and many years of training have certainly impacted my character. This legal consciousness I have developed has caused me a great deal of grief.

I am always unhappily aware of the lawlessness around me. Laws are abused throughout the globe and only the rich and powerful are above the law. While the Director of National Intelligence (or lack of) blatantly and deliberately with no shame or remorse lies to Congress, yet he walks freely; Edward Snowden who merely told the truth of illegal activities is stripped of his citizenship and becomes a stateless fugitive.

In Egypt, and the Arab World, raped girls and women who possess the courage to report such heinous crimes are routinely accused of prostitution and imprisoned in a shameless, lawless society.

Rupert Murdoch's wrongdoing in London, England is another disturbing affair. His journalists' phone hacking of innocent people was a blatant disregard not only to decency, but also more importantly to the law. The connection to British Prime Minister David Cameron is another slap on the face and a kick in the balls to those few of us who still have respect for the law.

The immoral, iniquitous beheadings that characteristically take place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, America's seductive sexy mistress, is without question among the most barefaced disregard of humanity and the law.

China, North Korea, and Russia as well as most of the African states consistent abuses to human rights and indifference to any law including international law

is another source of grief. Even worse are America and its Western allies' non-stop indictments of such indifference while they are indeed as apathetic and indifferent.

Then is the most lawless of all, Mexico. The repeated Kidnappings, murders, drugs, prostitution, the authority's unconcealed corruption, and all are not without religious hallucination. Just like the Middle East where religious delusion is the norm and cultural delirium is a pattern.

He gets exhausted. It is almost 6:20 AM. He must sleep. He has an 8:30 AM appointment with his neurologist. He gets up and goes to bed again in the hope that he has gotten a bit of defeat out of his system.

As soon as he lies in bed, a seizure attacks him for less than a minute. He smiles at the nature of man and thinks a little longer.

He tries to get himself to sleep, but his mind is still racing and his body is still shaking. He thinks of getting up and walk for a while. He decides against the idea. Sometime later, he falls asleep – his normal sleep, which is not sleep at all.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PROSECUTOR

On rare occasions, he goes into a deep sleep. He does not know for certain if now is one of these rare occasions. In a semi-dream state, he needs to impeach God. He sees himself a representative of the Office of the Prosecution responsible for confirmation of charges hearing in major world cases concerning International Humanitarian Law brought to the International Court of Justice, in charge of crimes against humanity such as murder, rape, sexual slavery, other inhumane acts and enslavement. Additionally, charges of war crimes such as acts of terrorism, murder, outrage upon personal dignity, cruel treatment,

savagery and many other serious violation of international humanitarian law including but not limited to abuse of children and enlisting children into armed forces in many parts of the world.

For him, there is a major challenge. How he will summon a non-existent being to appear before a court of law. He resolves the issue by deciding the trial should be in absentia.

A common California earthquake interrupts his trance. He now thinks of *Edward Snowden* and *Julian Assange*; a mysterious power is trying to prevent him from divulging the truth; it is trying to forbid him from exposing viciousness and savagery. Fear.

It takes him a long time to settle. He is now sure he is fully awake because of the quake. He does not remember much of what he was thinking of minutes earlier. He remembers only something about a trial, 'The International Court, crime and punishment.

He recalls *Dostoevsky* great novel, *Crime and Punishment*. The former student, Raskolnikov, thinks of committing an unclear hideous crime. He is consumed with the idea of crime and punishment. He is convinced that God has committed repugnant crimes against humanity and he is intending, in his hallucinate state, to have him impeached.

His thoughts deplete him. He is severely tired and he decides he should try to sleep. Few minutes after lying in bed, his body

begins shaking and another seizure takes him to another dimension of existence, he is not sure what dimension or if he exists at all. This seizure lasts about two minutes and leaves his mind drained and his fragile body floating in the unknown, not well understood world of *Stephen Hawking* where the idea is “*“No matter how thorough our observation of the present, the past, like the future, is indefinite and exists only as a spectrum of possibilities.”* Everything is a mere possibility. He may not have had a seizure. He might not be thinking what he is thinking. His conviction to punish God for his crimes might be just a mere possibility and not necessarily fact.

“Alas! Mere possibilities.”

He muses. He contemplates if all were a mere possibility, then our own existence is only a possibility. Then the entity people refer to, as God is also a mere possibility.

The prosecutor part of his personality takes over.

“How will God appear before the court?”

He cannot be summoned for he has no land, no country, and no address. He is simply a mirage; he is an imagination, a creation of our own minds. Yet, he is determined to bring that entity to justice; he needs answers.

The seizure he experienced just left him in a unique state; he does not know whether he is awake, asleep, or still under the spill of the seizure. He is aware of his thoughts, though.

Some extraordinary power brought the child in him to life again. He starts thinking and decides to script his thoughts:

The summer of 1967 has had a long lasting impact on my personality and my life. I was only a ten-year-old-child. A ten-year old child then was in no way like a ten-year old child now. We were innocent, we knew little or nothing; we were utterly dependent, insecure and timid. And I was no different.

Now the war had begun on June 5th, and again we lived in darkness and under the dreadful sounds of sirens. When my mother left my father and left us behind, my father took good care of us at first. Every day, my two brothers and I would eat at the best restaurants. My father showed us an immense affection.

Then, for some reason, possibly out of fear and worry, my father would lock us in the house and take the key until he would send for us to go eat, then, after eating, he had us locked up in the house again. I never forgot how we all felt as prisoners talking to our neighbors from the balcony, veranda or the windows. It was an eerie time; it was a ghostly time; it was a spine chilling time. It was a time never to forget and a time to be engraved in our souls for eternity.

The unpredictable and volatile happened; my father became unable to care for us, so he made the vilest of decisions; he transferred the three of us, my brothers and I, to his father's mansion in a village called Tobbar so that my grandfather, grandmother, and my uncle's wife would attend to us. It was a grave move, which had nearly destroyed me both physically and psychologically.

I hated the village, and possibly that is the reason why today I do not like to be close to nature; it brings about fear, discomfort and unexplainable despair. I detested the large, very large, mansion my grandfather had; it scared me to the point that I would run to go from one area to the other. I despised my grandfather as, for the first time, I grasped who he was. My grandfather was a landowner. He was severely abusive to his farmers who worked the plantation; I watched him whipping them as though they had been his slaves. He was abusive to everyone around him including his wife, my grandmother. Yet, he was a very religious man, never missed a church mass or a Sunday communion.

My grandfather would read the newspapers every morning and afternoon. He would repetitively curse President Gamal Abdul Nasser. Abdul Nasser had possessed part of his land as role of the revolution reforms to give the land to farmers and allow them to care for and improve themselves. My grandfather hated that; he was a heartless capitalist. Perhaps that is why I am now an earnest socialist.

The children, my brothers, my four male cousins slept in two different large bedrooms, two children on a bed. I happened to sleep next to my, then, twenty-two-year-old cousin named George. Late at night, I would feel someone taking my hand and putting it on some strange object. I had not had pubic hair at the time, and that object was George's pubic hair; then he forced me to hold his penis. At my age and in my innocence, I could not understand why that thing, his penis, was big nor did I understand what my older cousin wanted.

In fractions of a second I recalled how our young female helpers at home used to, when alone, ask to see and touch my tiny penis and ask that I would touch their breasts and private parts. I must admit, though I could not understand, that I liked the sensation. This had gone on for a long time. We played doctors and we played husbands and wives. The helpers were much older; they were teenagers; I was a mere child with no understanding of this human pleasure.

Though I liked what had been going on with the helpers, I did not like or understand what my cousin George was doing. He would ask me to turn around and place his penis between my buttocks. I would lie there frightened and confused. There was a nagging voice inside me repeating that what was happening was wrong. I would cry in silence, afraid to tell anyone. I was a ten-year old child then, which is equivalent, in terms of knowledge and innocence, to a three or four-year old child today.

This abuse and loath of being in my grandfather's mansion went on from June to July 1967. Then I became very, very ill. I was on the verge of death and was constantly crying for my mother. Finally, against my grandfather's wish, my grandmother ordered a car and transported me to my mother, in Fayoum. Though I was terribly sick, I was the happiest soul at that moment when I saw my mother, maternal grandmother and my baby sister, who was just above a year or two old.

This happiness was not without a grave sense of guilt and culpability for leaving behind my baby brother there in the village. He was only seven years old and heavens know what form of abuse he had gone

through. He and I have never talked openly about it although I had told him all that had happened to me. I would cry for him each night and beg my mother to call for him to join us.

As for my older brother, who sadly met his demise at the age of forty, I was not so worried. He was thirteen years old at the time and he loved the village life and living in the mansion. He used to enjoy climbing trees, playing in the lakes, riding horses and camels and just having a rave. There was no reason for me, or at least I believed so, to worry about or for him.

At my maternal grandmother's house, another cousin, Magdy, who was twenty-five years at the time, also sexually abused me. While my mother, grandmother and baby sister were asleep, he would force me to go to the toilette with him and touch his penis. Again, I was terrified to tell anyone about these incidents.

He is more bamboozled now remembering all that. He is more muddled by *Hawking's* ideas of possibilities. He wonders whether any of those events really happened. He knows they did, but considering that all things are possible, it is also possible that they never happened. He convinces himself to fuck it and go to sleep, or try to.

He goes to bed, thinks a bit more about convicting God in absentia, and falls asleep.

CHAPTER FIVE: IN ABSENTIA

It is 5:44 AM. He is fully awake and attentive this morning. He makes his espresso forte coffee and sits at his desk. He lights a Dunhill cigarette while waiting for his computer to start. Now that the computer is on, he checks his email messages, replies to the messages that deserve attention, and opens CNN website. The habit of reading CNN news is very much like alcoholism or drug addiction; he does it; he regrets it; he swears he will never do it again, but the next morning he does it with a great deal of remorse. The reason for this remorse is that he has developed an extraordinary disrespect for any American news and for many American journalists. For him, they are not reporting news; they are making news. He recalls Atef, his best friend, once referring to CNN as CMM, which for him means 'could be, might be, and may be.' His friend is so accurate on giving CNN such a name. Working as a

journalism professor at one point, he feels embarrassed for the whole profession in these United States. He prefers NPR, BBC and France 24. Nevertheless, he still does it, contemplating it is an addiction to a very unhealthy, dangerous, and brain frying substance – American news.

He loses consciousness, yet still functions. He is deeply focused on the trial. He is aware that a trial can take place without the accused being present. In essence, it is clear that the accused has waived his or her right to be present. He understands that a counsel appointed by the defense office can represent the accused. This is to guarantee that the accused's rights are not violated.

In his mirage, he is deeply troubled; he does not know how he will bring God into a trial or try it in absentia. The Anglo-Saxon law, in its early days, would not allow any tribunal to enter a judgment on an accusation unless the accused is present. Such a rule was rooted in common law. His delusion takes him to the Romano-Germanic legal system. His hopes elevate.

Soon, he recalls the trial of *Martin Bormann*, the Nazi Party Secretary who was indicted, tried in absentia in 1946 and sentenced to death based on Article-Twelve of the charter of the International Military Tribunal.

He thinks of the most recent case of trying in absentia the four suspects who were

involved in the brutal murder of the Lebanese Prime Minister, *Rafik Hariri*.

He now thinks of assistance. He goes through all the names he knows. It is not an easy task. He needs someone with legal background and above average critical thinking skills. He thinks of one lawyer friend who seems to be always next to him, talking and advising him, and at times, telling him how he should react to situations. She appears next to him, as she often does

“Ab! Juliana Maigret?”

“Yes? Do you know what time it is?” Juliana answers in a grouchy voice

“Not Really. What time is it?” He politely replies

“It is fucking 6:13 in the morning. Being awake now and thinking; this must be about something important or I will kick your ass.” She semi-seriously tells him.

She raises her head, then her half body and sits comfortably on the couch next to his desk listening attentively.

“Listen Juliana, I am contemplating bringing God before the International Court.”

“You fucking want to do what? Have you been drinking? Please tell me you did not say that.”

She confusingly responds to his, in her opinion, a contemptible notion.

“Ms. Maigret, we really should not be discussing this here. You know America is now a fourth world country and none of us is safe. We have people listening,

the NSA, the CIA, the FBI, and even TBN; no one is safe. Let us meet at Simmzy's on Second Street in Belmont Shore. You know I am unable to drive now because of my seizures, so I will walk there. OK?" He explains. *"I will tell you everything, then."*

"D'accord. This better be good. When do you want to meet?" She agrees in a much calmer tone.

"Tuesday at 5:30 if it is suitable for you."

"Oui, Oui. OK. See you then."

She simply disappears. He has a sense of semi relief. He is strongly feeling he will be able to try God in absentia. All it will take is some serious research, a well-drafted complaint to the International Court and a great deal of luck.

It is now 6:46 AM. He is worried that if he goes to bed, he will suffer another seizure. He is tired of seizures because they drain his brain and make him lethargic and unable to think clearly. He needs all his intellect now, whatever is left of it, to accomplish his task.

He reflects for a few minutes, until about 7:07 AM. He decides it is best to go to bed and wake up in a few hours fresh to prepare for the discussion with Juliana Maigret the day after tomorrow— or actually now is tomorrow.

He squiggles on a piece of paper the letter G – O – D then doodles JULIANA – MR. MAIGRET – TUESDAY. And with his pencil writes hard and writes over each letter many times *"I shall get you."* Then he switches his desk lights off and slowly walks to the

bedroom with unsteadiness as though he were intoxicated, though he drank no alcohol of any kind. His intoxication is with his deep thoughts. He trudges until he reaches his bed; he throws his unstable body next to his wife, Sofia, and turns to his right side and falls asleep.

He is in a restless sleep and he is either dreaming or delirious; he does not know for sure. He thinks of high-level detectives to recruit or seek their input. He is thinking of whom he will call to the stand to testify as though he had it all figured out, though he recognizes how difficult the road ahead is going to be.

Pope San Francis is the first name that came to his mind as he thinks of possible witnesses. "Yes," He tells himself with confidence. He thinks summoning the Pope to testify is a clever strategy. Indeed, the Catholic Church has quite a dark, very dark, history. Then he thinks of someone representing the Jewish faith and another representing the Muslim faith. For the Jews, he thinks to summon the present Sephardi Chief Rabbi, *Shlomo Amar*. For the Muslim faith, no one would be better to summon than the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, *Ahmed el-Tayeb*, in Cairo, Egypt. He thinks this would cover the main three sects that follow the principle three books inspired by God.

He feels a sense of contentment and cannot wait to share his idea with Juliana on Tuesday evening. He will tell her about the indictment. He will consult with her about the approach. He is buoyant in his phantasm state.

His restlessness often keeps his wife on the alert. Sofia, his wife, is a tender, good-hearted girl. Her care for him and his medical conditions are unconditional. She is tall, slim, with long dark hair that makes her oval pretty face shine under any circumstances. She supports him in all that he does. When he suffers from seizures, she holds him tightly and protects him. She handles his madness effectively and she is never bothered by his terminal impotence. Her eyes often speak volumes of her inner self. Considering his vast experience with women, Sofia is the best of all.

He met Sofia many years ago. She was an English student in one of his classes at the local college. She was only twenty-one years old, then. She captured his attention instantly and she and he shared a short fling that left an impact on him all his days ahead. Then Sofia, for one reason or another, disappears. He resigned to thinking that she must have returned to Rome, her home.

She did not return to Rome. Many years later, as he searches for her as he has done for years, he finds her and they reconnect; this time for good. They reminisce, recall, and laugh.

Her laughter, which has never changed since she was a twenty-one-year-old maiden, is a source of energy for him. They marry despite all his challenges.

He shares all his thoughts with Sofia. He shares his intention to bring God to justice. She cautiously listens and her eyes show she feels his pain and anguish. He tells her about his meeting with Juliana Maigret. She has never heard of the name nor does she know that he has friends. However, she reluctantly smiles and advises him to be careful sailing in such unchartered waters.

CHAPTER SIX: TUESDAY WITH Ms. MAIGRET

It is 5:16 PM. He gets dressed casually, says goodbye to Sofia who knows nothing about what he does, leaves his apartment and walks toward Simmzy's on Second Street. The meeting with Juliana is in fourteen minutes. He arrives, but she is not there yet. He asks for a corner table to be away from the noise and to avoid being heard. He sits down and anxiously focuses his eyes on the front door in anticipation for Ms. Maigret.

It is now 5:46 and Juliana is still not there.

"Fuck!"

He mumbles in a hearable voice

"Is she coming? Damn."

He is startled as the waitress, Shade, is standing above him saying:

"I big your pardon!"

"Oh! Sorry Shade; I was thinking out loud. Just get me a Stranded Amber Beer for now. I am waiting for someone." With embarrassing tone he talks with Shade, the waitress.

Just a few minutes before 6:00, he sees an elegant tall, blond, and well-built woman walk through the door. It is Juliana. She has just arrived. She waves her hand as she is looking around the restaurant. She sees him and walks between tables toward him. As she approaches, he gets up to greet her.

"*I am sorry I am late.*" Juliana says.

"*Do not worry. Pas problem.*" He replies and asks her to please take her coat off and sit and relax.

"*What will you like to have?*" He asks.

Patrons of the restaurant look at him in a very strange way because he is waving and talking, but they see no one with him.

"*Martini, if possible. I need a fucking drink.*"

He gestures to Shade; she comes over to the table; he asks her for a Martini for the young lady. Shade obliges in confusion, what lady?

Juliana interjects,

"*What is that weird scheme you are considering? Have you gone completely mad? How can you bring God before a tribuna?*"

"*Listen Mrs. Maigret.*"

He says but soon interrupted.

"*Call me Juliana. Monsieur Maigret had had enough of my work and me and decided to go back to Paris. I am left alone now caring for the two young ones.*"

She says in a rather confident and untouched tone, just a matter of fact.

"*Oh!! Sorry.*" As he tries to show regret she interrupts him and asks in a strong tone of voice that he leave sentimentality aside.

"*D'accord.*" He agrees.

"*Let us get to business.*"

He starts to tell her about his childhood, his suspicions of religion, his child sexual

abuse, and the hypocrisy of all religions. He explains that all the world ailments are because of one entity that entices, and induces hatred, killing, corruption and the many holocausts that the world has suffered. This entity is the G-O-D. It must be punished just like any being would be. He shares with her a phrase someone said innocently, *“God is not the answer; he is a cancer.”*

You and I know that this G-O-D does not exist. How will we prosecute a phantom?” Juliana interjects. *“Are you aware how crazy this sounds?”* She continues.

“Yes, Mrs. Maigret. Sorry, Juliana. But he exists through his writings in the holy books. Isn’t it?” He argues

“Then you want to put religions on trial. This is ludicrous. Everyone has the right to be stupid. We cannot prosecute stupid people otherwise 90% of the world will be imprisoned, and more than 98% of people in America will be incrassated; this is really absurd. I cannot understand you.”

“All I need you to help me with is to draft the indictment so that I can present the complaint to the International Court of Justice. I am certain we have a case, Juliana.” He explains to her that there are precedents.

Then he starts reciting precedents as listed in Jeremy Waldron’s book, *The Harm in Hate Speech*. In 2009, a member of the Belgian Parliament was convicted of distributing leaflets with the slogans: *“Stand up against the*

Islamification of Belgium,” “Stop the sham integration policy” and “Send non-European job-seekers home.”

In 2006, protesters were convicted of distributing leaflets to Swedish high school students saying homosexuality was a “*deviant sexual proclivity*,” had “*a morally destructive effect on the substance of society*” and was responsible for the development of H.I.V. and AIDS.

In 2008, a French cartoonist was convicted of publishing a drawing of the attack on the World Trade Center in a Basque newspaper with the words: “*We have all dreamed about it. Hamas did it.*” The European Court of Human Rights affirmed all three convictions, rejecting defenses based on freedom of speech.

In Poland, a Catholic magazine was fined \$11,000 for inciting “contempt, hostility and malice” by comparing a woman’s abortion to the medical experiments at Auschwitz.

The Dutch politician *Geert Wilders* was temporarily barred from entering Britain as a “*threat to public policy, public security or public health*” because he made a movie that called the Koran a “fascist” book and described Islam as a violent religion.

In France, *Brigitte Bardot* was convicted of publishing a letter to the interior minister stating that Muslims were ruining France. Furthermore, Canada’s human rights tribunal has harassed magazines for anti-Muslim statements and for republishing the famous Danish Muhammad cartoons.

In Canada, *Bill Whatcott* was charged with promoting hate after he distributed flyers in Regina and Saskatoon in 2001 and 2002 that condemned gay sex as immoral. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal found him guilty in 2005, but that decision was later appealed and overturned in 2010. The Tribunal then appealed to the country's top court. However, the court left in place the ban on speech that exposes, or tends to expose, persons or groups to hatred.

The idea here is that hate speeches or writings that incites hate are unlawful. The holy books are full of such writings and incitements to commit murder. Logically, then, they should be barred and the writer should be held accountable.

"Ok, OK." Juliana interrupts.

She explains that these are isolated cases; and she asks how he will associate this with the G-O-D guy. She finishes her Martini and he calls Shade for another one.

"This requires some serious drinking, don't you think?" She asks playfully.

"Yes, sure it does; bring us cognac, Shade, please." Shade walks away to bring his two drinks, still not comprehending why two.

"Wait until I tell Maigret about this; he will laugh his head off." She tells him.

"Oh! I thought you said." He surprisingly replies. She interrupts

"Yes, we are separated, but still talk. We have two children and twenty-five years of friendship. There are no hard feelings at all."

She advises him to be discreet and explains that if any of such plans is leaked to the media, his life and his wife's life will be in serious danger. She assures him, though, that Maigret understands and that they would benefit from his experience as a Chief Inspector for many years. He nervously drinks his cognac in one shot; he appears restless and confused. Juliana encourages and assures him that there is nothing to worry about and that she will help him writing the complaint and brief.

She asks him about Sofia and their lives together. She asks about his deteriorating health and they both enter into a more intimate and personal conversation.

They finish their meeting and get up to leave. He thanks her and kisses her one kiss on her left cheek. She does the same, assures him she will be in touch; he pays the bill and he exits Simzzy's, alone.

He trudges toward home slowly and decides to take a walk along the beach as he feels he needs to clear his head. He thinks of Juliana driving home, parking her car and going to her apartment. He sees her, in his mind, picking up the phone as she is undressing and calls Maigret. He hears her telling Maigret

about her meeting and asking for his advice. He sees that after she realizes Maigret is not taking her seriously, she hangs up and utters the words,

"Va te faire foutre," which literally means *go fuck yourself.*"

It is close to 9:30 PM and his wife, Sofia, is quite worried about him and his whereabouts. She picks up the phone and calls his mobile. She realizes that his phone is off as the voicemail comes on right away. Soon after, she hears the front door open.

"Mio amore, is that you? I was terribly worried about you mio amore. Where have you been? Why is your phone off?" She shouts from another room.

He hears her, but he is in no mood to answer, talk, or argue. He approaches her, kisses her and throws his tired body on the nearest sofa. He closes his eyes and neither he nor Sofia knows for sure if he is asleep or merely hazed.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE COMPLAINT

It is 3:15 AM. He is either fully awake or in a delirium state, again. He slowly tries to get out of bed without waking Sofia up. In his clumsiness, he hits the side table and the lamp on top of the table falls, crashes, and breaks into pieces on the wooden floor. Sofia wakes up startled,

“Che cosa è il mio amore?”

Sofia’s only comfort was Savanna, her sister-in-law who used to check on her brother often and try to help Sofia as much as possible.

He quickly answers,
“Niente, niente, Ms. Sofia Di Marco. Tomare a dormire.”

He asks her to go back to sleep. She sits up on the bed and sees him trying to pick up the glass pieces of the broken Tiffany lamp. He tells her he cannot sleep and he is going to write. She realizes that he is not himself because he calls her Ms. Sofia Di Marco. He rarely calls her by her maiden name. When he does it, she knows he is not well enough.

“Do you want me with you?” she sensually asks.

“No darling; go to sleep. I am sorry I woke you.” He coldly replies.

“A che ora e il mio amore?” She softly asks.

“Dopo tre.” He tells her it is after three and continues picking up the broken glass from the floor.

She lies down and grief is evident in her eyes. There might be a drop or two of tears; he does not notice. He leaves the bedroom, goes to his study, starts the computer and thinks whether he wants a cup of coffee. He decides to make a cup of espresso forte while waiting for the computer to start up.

He brings his coffee to his desk, pulls out the Human Rights Council Complaint Procedure from the many papers on his desk. He takes a glance at it and a section attracts his attention. A section that reads, *“The complaint procedure addresses consistent patterns of*

gross and reliably attested violations of all human rights and all fundamental freedoms occurring in any part of the world and under any circumstances. Please detail, in chronological order, the facts and circumstances of the alleged violations including dates, places and alleged perpetrators and how you consider that the facts and circumstances described violate your rights or that of the concerned person(s)."

He starts jotting down his ideas of where God has gone wrong with his writings in the holy books. Writings that incite hate, crime, murder, mayhem, and evil doing against humanity at large. He starts with the Torah and the Bible as the original texts of bloodbath.

He writes:

In Leviticus 20:13, it is written, "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads." He underlines "Put to death."

When King David ordered census of the people (Cronicles-21), God gets angry. "And God was displeased with that thing; therefore he smote Israel." "... And the angels of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel... So the Lord sent Pestilence upon Israel, and there fell seventy thousand men." (Deuteronomy-3). He orders the killing of humans he supposedly created and loved. He orders another attack. In Joshua 6:20, "When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and

at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.”

In Joshua 6:21, “They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.”

In Judges 21, God, yet again, orders the murder of all the people of Jabesh-gilead, except for the virgin girls; he told them to take the virgins and forcibly marry them.

And in Judges 21:20-21 the holy book says: “Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, ...Go, lie in wait in the vineyards, and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife.”

In 2 Kings 10:18-27, God orders the murder of all the worshipers of a different God in their house of worship. “Go in, kill them; let none come out.” “...And they killed them with the edge of the sword.”

In Genesis 16-7-9, God commands the Egyptian slave, Hagar to go back into enslavement and generate children for her master though she does not want to do so as she said: “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai.”

Moreover, God writes in the book of Genesis 19:23-25, that God burns down a whole city

including women and children, simply because they were supposedly homosexual. “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven...And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.” Furthermore, Genesis 38:10, God murders Onan for refusing to get sexually involved with his sister in law

He researches and writes all this with a heavy heart. Yet, he is determined to bring God to trial. He continues collecting additional evidence

He moves to the third holy book, the holy Quran. In his mind, there is nothing that is told by God that can or should be taken lightly or unconscientiously.

In Surah 2:190, although God states that he does not like transgressors, God tells his followers to “...kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you.”

And to make matters worse and torment humanity at large, to create conflict, prejudice, and hate, he argues that all what he had written in the past is void and now for him “The only true religion in the sight of God is Islam.” (Surah 3:19)

He continues in Surah 3:118, 119 to impose more prejudice, hate and even violence by writing "Believers, do not make friends with any but your own people...They desire nothing but your ruin...You believe in the entire Book...When they meet you they say: 'We, too, are believers.' But when alone, they bite their finger-tips with rage."

God clearly incites acts of terrorism when he says, "If you should die or be slain in the cause of God, His forgiveness and His mercy would surely be better than all the riches..." Then he says, "Seek out your enemies relentlessly." (Surah 4:104)

God clearly encourages and approves of slavery and bondage when he writes, "Forbidden to you are...married women, except those..." "...your right hands possess..." you own as slaves." (Surah 4:24)

Again, a clear intentional incitement of hatred and bigotry, and dreadfully perplexing, to say the least, when he says "The Jews and Christians say: 'We are the children of God and His loved ones.' Say: why then does He punish you for your sins?" (Surah 5:18)

He adds, "O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them." (Surah 5:51)

With intent to cause harm and mayhem, he writes, "Make war on them until idolatry shall

cease and God's religion shall reign supreme.” (Surah 8:39)

He adds, “...make war on the leaders of unbelief...Make war on them: God will chastise them at your hands and humble them. He will grant you victory over them...” (Surah 9:12-14) And further stresses, “Fight against such as those to whom the Scriptures were given [Jews and Christians]...until they pay tribute out of hand and are utterly subdued.” (Surah 9:29-30) And “If you do not fight, He will punish you sternly, and replace you by other men.” (Surah 9:38) Even more, believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Deal firmly with them.”

He has enough now and becomes saddened and stressed; he takes a rest from writing. He stops, gets up, walks toward the kitchen to make another cup of espresso forte. As he rinses his glass, a seizure strikes and he falls to the floor making a booming sound that awakens Sofia. She rushes to the kitchen, lies on the floor, and as she always does when he is under such an incantation, holds him tightly while he convulses. She whispers to him, but it seems he is not in the real realm of life.

He is now awoken from the seizure, but consumed by the complaint. He hears Sofia talking to him, but he can make nothing of what she says. Sofia pulls him up from the floor and gently takes him to bed. She lies next to him to his right, opens her left arm as a

gesture to hug him. He rests his head on her breast and feels secure and gratified.

It is now almost 6:37 AM. He falls asleep before Sofia. She ensures he is safe in her arm and she falls asleep.

Just before 8:00 AM, he opens his eyes, stares at the ceiling and gets a bizarre feeling of not being able to move. He needs to get up, but he cannot. He feels as though he were completely paralyzed from head to toe. He clarifies to Sofia his predicament, but no word is coming out of him. He thinks he might be dreaming. The fact is that he is not dreaming. He is a transient between life and death. This impasse lasts for fifteen minutes, and then he utters the words,

“Good morning Princess Sofia? How did you sleep mio amore?”

“Amore, how are you today? Amore, buono Matina.” Sofia’s sexy voice breaks the silence in the air and brings a smile to his face.

“I think I did a lot of writing preparing for the complaint to bring that thing G-O-D to justice. I will call Juliana today and see if she is willing to meet with me and discuss the indictment.” He explains to Sofia, who has no idea what he is talking about, or who this Juliana is.

*“Sofia, let me ask you something, do you think there are mafia bosses who actually pulled a trigger killing someone? Has Hitler, personally, **killed** anyone, except for his dog whom he poisoned? The answer is likely no. Well, so as God. Assuming he*

kills no one, but orders the killing, the torture and the mayhem of millions, how different is he, then, from a Mafia Boss or Hitler? Why do authorities go after Mafia Bosses if they kill no one? Why the word 'Hitler' is a taboo if he himself killed no one? This is certainly bizarre. I must bring that entity to justice."

He natters with Sofia, who is profoundly startled, confused, and somewhat frightened.

"Are you sure you want to go through with this amore? I am worried for your life. There are many crazy people out there and many of whom are religiously zealous. Your life could be in danger amore." Sofia tells him with a shaking hopeless voice.

He tells her he shall never give up till the last breath. She begs him to be cautious and safe. She also tells him she is having lunch with a girlfriend and perhaps goes shopping for a while.

"I will see you at dinner, I hope" She tells him.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MEETING AT 555

He calls Ms. Juliana Maigret and asks if she could meet him at *555 Restaurant* on *Pine Avenue* in Long Beach. She tells him that she could, but Monsieur Maigret, who arrived two days ago from Paris, will accompany her if he does not mind. He thinks for a minute and asks if 6:30 would be fine with her. She agrees and they set the date.

At 6:12, his taxi arrives at *555 Restaurant* and he pays the fair and exits. He enters the restaurant and tells the hostess **about his** reservation for three. She asks that he wait for five minutes; she is bemused, as she sees one person not three as the reservation shows. Before the five minutes are over, he sees Juliana, as beautiful as ever, dressed in a long bluish dress, her long gorgeous hair is down. She is wearing a pair of expensive looking shoes and a pearl necklace that gave her a stunning beauty adorns her neck. Next to her is a middle-built man, looks very strong. His hair was slightly receding and he had a Gaulois looking nose that gave him a bourgeois French look. He was neither tall nor short, but a little husky – A typical commissioner or an inspector detective. He did not feel at ease meeting Maigret, but soon he and Maigret are now acquainted and

converse about every thing from politics to religion to culture to language, but the main topic of the complaint against God has not yet been in the dialogue.

There are a few minutes of silence interrupted by Maigret saying,

“Juliana tells me about your new project. It is fascinating, yet, dangerous. Are you absolutely certain you want to go through that route.” Maigret puts the question cautiously.

“Absolutely. I am determined to bring this entity to justice.” He adamantly responds with some fear in his heart.

He pulls out something from a file in his hand; it is the list of accusations he wrote the night before. He hands it to Juliana.

“Here are some of God’s atrocities against humanity.” He says and explains that they could also discredit God’s writings by showing the many contradictions in all three holy books. He adds that they could bring up the atrocities in Africa such as child and women abuse; we could bring Mexico’s intolerable corruption; we could produce more information on Middle Eastern madness, we could convey China and America’s abuse of basic human rights, and all other parts of the world if necessary. He supports his argument by stating that governments go after mafia bosses and after government leaders though they are directly involved in neither the killing nor the torture of humanity. Even Hitler, he

had never killed a person in his life. The only killing he did was poisoning his dog.

“Does that mean that Hitler, mafia bosses, or government officials are free of guilt? It is certainly not.”

“So what is your input, Juliana? Will you help me prosecute this so called G-o-d?” He inquires.

“Let me read this, give it a bit of thought and I will call you tomorrow, D’accord?” She comforts him.

“D’accord, bien sure.” He replies.

He continues; we need to add the New Testament as well because Christians argue that things changed after Jesus. Things actually never did. The messages and the book of revelations are quite significant. They prove that the nature of God has not changed by the birth of Jesus. It has always been the vindictive, abusive, and violent nature.

Maigret interjects by saying that he was talking with some friends at a bar in Montmartre on a hill in the north of Paris, one of whom was Pierre Alexander. Juliana interpolates,

“Do you mean Pierre from Agence France Press?” Maigret replies in the affirmative.

“Oh! That could present a severe problem.” She explains that *Pierre* could write something about the plan. She added, regardless how small it is, the media would pick up on it. No one has dared to bring God to justice before. Maigret apologizes saying he could have underestimated the seriousness of the

situation. He continues with serious stress that they would have to be very careful and discreet.

They finish their meeting and bid one another farewell.

"I will call you tomorrow." Juliana shouts.

"D'accord mon ami." He replied. He shook Maigret's hand and departed 555 Restaurant, alone.

"Hello Sofia mio amore; I am home. How are you mio cuore dolce?"

He greets his wife but does not see her. He hears her from the bedroom.

"Cio mio amore." She replies.

He walks to the bedroom, hugs her tightly as though he seeks a refuge. She hugs him back and asks if all is well. He tells her about Maigret and about what he said regarding Pierre Alexander from Agence France Press. She turns pale, confused and alarmed. She knows neither Juliana nor Maigret and she is not even sure what her husband is talking about. She is just going along with him knowing that he is not well.

"Amore, this is very dangerous. You are putting your life in danger. What if this Pierre Alexander writes something about your plan to bring God to justice? Do you know what that means? Our lives will be turned upside down. I told you that there are a lot of mad people around us." She says realizing that there is nowhere to hide from God's people.

“Yes, *mio amore*; I am aware. Please do not worry.” He tries to comfort her. “*This is simply a matter of law and order.*” He adds.

Sofia and he go to bed and although they are very tense, they make love passionately. He is exceptionally edgy; he certainly needs some relief. After making love, they hug each other and go to sleep.

“*Mio Amore, I hear some strange sounds; wake up. Let us go check what is going on.*”

He shakes Sofia, at times violently, but she is like a dead body feeling nothing.

“*Please mio amore, wake up.*”

He pleads with her to no avail. He covers his face with the blanket, comes very close to Sofia and keeps his eyes wide open and his ears attentive. The noise soon stops. It takes him some time to fall back into his normal, which is irregular, sleep.

The next morning, he gets up at 6:25. He makes himself an espresso forte and places it on his desk. He opens the front door to pick up his daily paper, takes it to his desk.

He starts his computer, takes a sip of coffee and reads the headlines in the paper. He turns the paper page by page, and on page four he reads something that attracts his full attention. It is neither a major article nor a report that deserves attention. It is a small square on the bottom left of page four with the title, “*A Man in California Plans to Bring God Before The International Court of Human*

Rights.” In his disconcerted feeling, he continues to read. The content starts by indicating the source – Agence France Press, Paris. He puts the paper down and screams:

“Shit! Shit! Fucking Maigret.”

He realizes the seriousness of the matter and tries to comfort himself by attempting to persuade himself that no one would read that.

He does not want to tell Sofia so she would not be alarmed, but before he picks up the phone and calls Juliana, she materializes before him. He tells her in a shaking voice what he has read. She seems startled and confused; she calls upon Maigret. And he also emerges. He is wondering what the commotion is about.

“We have to be very discrete and cautious. I worked all night on the complaint and I am sure we have what we need to proceed from there. Just be careful. Does Sofia know?” Juliana utters.

“No, No. I cannot tell her. She is already panicking and constantly warns me of the danger of such endeavor.” He replies.

“Shit. Do not tell her anything. Hide the paper, d'accord.” She advises him.

“Oui. Oui. I will do just that.”

“We will talk later and we will arrange for a meeting in a safer place.” She sighs deeply using all the expletives she knows in French, English and even Italian.

“*Merd! Damn! Cazzo! Fuck! Putain!*” She screams.

Juliana elaborates on what happened to Maigret.

“*Merd! Putain!*” He says.

“*Do not worry Mon Douce Amour. I will take care of any obstacles that may arise.*” He assures her.

They both get up, Juliana goes to the shower, as though it were her house, and Maigret goes to the ocean for a swim and to clear his head. He is thinking of Salvo Bruno. Salvo Bruno is a brutal detective who works for the Los Angeles Police Department and he has strong ties with the FBI guys. He remembers the days they worked together solving difficult cases. He gets out of the water, dries himself and walks into the house. Juliana is preparing coffee and breakfast.

“*Clazinoe, Maigret?*”

She asks if any one wants breakfast. Maigret tells her he needs just a cup of espresso. He asks Juliana if she remembers Salvo Bruno.

“*How can I forget?*” She answers him.

She continues explaining her memories of Salvo Bruno and the danger he and Maigret faced while working together. He tells her that he will call him and explain the situation just in case she, Sofia and her husband get into serious

problems. She encourages the idea and explains that she is determined to do what she was planning to do – help bringing God to justice. In the meantime, Sofia is in her bedroom asleep and has no idea what is going on with her husband.

Soon after, Maigret gets on the phone with the Los Angeles Police Department and asks for detective Bruno, Salvo Bruno. A short while later,

“This is Salvo, who is calling?” Bruno answers the phone.

“You will never guess who this is.” Maigret says.

“Son of a bitch, this is Maigret, Morris Maigret. Holly shit!! I recognize your voice anywhere. What the fuck are you doing in this fucking LA?” He astonishingly asks.

“I came to see Juliana. Do you remember Juliana?” He asks.

“Sure I do, you son of a bitch. How can I forget? She is a hot attorney now, I heard. How is she? I have not seen her since you went back to Paris.” He inquires.

“Oh. She is well indeed. I need to see you. There is something we need to discuss. OK. Meet me at the Standard Hotel on Sunset Boulevard. Do you remember it?” He says.

*“Of course I **do**, you ass hole. My past is never dead. We used to have a lot of fun there you and I and the gang.”* He interjects.

“OK. Let us see, today is Tuesday, June second. How about 9:00 PM tomorrow, Wednesday; how does this sound to you?” Salvo asks.

“Great, I will see you there by the girl in the glass. I miss looking at that sexy girl.” Maigret says playfully.

“Ok. You will see her tonight. May be it is your lucky night and you take her out of that fucking glass and show her some fun.” Salvo mocks Maigret.

“You are the same Salvo, always. See you at 9:00 sharp Wednesday night.” Maigret says and hangs up the phone.

When the phone rings, he rushes to pick it up. It is a girl asking for Sofia. After a short chat with him, he calls Sofia to the phone. Sofia and her girlfriend talk for rather a long time on the phone. When she finishes the call, he asks Sofia what the conversation was about.

“You have been on the phone for a long time *mio amore*; is there anything wrong with your friend? He asks and waits attentively for an explanation.

She explains to him that her friend, Monique, is having some marital difficulties with her husband who is from the Middle East. She tells him that the husband is getting far too involved with some unscrupulous people at the mosque he attends regularly. She explains that his personality has changed and he has become violent. The husband does not like his wife’s clothing, her outings with fiends and seems to detest her independence. He

talks to her constantly about converting to Islam and avoiding infidels. Even his appearance changed; he now has a long beard, wears a white dress that falls just after his knees and refuses to wear shoes; he is always in a slipper. He has also bought a white hat he wears all the time on his head. He is always praying or reciting verses from the Quran. Sofia tells him she is worried about her best friend, Monique, and her safety.

She confides in him that her girlfriend met another young handsome man who lives in Century City close to her office and she developed an affair with him.

"If her husband discovers that, he will kill her for sure. I am so agonized about her." Sofia explains in a gloomy voice.

He takes all that in and interpret it his way according to how his ill mind works and how progressed his paranoia has become.

"Did you share with your friend anything about my plan to bring G-O-D to justice?" He asks Sofia in a confused voice.

"Actually, yes. Last time when we were out I mentioned it but without any details." She replies.

"Shit! This is serious. Emotional people like many Middle Easterners, many fanatic Christians in America are far too zealous and could certainly cause a great deal of harm." He stressed.

"I am meeting her today for lunch and will ask that she does not mention any of this to her husband. I hope she has not said anything already."

Sofia explains to her husband that her girlfriend was a pretty young girl about twenty-two years old when she met her husband while studying political science in Barcelona, Spain. She is slim, not too tall, but not short. She has a petite physique. Her eyes are big, brown and sparkling with life. Her small body makes her very attractive and desirable. Her smile resembles that subtle look on the lips of Johannes Vermeer's the Girl with the Pearl Earring. She looks mysterious and quite intelligent. The boy was a simple waiter in a local restaurant. He was charming and persuaded her to marry him. Once she finished her degree, they got married and came to California. They had a wonderful three months, and all things went downhill from there. She met her lover, Alex, during her first year of marriage and they have had their affair since. Her strange husband repeatedly hits her and treats her as a servant. She is too embarrassed to report him to the police or to tell anyone about it. She has not mentioned that to her best friends; she said it to me only.

Under severe stress, giving Sofia's girlfriend a pseudo name, Marina and her husband the name of Morsi, he calls Juliana to share with her the development he has just heard from Sofia Di Marco, his wife. Juliana expresses discomfort with the news and with the fact that the French press mentioned the plan to try God. She, too, is very stressed. She

comforts and assures him that they will go ahead with the complaint and that she is finishing the brief.

“There is enormous amount of evidence that would convict anyone – including God. We shall add pictures of the atrocities in Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Africa, and even the United States. We have a strong case.” She details.

“Your research in addition to all the contradictions in these books will render them not just pathetic, but devilish.” She ascertains.

“I am working day and night on this and we will get it to the court before long.” She assures him.

CHAPTER NINE: MAIGRET MEETS SALVO

It is Wednesday. He is in his room trying to read, to write or to do anything. Instead, he is just in deep thought. Suddenly, about 8:15 PM, he leaves the house and drives away. Sofia has no idea where he is going.

It is close to 9:00PM. Both Salvo Bruno and Morris Maigret are anxious to see each other after so long. Salvo parks his Lexus sports car at the valet parking, and walks into the Standard Hotel. From a distance he sees Maigret and rushes to greet him.

"My friend, it has been a long time indeed." He tells Maigret. *"You have not changed a bit; just the old Maigret I have known."* He continues.

"You have always been a sweet talker you son of a bitch. Of course the years left their marks on my face and body. It is you who are as youthful just as I remember you." Maigret tells Salvo.

They both finish with their small talk and find a quiet corner to sit. They sit down and immediately a pretty waitress in a short skirt and a clearly revealing top places napkins on the table and asks him what he would like to drink. Salvo and Morris look at each other and say at the same time *"Cognac?"* Just like the old days. He orders three glasses of cognac and asks that his glass be placed and tilted above another glass full of warm water; he likes his

cognac warm. The pretty waitress, named Jasmine, walks away with the order wondering why he orders three drinks; he is alone. She obliges anyway with a look of bewilderment.

"How is Mattie, Salvo? I miss her and I think of both of you often." Maigret inquires.

He is quickly interrupted by Salvo in a gloomy voice, *"Mattie left me four and-half years ago. She could not handle my demanding work and felt lonely. We are still friends and we talk sometimes."*

"I am sorry, Salvo. That is the business we are in; what can we do? This is like what happened between Juliana and me. We are friends and talk often, too. In fact I am staying with her now since I came from Paris. I enjoy being with the two young ones. I cannot tell you how much I miss them." Maigret replies in a resigned manner.

Then as they drink their cognac and he orders another round, they start talking about Juliana's project, the leaking of information to the French press and what may come out of this. Then he expresses his fears that Marina, (the pseudo name created), Juliana's best friend, is married to a fanatic named Morsi, (the other invented pseudo name). All together make the two of them quite nervous. Maigret tells Salvo that Marina has been having an affair with a man who lives in Century City.

"Waite a minute here Morris." Salvo interrupts. *"So what we have here is this cracked man who wants to prosecute God in the International Court of Human Rights. This man is a friend of*

Juliana and she is helping him with the indictment. Then we have Juliana's Sofia's friend who is married to a nut and is having an affair. And to top that off, we have the French press publishing of the plan to indict God. Now that is a fucked up situation that nothing good can come out of it." Salvo says passionately.

"I know; I know, Salvo. This is a tricky situation. Juliana is supporting this eccentric friend, sitting here, wholeheartedly and she would not bow to reason. That is why I am here. I am concerned." Maigret says.

"You should be concerned my friend. This is really a fucked up condition. It reminds me of the case you and I worked on – That Mafioso named ah! Salvatore, I think. No, his name was Marconi. You remember Marconi?" He asks calmly.

"How can I forget; you were shot and almost died. Of course I remember. Damn! Time really passes by quickly. That was eighteen years ago or so, right?" Maigret inquires.

"Yes, I think it was twenty-one years ago." Salvo corrects Maigret.

They continue talking over more cognac until past midnight. They decided that they would keep each other informed and keep an eye on the situation.

"It was great seeing you Maigret." Salvo said. Maigret responds saying it is the same for him, too.

Maigret returns home to Juliana's apartment. Rings the bell and she comes to the door asking who is at the door. He tells her it is he; she cautiously opens the door, sees him

and releases the door chain. Maigret enters, takes his jacket off and begins to recite what has just taken place during his meeting with Salvo. He assures Juliana again that Salvo Bruno will be assisting them should they need any assistance.

Their conversation is interrupted by Juliana's mobile phone ringing. She responds and hears a distraught voice on the other end. It was Sofia Di Marco's husband.

"Allo, Juliana speaking. Who is calling?"

"Hi Juliana, this is me. Have you seen Sofia? She is not home and I am terrified at the moment. I heard some noise; some strange people were here, two men. When I came home from the Standard, I went and opened the door. I was petrified. My front door is now sprayed in red with the words blasphemous bastards." He says in a trembling voice. *"I am really scared, Juliana. Please find where my wife is and ask her to come home quickly; it is after midnight. I am really frightened."* He cries uncontrollably.

Juliana tries to comfort him and says that she and Maigret are on their way to his apartment. It is now forty-five minutes after midnight. Maigret contemplates whether he should call Salvo. He decides he should do so that they may be able to get some fingerprints. Maigret picks up his mobile phone and dials Salvo's number. With a great disappointment, he gets the voice mail. He leaves a message.

"Salvo, this is Morris Maigret. Something has come up and we need your help. Please if you get this

message, meet Juliana and me at Sofia's apartment. The address is 30001 Bay Shore in Long Beach."

As Juliana parks her car along the curb by the bay in front of Sofia's apartment, she sees Salvo in his sports Lexus parking behind her.

"*Heb Salvo! Long time.*" After the initial greetings the three of them, Juliana, Maigret, and Salvo, come to Sofia's door and knock. He makes sure who is at the door and opens it slowly. He cries and shows extraordinary worry. First, he has not heard from his wife since he was with them at the Standard Hotel, and her mobile phone is off; then, that phrase on the door.

Salvo calls the police department and asks for forensics to come to the apartment to check for prints, type and materials used for writing the slogan. He gives them the address and asks that the case be considered a 'hate crime' with the intent of intimidation. Before long, police cars, marked and unmarked, were surrounding the Bay around Sofia's apartment.

Salvo asks him if he heard or saw anything, but gets no concrete answers. He looks around the front door in an attempt to decipher the mystery at hand. He takes a report, collects pictures of the crime scene and assures him that they will get to the bottom of this. He dials a number.

“Heb! Where are you mio amore; I am worried sick about you. Why was your phone turned off? Come home right away; Maigret, Salvo Bruno and I are here. Something terrible happened.” He says.

“Yes, everything is ok and I am ok. Just come home now. D’accord?”

Sofia is bewildered by the call. She did not understand much of what her husband was saying. She has been in the apartment, in bedroom all the time.

A short time later, Sofia goes to the other room, approaches her husband startled and confused. He hugs his wife, Sofia, and tells her what has just happened. Sofia explains to him that she has been in the bedroom all the time. She could not explain why her mobile phone was turned off and how it was turned on again. He is not grasping what she says. She does not see any defacing of the front door.

He is severely worried about what happened and wonders whether Marina’s husband, Morsi, has anything to do with it. Sofia goes directly back to bed severely worried and confused.

Salvo Bruno approaches him and introduces himself, again. He asks if he has any idea who would have done something like that. He tells Salvo about Marina and her husband, Morsi. He also tells him that he read in the local newspaper a short piece on his plans to bring

God to the International Court of Human Rights. So, at this point, it could be anyone.

"But who knows where I live?" He asks Salvo Bruno.

"Interesting question." Bruno replies.

Maigret walks around just outside the apartment looking for clues. He finds something not far from the door; it attracts his attention. It is a piece of paper on which the address 3001 Bay Shore is written. Also written are the same words, but in black ink, *blasphemous bastards*. He hands the note to Salvo and asks that he send it to forensics for analysis. Salvo takes the paper with a tissue and places it in a plastic bag he took from one of the uniformed officers.

Salvo Bruno suggests that Sofia and her husband go stay with Juliana and Maigret for a while until they clear this situation. Sofia is in deep sleep unaware of what her husband is doing.

He thinks that his wife Sofia will never agree to leave her house, so, he takes his car and follows Maigret and Juliana. They drive slowly through a crowd of neighbors and other people steered by curiosity wanting to know what is happening and why there are so many police cars around the bay. Salvo and some forensic team members stay behind in the apartment looking for more clues.

CHAPTER TEN: FORENSICS

At the forensic lab of the Los Angeles Police Department, a team of experts is looking at the fingerprints they collected, but they could find none but the residents and their friends. The expert who works on the piece of paper Maigret found seems completely occupied by trying to identify the type and source of the piece of paper and the writings on it.

First, she finds different fingerprints on the paper. She also determines that the paper is originally from a motel in Anaheim after examining what is unseen to a naked eye. She also determined that the writings are not fresh; she thinks the message was written at least twenty hours before midnight Wednesday, June third. She calls Salvo Bruno and shares her findings. Salvo takes the name of the motel and writes it on a piece of paper and puts the paper into his jacket's pocket. He asks that she send the fingerprints for analysis.

It is now Thursday, June fourth. It is just about midday. Salvo gets up and walks toward his car. While walking, he picks up his mobile phone and calls Morris Maigret.

“Ciao Morris. I have some news and I am on my way to Anaheim. I will pick you up on the way.” He tells Maigret.

Morris Maigret wonders what news; he is unable to reach Juliana; he thinks she is in court. He anxiously awaits Salvo and before long, Salvo’s sports Lexus pulls over in front of the place. Salvo waves his hands from the car as he sees Maigret by the window. Maigret picks up his jacket and goes to the car, opens the passenger seat’s door and throws his heavy body on the chair. He greets Salvo while fastening his seatbelt.

“What news, Salvo?” Maigret impatiently asks.

Salvo tells him about the forensics’ findings and that he is going to the motel from which the piece of paper came. They also have some fingerprints, which they are analyzing at the moment.

Maigret interjects,

“You know something Salvo, I am curious why the phrase blasphemous bastards is included under the address. This is certainly for a reason. Is it possible that the person or persons who vandalized the door do not know how to write or may be spell in English? If we assume that the person or persons are illiterate, the writings on the door would have revealed that. What do you think?”

“This is brilliant, Maigret; you have not lost it old boy. Unquestionably this makes sense.” Salvo says and thinks for a short moment. *“Didn’t you*

mention to me once that Sofia's friend, Marina is married to a fanatic nut? I forgot his fucking name. Mustafa or Mubarak or something that sounds like that." Salvo probes.

"Morsi."

Maigret says in a very calm voice that is hard to decipher.

"What?" Salvo questions. Maigret explains to Salvo that yes, indeed, Marina is married to an abusive fucking fanatic whose name is Morsi. He attends a mosque in Anaheim, actually. I need to confirm with Sofia's husband if Marina knows anything about the project to impeach God and if she said anything to that asshole. Maigret picks up his mobile phone and dials the number for Juliana's house. He does not have Sofia's husband's number. No one answers. He leaves a message asking that Sofia's husband call him urgently at his number 562-931-8888. Within five minutes, Maigret's phone rings.

"Morris Maigret. Bonjour. Ah! Thank you for calling me back. First, how are you? I am sorry I left without saying bye; I did not want to disturb you... By the way, did your wife ever speak with her friend, Marina, about the project you—and Juliana are pursuing? ... "

"Oh Mon Dieu! Oh Merd! Do you think she said anything to her nut husband, Morsi? I see; so you are not sure, d'accord. I will see you later. Take good care of yourself." Maigret hangs up the phone gasping and cursing and tells Salvo that it is

most likely Morsi knows of the plan to file a complaint against God.

Meanwhile, Sofia's husband is still at Juliana's house. He misses Sofia, his wife. He is too close to his wife, Sofia, as a child who seeks mother's protection. He is again in one of those phantasm states. He talks, but makes no sense; he stutters incomprehensible words. Sofia is alarmed, as she does not know where her husband is. As she awoken, she calls on him, but he is not at home. She calls his mobile phone, he answers and starts talking about events and places, that Sofia has no idea about. For the first time she questions whether her husband suffers from some serious mental illness; he has been talking with himself a lot and his moods change often and suddenly. He also talks with and about people she neither sees nor knows about.

As soon as he returns home to see his wife, she hugs him tightly and suggests that he sees a doctor. She tries to be very careful in her choice of words and sensitive to his feelings as his demeanor may change in a matter of seconds. He has never been violent. He is always calm, but in deep thoughts. He has withdrawn to himself somewhat lately, and seems to avoid his friends any time an opportunity arises for he and his friends get together. He has also lost interest in grooming himself and has become rather disordered in his attire.

He is not responsive to her and does not react to her suggestion to see a doctor. He is in his own world, and his world seems to be as far from the sphere of reality as scientifically possible.

Salvo and Maigret arrive at the motel. Salvo parks his Lexus and they both enter.

Salvo politely introduces himself to the desk clerk as LAPD detective and that he has some questions. The desk clerk responds in a confused voice asking why an LAPD officer should be in Orange County. Salvo assures the clerk that he only has a few questions to ask and that there is nothing serious. While Salvo is talking with the clerk, Maigret looks around and picks up some of the writing papers with the motel's logo; he also picks up a box of matches and put both the papers and matches in his pocket.

Salvo asks the clerk about the names of the guests who registered in the period between the months of May thirty-first and June fourth. The clerk shows him the registration book. There were four foreign names. Salvo took the information of the four guests. He asked the clerk if any of the guests behaves in an unusual manner. The clerk asks for clarification.

"I mean if any of them appears nervous, restless or up to something." Salvo explains.

The clerk replies in the negative. Salvo asks if any guest came to the motel late after

midnight on Wednesday June third. The clerk said he worked that whole night and cannot remember anyone coming that late.

Salvo thanks the clerk and tells Maigret, "*We are done here Morris.*"

They both walk out of the motel more puzzled than when they came in.

Salvo tells Maigret that he has taken information on four guests on whom he will run a check at the station. Maigret tells Salvo that he has taken some of the motel's blank papers and a box of matches; he takes them out of his pocket and hands them to Salvo. Salvo puts them in his pocket and they both drive off.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE BRIEF

Juliana has almost completed writing the complaint and brief to have God indicted. She identified the parties and counsel for the people. She identified and listed an index of authorities, statutes and

rules. She drafted a strong convincing statement of the case with issues presented and a statement of facts, all with clear citation at the bottom.

She finished writing the summary of the argument, then the argument itself with concrete references to black-letter law and various cases. She is now at the end writing the certification of service. She is very eager, indeed.

His phone rings and he picks it up though he is not in a stable state,

“*Hello, who is calling?*” He forces the words out of his mouth.

“*Congratulations friend; the first stage is now complete. I stayed up all night writing the brief. It is done and ready to go.*” Juliana says jubilantly and triumphantly.

“*That is wonderful, Juliana. Thank you.*” He says and hangs up.

Juliana wonders what is wrong with him. He did not seem himself; she persuades herself that he is hardly himself anyway and goes to bed. In bed, she and Maigret talk about their day and what has taken place during the course of the day’s hours.

Maigret tells her about his and Salvo’s visit to the motel in Anaheim based on the information from forensics. She tells him she has finished the brief. They both talk about the strong possibility that Marina’s husband, Morsi, is involved in the door-defacing

incident. They agree it is the only logical conclusion. They are both beyond exhausted and they fall asleep.

While Maigret and Juliana are asleep, Salvo is working hard at the station identifying the four guests at the motel. None of the four guests seems to be a likely suspect; one person, however, by the name of Gamal Nour-Eldeen is a resident of Anaheim. Salvo questions why a resident of Anaheim would go to a motel only two miles away from where he lives. Salvo theorizes that since Gamal is a married man with children, he may be having an affair and rented the motel for that purpose.

Salvo checks Gamal's FBI profile; he finds nothing peculiar. Then, he wants to check Morsi's profile, but he does not have the full name and address. It is now too late to call Maigret for Morsi's last name and address. Since he knows that Morsi lives in Los Angeles County, Salvo decides to wait until the next morning to ask for his information. However, he picks up the phone and dials the phone number of the Anaheim Police Department and asks to speak with Detective Raul Del Rio. The detective was not available, so he left a message for him to call him back in the morning.

It is 3:08 AM. Sofia is awoken by her husband's clumsiness as he is getting up.

"Dove si sta andando il mio amore?" She asks where he is going.

"I cannot sleep mio amore; I am going to my desk. Sorry to have awoken you. Please go back to sleep." He calmly replies.

He makes his espresso forte and goes to his desk. He goes over his notes obsessively. For the first time in his life he realizes that he talks with himself. This does not seem to trouble him. What overwhelms him is that he finds that he replies to himself. Yes, he has felt his mother's presence by his bed before and even conducted a conversation with her while he was the only one in the room. This time is different.

He is at his desk drinking his coffee and sees Juliana sitting at the couch with a short skirt and her legs crossed. He even asks her if she wants a cup of espresso. He is certain he is not alone.

"Why are you here at 3:30 in the morning, Juliana?" He asks her. *"Have you had an argument with Maigret?"* He asks again. *"Was it Sofia who opened for you the door?"* He asks his third question waiting to hear answers. Juliana is looking at him with a beautiful smile on her face that makes her full lips luscious and surely kissable.

He is precipitously returned to the real world, if there is such a thing as an existent world. He focuses now realizing he is entirely alone and Juliana's presence was a fabrication of his imagination. He shuffles through his documents; studies what he has written for

Juliana to include in her brief and wonders if he should add anything that might be valuable.

He realizes that his focus was on part of the Torah and Old Testament in addition to some proof from the holy Quran. He is now thinking about the time of Jesus, the Son of God, and the savior. He researches his books and Internet sites to collect viable information.

In the book of Mathew alone, he recalls and finds sources that show more than thirty disconcerting and ominous quotes.

He picks up his writing pad and start writing some of what he remembers and finds while searching the net from the New Testament, which he has read many times in three different languages. He writes:

God will come when people least expect him and then he'll cut them asunder. And there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mathew, 24:50-5
Jesus tells us what he has planned for those that he dislikes. They will be cast into an everlasting fire. Mathew, 25:4

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Mathew, 25:41

And from the book of Mark, he remarks:

Jesus says the damned will be tormented forever. Mark, 25:46

Jesus says that those that believe and are baptized will be saved, while those who don't will be damned. Mark, 16:16

Jesus criticizes the Jews for not killing their disobedient children as required by Old Testament law. He also said to them, "You completely invalidate God's command in order to maintain your tradition! For Moses said: Honor your father and your mother; and whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death: Mark, 7:9-10

And from the book of Luke, he cites:

Jesus says that entire cities will be violently destroyed and the inhabitants, thrust down to hell for not receiving his disciples. Luke, 10:10-15

Jesus says that we should fear God since he has the power to kill us and then torture us forever in hell. Luke, 12:5

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luke, 13:3, 5

Jesus also believes the story about Sodom's destruction. He says that even thus shall it be in the day the son of man is revealed ... Remember Lot's wife. Luke, 17:29-32

And from the book of Peter he scripts:

Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes. Peter, 2:6

God will set the entire earth on fire so that he can burn non-believers to death. Peter, 3:7

When Jesus returns, he'll burn up the whole earth and everything on it. Peter, 3:10

He is dreadfully drained now with all these devious and ruthless phrases and ominous imageries. He is stauncher than ever before these two hours of writing. It is now 5:20 AM

and he is unreservedly confident that God will not only be tried before the International Court of Human Rights, but also it will be convicted.

“The evidence is just overwhelming.” He speaks to himself loudly. No court would refuse to address such atrocity and most judges and jury would most certainly convict such an egocentric maniac.

He is in a euphoric state of mind and endorphin is running high through the streams of his fatigued body. It is close to 6:00 AM and he has not had a minute of sleep or even rest.

He is tempted to call Juliana and share his citations with her, but thinks it is too early and he knows she has a court hearing today. He decides to wait until late afternoon. His now severe state of paranoia prevents him from communicating with Juliana via email, especially after what happened at his apartment regarding the writings on his front door. He is also considering the illegal invasion of privacy by the United States government as bravely divulged by Snowden.

He is now contemplating going to bed, but concerned he will wake Sofia up again. This has been making him feel guilty. He often feels guilty toward Sofia. She drives him to doctors every day; she tends to his medical as well as personal needs; she suffers with him as he

suffers from seizures and the weird attacks he gets. In addition to all that, his insomnia, his restless sleep, or lack of, disturbs her. He does not know how to manage these culpability sentiments he undergoes. He decides to go to bed any way. He needs some energy for what is to come.

CHAPTER TWELVE: INVESTIGATION

It is Friday, June fifth, early morning at the Los Angeles Police department. Salvo Bruno gets into his office; he takes his jacket off and hangs it. He sits at the desk and reads the notes left for him. He notices that Detective Raul Del Rio has called him. He looks at his watch, picks up his desk phone and calls the Anaheim Police Department. He asks for Detective Del Rio and he is immediately connected.

“Hello Raul? How is it going my friend? I am sure you are busy as hell as we are down here.” Salvo says.

“Heb! Salvo. How have you been? I have not seen or talked to you for a while. What can I do for you?” Raul responds.

Salvo explains the whole situation of the incident in Long Beach and asks that Raul interviews a person named Gamal Nour-Eldeen. He spells the name for him and provides him with the address. He tells him to be discrete because the man is married and that he was at the motel, which is only two miles away from his house, which may indicate that he is having an affair. Raul assures Salvo that he will do that in the afternoon. They share a short time of small talk and say their goodbyes. Salvo calls Maigret to ask about Morsi’s last name and his exact address. Maigret asks that he will call him back once he gets the information from Juliana. Salvo asks if Maigret likes to go with him and Maigret agrees. Salvo tells Maigret that he is leaving now and is on his way to pick him up.

A short time later, Salvo gets up, puts his jacket on and leaves the office. He gets into his car and starts driving to Long Beach to pick Morris Maigret up and go to interview Morsi. The traffic on the Interstate 5-Freeway is terrible; the heat is unbearable; and although Salvo has the top of his Lexus down, he feels the heat because he is not driving more than ten miles per hour. He curses and curses. It takes him one and half hours to get from Los

Angeles to Long Beach. He is seriously ill tempered.

Just before approaching where Maigret lives, he calls him to say he will be there in three minutes. Maigret picks up his jackets and waits on the curb for Salvo. Shortly after, Salvo arrives; Maigret gets into the car and realizes how cross Salvo is. Maigret recognizes it is because of the heavy traffic and the intolerable heat.

"Fucking freeways should not be called freeways." Salvo suddenly utters. *"No freeway is free anymore; they have to come up with a more appropriate name."* He continues.

"Oui mon ami. That is surely true, even in Paris. And it all seem to have happened suddenly." Maigret replied.

They approached the address Maigret took from Juliana. It is an old apartment building in downtown. They park their car, get out and go to the third floor to find apartment number 309. Salvo knocks on the door and identifies himself as police. After a few knocks, a very pretty, petite, girl opens the door. Salvo introduces himself as Detective Bruno and identifies Maigret as his partner Detective Maigret. The girl is startled and is visibly shaking.

"Are you Mrs. Marina Sheikh Ahmad?" Salvo asks.

“Yes, I am. *What happened?*” Marina replies in a quivering voice. She is buttoning her open blouse fretfully.

“*Is your husband home? We need to ask him some questions.*” Salvo politely asks and requests that they go inside the apartment.

“Yes, he is. He is in the bedroom praying right now. *What is this about?*” She asks nervously as she escorts them into the apartment.

“*Nothing to worry about Madam. We just want to ask Mr. Sheikh Ahmad a few questions.*” Salvo tries to calm Marina.

A man appears from another room. He is short and dark skinned; he has black hair most of which is covered by a round hite hat and he has a long black untidy beard. He is wearing a long white dress that stops short way before his ankles and he is bear foot.

“*Al Salam Alaykoom, good afternoon. I am Morsi. How may I help you?*” Morsi asks. “*Can we all sit down please?*” Salvo requests.

“*Sure, please, please, come sit, sit.*” Morsi says in a warm welcoming voice. “*Anything to drink? Shall we make tea?*” Morsi asks. Salvo and Maigret notice Morsi’s accent but see him as courteous and polite. They refuse the offer of tea.

They all sit down except for Maigret whose talent for observation makes him notice three newspapers on the kitchen table.

He moves the papers and notices that all papers are opened to a page where a report headline of Juliana's project appear in bold and circled with a red pen. He observes closely. One reads, "*A California Man Sues God.*" Another reads, "*God is on Trial.*" On the third newspaper the caption reads, "*God is to Appear Before a Tribunal.*" Maigret takes the circling of these items seriously. He continues to walk around confidently and quietly.

Salvo begins questioning Morsi.

"Where were you between Wednesday, June third evening and early Thursday, June fourth morning?"

"I was here, home with my wife, Marina. Why do you ask?" He confidently responds.

Both Salvo and Maigret notice a surprised look on Marina's face as her eyes opened while looking at Morsi. This makes them doubt Morsi's answer.

"So, you have not gone out at all, not even to the store or the mosque?" Salvo asks while his eyes are focused on Marina's facial expressions.

"No, not at all; we had dinner; I prayed and we went to bed."

Morsi answers again with confidence. The same surprised and frightened look remains on

Marina's face. Her whole demeanor changes with Morsi's answers.

Maigret calls on Salvo to see him in the kitchen for a minute. Salvo excuses himself and asks if he can talk with his partner privately. Morsi and Maria nod in approval without uttering a word.

Maigret points to the three newspapers on the kitchen table without saying a word. Both Salvo and Maigret hear very soft voices from the other room; the voices indicate to them that Marina was arguing with Morsi. They leave the kitchen and both sit down across from Morsi and Marina.

"Which mosque do you attend regularly Mr. Sheikh Ahmad?" Salvo asks.

Morsi tells him that he goes to several mosques, but the one he goes to the most is the one near their apartment building.

"Do you write English well Mr. Sheikh Ahmad?" Salvo asks without looking at anyone, but looks at his notepad and writes something.

"Not really. I speak a little, but I cannot read or write English. I am fluent in Arabic, though. I can read and write well in Arabic." Morsi replies in a soft shameful voice.

Salvo thanks them both and says if he needs more information, he will be in touch. Salvo and Maigret leave the apartment looking at

each other as though they read each other's mind.

They get into the car and Salvo says,
"Liar son of a bitch. He is lying to his teeth. He was not home that night. Did you see the apprehension on Marina's face and the fear in her eyes?" He asks Morris.

Morris replies in the affirmative and says he believes Morsi is either the one or someone he knows and is close to who wrote the phrase blasphemous bastards. He is lying. Then we see those newspapers with the reports circled in red in all three. Salvo interrupts saying that Morsi would be the one who knows where Sofia and her husband live because Sofia is Marina's friend. But the reality is that Sofia does not know anyone named Marina. Her best friend is Monika.

The three of them, he, Salvo and Morris, arrive home. Salvo comes down with them; Maigret now has a key to Juliana's place, and goes into the house for a drink. It has been a long tiring day for the three of them. After some trivial chatting, Salvo interrupts saying,

"So, what are your thoughts on this, Maigret? Do you think it was Morsi? It sure appears that way, no?"

Maigret thinks for a moment and replies, *"You must speak with Marina alone. She was evidently and unmistakably frightened and shocked by what Morsi said."* Salvo agrees.

While he was in his own mind, his other self asks if Morris and Salvo have more

information on the crime. Salvo tells him that they believe Marina's husband is involved. He asks him for Marina's personal mobile phone number; he writes the number down for him on a small paper pad and hands it to him. He takes it and puts it in his pocket.

"Maigret let us recap here. We have the newspapers and the circled articles. We have Morsi not being honest and we have Marina frightened and surprised. This appears to be solved here." Salvo converses with him and Maigret.

"Yes, but talk with Marina and I am sure she will tell you more." Maigret replies.

Salvo finishes his soft drink quickly and gets up to leave for the office. He says his goodbyes and departs. Maigret tells him he will speak with him later in the evening.

Salvo arrives at his office and the first thing he does is call Marina. She answers the phone.

"This is Detective Salvo Bruno, Marina. I am calling to ask if there is anything you want to tell me. I noticed when I visited you this afternoon that you were somewhat anxious and wanted to say something, but you were concerned about your husband. You can talk to me confidentially and off the records."

Marina is quite for a while and suddenly started sobbing and in a somewhat incoherent manner, between tears and words, she articulates,

"Morsi was lying about having been here with me that night. He disappeared for two days and never told me where he was." She continues weeping.

"Please do calm down Mrs. Sheikh Ahmad. It is OK and will be ok. Thank you for the information and I promise it is off the records." Salvo assures Marina. But he continues,

"One more question, Marina, before we hang up, do you know why the newspapers on the dining table have red circles around specific articles?"

She replies, *"No, I do not, but it was Morsi who did that. I saw him doing it and saying things in Arabic I could not understand."*

He thanks her for the information, says goodbye and hangs up.

He calls his assistants and asks that they place Morsi under surveillance and report all his movements, whereabouts and contacts to him personally. He later manages to get the District Attorney's office to get a court order to tap Morsi's phone and to bug his apartment and intercept all his movements and contacts. It is just before 7:00 PM. Salvo receives a private call from Maigret. He explains to Maigret that their initial hunch was simply perfect. He tells him that Marina confessed to everything and that Morsi is indeed lying. He informs him that Morsi is now under surveillance. He also explains that his friend Detective Raul Del Rio is working on Gamal Nour-Eldeen.

The next morning, Raul Del Rio of the Anaheim Police Department calls Salvo at the office and tells him what his investigations of Gamal Nour-Eldeen reveal.

“Good morning, Salvo. I hope it is not too early for you. Listen, this guy Nour-Eldeen has a long list of records with us that go back seven years. He was convicted on vandalism charges, convicted on possessing and distributing literature that incites hate and criminal activities. And listen to this, he was convicted and imprisoned for three years on child sexual abuse charges. Guess who the victim was? It was his baby sister, a nine-year-old girl. Can you believe this fucking shit? He is a regular at the Anaheim local mosque and has many friends. What is the name of the guy in Long Beach? Is it Marsi or something?” He asks Salvo who is listening attentively and taking notes. *“Morsi is the name. Morsi Sheikh Ahmad.”* Salvo replies.

“Yes, that is it. He is a friend of this Morsi guy and they hang out at cafes in Anaheim. We will place him under surveillance. I will keep you posted, Salvo. Ciao for now.” Raul concludes his report to Salvo.

“Thanks Raul. We will be in touch. By the way, we also placed Morsi under surveillance. Thanks again and ciao.”

Salvo hangs up the phone and sinks into deep thoughts:

“Fucking contemptible bastards,” he hears himself say.

Forensic calls Salvo to tell him that the piece of paper, that Maigret found, has no legitimate fingerprints at all. But the paper itself, after they examined it against the papers Maigret took from the motel, is a perfect

match. They assure Salvo that the piece of paper is indeed from that motel. Salvo is now certain of Morsi's guilt, but he does not know if he acted alone or he is in a group of possibly terrorists. He remains patient to get more information from the surveillance.

The first report Salvo receives is quite disturbing. It is a recorded telephone conversation between Morsi and a man named Ali Almokhtar. The content of the conversation reveals that Morsi is a member of a local terrorist group which plans to attack Disneyland using a thirteen-year old boy they refer to as the '*chosen one*' but in this initial recording, there is no information about the plan itself or who Ali Almokhtar or the *chosen one* are.

Salvo is quite nervous and disturbed, so he calls his friend Dorothy Lawton at the FBI. He explains the whole situation and gives her the information. Dorothy explains to Salvo that the situation now is in the FBI's hand and that they will take it from there. Salvo is not happy with Dorothy's comment but asks that she keep him posted. The conversation ends there leaving Salvo Bruno more than just upset.

Salvo calls Maigret and tells him of the new development. Maigret is unhappy but assures Salvo that they will be on top of the matter regardless of the FBI guys.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE PSYCHIATRIST

He is in an unusual state. He keeps talking to himself and responding as though he were talking with someone. He is agitated, twitchy and making no sense. He talks of terrorists, of attacking Disneyland, and of names she knows nothing about. Sofia is quite frightened. She calls his regular doctor, Dr. Robert Shen, and he advises her to take him immediately to Long Beach Memorial Hospital.

She frantically, but calmly, persuades him to get into her car and she drives a short distance to the hospital.

"Where are we? Where are we going Sofia?" He asks fretfully.

She tells him that they are going to get some serious help. She arrives at the hospital and parks her car.

"Are you OK honey? Why are we at the hospital?" He asks her firmly. *'Is there anything happened to you mio amore? What is wrong mio amore? You can tell me please.'* She does not reply.

She exits the car, turns to the passenger seat and takes him out of the car by the hand and both walk into the hospital. She goes to the emergency room reception desk,

"Hello I am Sofia. Dr. Shen asked that I bring my husband here right away. He is hallucinating, talking to and answering himself. I think he needs to have psychiatric evaluation, please hurry. I am not sure if I can keep him here with me for long." Sofia pleads with the lady to make her husband's case a priority.

A few moments later, the receptionist calls for Sofia. She tells her that they received an urgent message from Dr. Robert Shen and it will take a few moments. A few moments later, a nurse comes out to look for them. She asks that they follow her. She takes them both to the hospital's triage area.

She asks Sofia a few questions while taking his vital signs. He seems to be in a twilight

zone unaware of anything that is taking place; Sofia explains to the nurse how he has been not himself.

He has been talking and answering as though someone were with him. She explains his mood changes and his obsession with the idea of prosecuting God and accusing God of human rights violations. He constantly talks with a woman lawyer named Juliana and her French husband, or boyfriend, I am not sure, but I think he is named Morris Maigret. I have never seen these people. He seems to be hallucinating.

“Ok Ms. Sofia. I will take him in not right now but as soon as a bed is ready for him.”

The nurse sees that he is highly agitated and not in a safe condition. She takes him in right away and Sofia follows.

He lies on a hospital bed in the emergency room and wonders why. He asks Sofia, *“Why am I here on this bed in this terrible place? I thought it was you who needed help.”*

Sofia comes close to him and holds his hand. She assures him that all will be fine.

“I need to speak with Juliana right away. I am alarmed about the project. Have you talked with Maigret? Have you heard from Marina? Is she OK?” He talks with Sofia and she does not grasp anything he is saying.

Sofia calls on the nurse to give him something to sedate him or make him calmer. Soon after,

"Sir, please take this tablet. It will make you feel better until a doctor sees you." The nurse hands him a strong dose of Ativan.

He asks, *"Why? I am fine. I think it is Sofia who is not well. Tell her mio amore that it is you."*

He takes the tablet and a few moments later, he is in a different zone; he is in an unknown world to anyone but to him.

In his world, he thinks. He never stops thinking. For him, life is but a dark comedy of sort. He recalls how suddenly and with no warning, he discovers remarkable changes in his behavior, physique, aptitudes, and overall being. It all started one day, and began progressing on from then.

Clumsiness is the first thing he notices. He wakes up in the middle of the night as a result of common insomnia and walks around his apartment not knowing what to do with himself. Shortly after, he decides a cup of coffee is a great idea. That is after a few whacks to his arms, elbows, legs, toes and several parts of his body against any and all the objects in his apartment.

He goes to his kitchen and prepares for the coffee; he makes coffee in the old fashion way. He puts fresh water in the kettle and places it on the stove. While waiting for the water to boil, he gets his cup, places the cone he uses on the cup and adds two spoons of espresso forte in the filter inside the cone. Often, he misses the filter and the

espresso coffee flies all over the place. After a few curses, and a lot of cleaning, he goes through the process once more. Then he waits. After discovering that his waiting lasts longer than humanly possible, he checks the reason. He soon smiles as he discovers that he has forgotten to put the fire on for the water to boil.

His smile does not last for too long. After the water is ready, he pours it into the filter with the espresso coffee in it. Often about half way, he misjudges the distance and violently hits the cone; the cup of coffee falls side way and now fresh coffee is all over the counter, the stove and the floor. Again, after a few curses, the long process of cleaning takes place. At times he gives up the idea of having coffee all together; other times he restarts the whole process again.

One morning after he made his coffee, he pulled the milk out of the refrigerator but discovered that the milk expired. After a short decision making process, he opted to going to the local store to buy fresh milk. He got his shoes on, went into his car and drove the ten minutes to the store to buy milk. The old milk was on the counter by the sink. He placed the fresh milk next to it and went to the bedroom to take off his shoes. When he came back to the kitchen and while preparing a fresh cup of coffee he decided to rid of the old milk and empty the bottle in the sink. He calmly and

swiftly did just that and waited for the water to be ready. When the coffee was ready, he poured it in the cup. He picked up the milk to add to his cup. He despondently discovered that he emptied the bottle he just bought and the milk that remained was the old expired one. Ever since, he never added milk to his coffee. Now he drinks it black.

Then it is his physical appearance that astounds him each morning. He avows that his face changes on daily basis. Black circles around the palpably wrinkled areas under his eyes attract his attention. Then, later, wrinkles around the forehead and mouth start emerging and materializing. By then he loses all his teeth, and although he spends thousands of dollars on teeth implants that make him look terrific for a while, he loses the implants, too, due to bone loss as a result of chemotherapy. With his toothless mouth and thin lips, his face reminds him of his grandfather when he was eighty-seven-years old, a few years before his departure to the unknown world of demise. His attractiveness disappears; he notices that on the streets. While in the past, young pretty girls turned their heads to take a glimpse of him, now they do not even see him. Only older women over seventy do. Perhaps, if he were lucky, old women give a look or two.

His dexterity notably changes. He hardly balances his body and he walks like a drunken man without any drinking. The worst of all for

him is his sexuality; he virtually lost it all. With lack of testosterone, Prostate enlargement, and rapidly shrinking and shriveling penis, sexual desire is now an absurdity. Nothing could give him an erection less than a Goddess from King Solomon's female entourage. Even with such a Goddess, the experience can be humiliating; his body even refuses to produce semen and as though he depleted all at a younger age with all his not long ago sexual escapades and flings. Now, he lives his sexuality merely vicariously, *du fait d' autrui*, and through the wild memories he accumulated over his playboy years.

He wonders how Sofia endures this lack of sexual intimacy. He wonders why his Prostate keeps growing while his penis continues shrinking. No doctor is able to answer that. Sexual desire is practically a mission impossible. Hence, sex for him is also a mission impossible.

Then, attitude changes invade silently, too. In a Trojan horse style attack, he becomes a different man. His socialization and social skills, his love for outings and companionships, and his desires to play and frolic hastily are now things of a recent past. He befell fairly a recluse, a hermit, and an ascetic being. *Ascète*.

He is in his fifties and he abhors, despises, and détestent what has been transpiring. He recalls the great *Mark Twain* saying, "*Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't*

matter." But he minds; he demurs very much. With eye-sight fading, energy depleting, sex disappearing, body shrinking, and life is mere words to be written, he relates more to *Nikita Ivanovich Panin's* candid and straightforward words, "*In youth the days are short and the years are long; in old age the years are short and the days long.*" His days have never been longer; his years have never been shorter. And that is celestial comedy, indeed.

He is now almost asleep because of the Ativan, but not quite. A doctor comes in and introduces himself as Dr. Philip Sporty. He is the psychiatrist the hospital called upon to assess the situation. He talks with Sofia and she explains to him all what has been happening. She explains that her husband is intelligent and tender, and she does not fully comprehend these occurrences and spells he experiences. She tells the doctor that he is engrossed in an idea of prosecuting God in the International Court of Human Rights. She tells Dr. Sporty that he talks with and about people she does not know.

"I am afraid I have to give you some very bad news. I think he is suffering from a dangerous form of schizophrenia. We do not know how to eliminate the disease, but there are medications that can manage the illness. Has he ever been violent in any way?" Dr. Sporty converses and asks Sofia.

"Not at all. He is the calmest and sweetest man." She replies.

"I do not want to alarm you, but he can get violent at any moment without realizing it. You need to make sure he takes his medications as prescribed and you need to be vigilant and try to know as much as you can about his activities, his whereabouts, and his contacts." Dr. Sporty warns Sofia. *"I like to keep him here in the hospital for a few days for observation, ok?"* He tells Sofia.

"Yes, doctor, sure, if it helps him. I will be here with him, too." She says.

"There is nothing really you can do here, but you can come visit him any time. You need to care for yourself. Go home now and rest." The doctor suggests.

He is in a semi-sleep state. Sofia comes close to him and tells him he is in good hands and that she will come see him tomorrow, Sunday. He nods and waves at her. Sofia leaves.

"Ciao Juliana. Thank you for coming to see me. How are you and how is the project going? Are we ready to file? Where is Maigret?" He says to Juliana whom he sees standing next to him.

"What happened? As soon as I heard, I came directly to see you. I called Maigret and he will come soon." Juliana explains.

He tells her he does not know what exactly happened, but Sofia brought him here and the doctor says he will have to stay here for a few days.

"I have no idea why. First, I thought it was Sofia who was not well. I was wrong." He confusingly explains.

With a mystified look on his face, Juliana softly says to him,

"Ah! I think Sofia is posing a problem for us right now. We need to do something about that; don't you think?" Juliana addresses the dangerous situation at hand.

"What do you mean by posing a problem? I do not understand what you mean." He asks in a bewildered manner.

At that moment, Maigret comes into the room, kisses Juliana on the cheeks and asks,

"How are you old man? Stai bene?" "Si mio amico, bene." He replies.

Juliana interjects,

"I was just telling him that Sofia is creating a problem for us. He should not be here in the hospital. We have work to do. The indictment of God, the investigation of Morsi and his terrorist group, dealing with the FBI guys, there are just too many things. We cannot allow that he stays in the hospital. We need to work together."

Maigret agrees saying,

"Oui ma chère. Bien sûr. We need to do something about Sofia."

He further explains that he is in touch with Salvo Bruno and that he is upset that the FBI guys are taking over the case now that is a national security problem.

He stresses that he wants to get that son of a bitch Morsi and his friend, Gamal Nour-Eldeen.

“Did I tell you that this Gamal guy has a long sheet of violations and convictions?” He asks him and Juliana.

They both answer in the negative.

“Listen Maigret, we need to get him out of here as soon as possible.” Juliana says.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

Morris Maigret starts to disconnect all the medical instruments attached to release him.

"We will get you out of here mon ami." He tells him.

They pick him up, dress him, and walk out of the hospital without anyone of the staff noticing. They get into Maigret's car deciding that he will take him and drive away while Juliana drives her car behind them.

He is still under the effect of medications and is not so coherent. They all arrive at

Juliana's place and the first thing he does is look for his wife, Sofia.

"*Sofia must be home at your apartment.*" Juliana tells him.

"*Oh, I thought we moved here for a few days for safety after what happened. I mean the slogan written on our front door.*" He questions.

"*Well! She must have returned to her apartment now.*" Juliana did not want to tell him that Sofia never came.

"*Do not worry. We need to have a serious conversation here regarding Sofia.*" Maigret suddenly speaks firmly.

He, Juliana and Maigret sit at the dining table in the kitchen. Juliana is making coffee.

"*Listen Mon Cher ami. Sofia is now a threat to us, and to our mission. We need to get rid of her. You must kill her. We really have no choice.*" Maigret continues, "*She thinks that you are hallucinating all the time and does not take your conviction to prosecute God seriously. For us to succeed in our mission, Sofia has to be out of the way. She has become a serious obstacle.*" Maigret resolutely instruct him.

"Yes," he says. "*I do not understand why she takes me to the hospital and leaves me there. It is as though she wanted to prevent me from doing what I am doing. Or, perhaps, she wants to eliminate me. Yes, she is a danger to all of us. Yes, yes, yes. I must take care of her once and for all before all our effort goes in vain.*" He confidently speaks.

He continues,

"Just her friendship alone with that Marina girl and her Islamist husband is a clear sign that she works against us."

"Absolutely." Juliana says as she pours coffee for each one. *"Sugar or milk,"* she asks him.

"No I drink my coffee black now. It is a long story. But thanks."

He replies with a sneer on his face remembering the milk story and that it is the reason why he now drinks coffee black.

Morris starts planning. He tells him and Juliana what they have to do. He explains to him that in the morning, he should go back home to his apartment. Sofia will be there.

"You greet her normally. She will certainly be surprised to see you since you are supposed to be at the hospital. You put her at ease and tell her that Dr. Sporty released you this morning and you took a taxi home."

"Take this knife with you, but hide it carefully." Maigret hands him a scary looking sharp knife.

"Try to distract her somehow and then attack. Plunge the knife into her heart once. Our problem will be over once and for all. Juliana and I will be waiting for you in front of the bay. Once you are sure she is dead, you bring the knife with you and come down and we will drive to Julian's place. Is that clear?" Maigret asks in a very authoritative tone.

"We also need to be sure that no one sees you getting in or out of the apartment." Maigret stresses.

He is listening to all that and sipping on his coffee and he is in one of his psychotic states. He tells Juliana and Maigret that he is very tired and should go to bed. He says goodnight and leaves the table.

He lies in bed with eyes wide open and mind in an incomprehensible physical state. He sinks into deepest thoughts. "*Perhaps I died.*" He mumbles to himself as he dives into a trance wondering about time and life and what has transpired with Juliana, Maigret, and Sofia. He has passed life's milestone age of fifty, and he is not too happy about it. "*What?*" He regularly exclaims and bellows. He does not know why he thinks he is dead. He knows that he remembers only one thing and that is he remembers nothing. To him, if there is no memory, there is no life. If he remembers nothing, he must be dead. He does not know whether the dead know they are dead; he wonders. If he knows he is dead, then he is not dead. He is not sure. He is also not sure how he remembers he does not remember. It is bizarre. The whole episode is eerie.

He is half a score above fifty; when pessimistic, he thinks he is half a score to sixty, a score away from seventy. A score is an eye-blink; he has blinked only five times so far; he thinks if he is not dead, he has less than two blinks to be. He tries not to blink as he remembers Horace's code of *Carpe diem, quam*

minimum credula postero. He waits for the miracle to come – to remember.

He sinks back into the past, more than twenty years ago. He picks up the phone and unconsciously dials her number.

“Hello,” she says.

“*Oh! This voice is familiar; who might this be?*” He asks as he tries to remember whom he called.

“Hello,” she says again. “*Hello, Sofia. Is that really you? I hope I am not interrupting anything. I have been thinking of you.*” He nervously and with difficulty utters.

“*Oh my God! No! Not at all - This is strange because I have been thinking about you, too. Oh my God; it has been ages.*” Sofia enthusiastically says.

“*Yes, it sure has.*” He replies.

Sofia is the protagonist of the most vivacious chapter in the narrative of his life. They have been in love and share the most sensuous moments he graves to repeat. She is an Italian sixteen or seventeen years his junior. She is a very pretty young girl with a model-like physique, and large inviting brown eyes in which he sails often, with no knowledge of navigation. Love- making has always been a trip to Renaissance whose residuals stays with him for days; it has always been an experience serenaded by angels and mermaids. That, he never forgets. He worships and adores Sofia.

How can he kill her? He is back into the now for a fraction of a second.

He does not remember why he calls her. There is a moment of silence between them; she interrupts the silence,

"Are you still living at the same place?"

"Yes, indeed I do, Sofia;" he replies and hopes he remembers why he called her. While trying to recount the moments before calling her, he takes another sip of his Cabernet Sauvignon and feels intoxicated, not with the wine, but with the memories of his beautiful Sofia.

"Now a miracle will be appreciated; I need a miracle. I do not know why I called her – Oh! No! What shall I say?"

He hopes for a miracle to come. And he is sipping it now. For him, the taste of wine is like the taste of kissing a beautiful maiden for the first time; it is somewhat erotic; it is somewhat sensual. Perhaps in solitude it is intensified. He is in solitude; it is intensified.

"How can I kill the one love I have ever experienced?" he asks and asks and asks. *"Are Juliana and Maigret correct in their suspicions? Is it possible that Sofia jeopardizes my life?"* He wonders but resigns to Maigret and Julian's suggestions and advice. *"After all, they have helped me through the whole process."* He persuades himself.

It is 4:15 AM and he has not slept, yet. Or perhaps he did but does not know. He never knows. That has become his way of life; he is always in the middle, on the fine line that

separates reality from fantasy and make-believe.

He decides that he is not going through with the plan to murder Sofia. He gets up and walks into Julian's bedroom; she is now in a deep sleep next to Morris Maigret. He wakes them up.

"I am not going to do it. I simply cannot. I cannot kill my beautiful wife. I love her too much to do her harm." He firmly speaks his mind.

Half asleep, half awake, Juliana tells him not to worry; she or Maigret will do it for him. He does not even have to be there. She tries to reason with him and explains how dangerous Sofia is to them now. She convinces him that Sofia does not want to bring God to justice and that she is probably in cahoots and conspiring with the Islamist guy, Morsi, and his wife Marina. He thinks for a minute and without saying a word, leaves the bedroom.

He goes back to his room; he lies in bed and suddenly suffers a seizure. He convulses and loses consciousness. As he opens his eyes and enters the state of semi-consciousness, he thinks of what Juliana said.

"In cahoots with the Islamist guy, Morsi? Conspiring against me?" He slurs but only he could hear the words. *"Is it possible that Sofia is having an affair with Morsi?"*

Suddenly he sees Juliana sitting on the corner of the bed. She talks to him quietly and tells him how she cares for him, as he should do for himself. She reminds him that Marina, Morsi's wife, is having an affair. She asks him if it is possible that Sofia is also having an affair. She stresses to him that all things are mere possibilities. He continues entering deeper into the dark side of his mind.

She asks him if he ever reminisces about the story of Laura and Ada, Sofia's friends. Suddenly he elicits the unique tale that his pretty wife Sofia shared with him not long ago; a story about her two gorgeous very married friends, Ada and Laura. Sofia's friend, Ada, is a pretty young wife with a delicate demeanor that makes her eyes sparkle under any form of light; she is in the kitchen late morning preparing lunch. Her phone rings and startles her. With busy hands chopping vegetables, she manages to pick up the phone, places it on her left shoulder and tilts her head a bit to talk while chopping.

"Hello, Ah, Laura. Hi, how are you and how is Dimos Lorenzo?"

Ada, are you busy?"

"Not really, I am just preparing lunch

What is on your mind, Laura?"

"Listen Ada, meet me for lunch. It is very important. I need to talk to you; I need to talk to someone." Laura is crying.

"What is wrong, Laura. Calm down and tell me what happened. Are you ok?" Ada reassures her friend and agrees to meet her. *"Where do we meet? I will take a taxi immediately."*

"Meet me at the Sky Room in Long Beach; you know it? See you shortly"

Ada nervously tidies up the kitchen and covers what she prepared for the lunch that will not be eaten. She rushes to the bathroom to freshen up, throws a sweater on, puts on her shoes and exits her apartment.

Laura takes a taxi and goes on her way to the restaurant. As the taxi takes the ramp to Long Beach, she pulls something out of a box in her hand; she examines the items, takes a deep sigh with heavy tears, and places the items back in box hostilely.

The taxi driver notices from the rear view mirror.

"Are you ok, madam?"

"Yes, yes, I am. Thank you."

"Would you like me to stop anywhere?"

"No, no, just drive to the Sky Room"

"Sure Madam." The driver says.

The driver takes Third Street to get to the restaurant. He parks in front of the restaurant on the left side.

"Here we are, madam."

"Thank you. Here you are." She pays the fare, takes her purse and the white box she held in her hands and exits the taxi from the right side. She slams the door and walks into the

restaurant. Laura sees Ada sitting at a table before her. She approaches the table where Ada is sitting. Ada gets up, hugs Laura, and they both sit down.

“Oh God, Oh God!! You will not believe this Ada.”

She opens the white box and takes out a pink bra that is seductive in an Italian way; then she pulls a matching pink even sexier pantie and holds them both to show Ada.

“What is that?” Ada recognizes the undergarment and nervously asks.

“I received this box from Trump International Hotel with a note.” She pulls out a small card with the hotel logo printed on the front. *“...Here, listen Ada, ‘Mr. & Mrs. Lorenzo Nardonne, we found that you have forgotten these items in our room. I hope you enjoyed your stay and we look forward to serving you again. Management.’”*

A waiter looks dazed seeing Laura holding lingerie in her hands. He pretends not to notice; he places two glasses of water on the table. Another waiter approaches with the same eyes wide shocked cannot quite resist looking at the sexy pink bra and pantie, clumsily places a basket of bread on the table and almost knocks the water glasses off the table, but catches them rapidly, saving himself the embarrassment.

Ada is in shock; her cheeks are burning red; her hands tremble. She extends her hand to touch the bra Laura is holding. She wishes the

earth would open and swallow her. Laura notices Ada's reaction but makes nothing of it.

"This has to be a mistake, Laura. It just cannot believe it. No, it cannot be Dimos Lorenzo Nardone. It is impossible."

A well-dressed server approaches the table, greets Ada and Laura and asks if they want drinks. Simultaneously they both ask for Martinis.

"Have you told Lorenzo? I mean did you ask him about the package?"

"No, I did not. You are the first one I called. I am not sure what to do. What am I going to do, Ada?" Laura pulls out a handkerchief to dry her uncontrollable tears.

"What am I going to do, Ada?" Laura cries. Ada cannot hide her nervousness and distraction. She asks Laura to be calm.

She excuse herself to go freshen up, takes her purse and walks away feeling faint. She enters a stall in the ladies room, pulls out her mobile phone and dials a number while tapping her feet on the floor in edginess, and with her index finger twisting her long hair with nerviness.

"Come on! Come on, answer the bloody phone."

Laura hears ringing of a phone nearby and gets irritable thinking how discourteous people are, having their phones so loud in a restaurant. She turns her head toward the sound, but identifies nothing in particular.

“Allo, Dimos Lorenzo Nardone? Listen, this is Ada. I am here at the Sky Room with Laura. We are in a mess now. She knows about us.” She is mumbling hysterically.

“Calm down. SKY ROOM!!!!” he nervously scans the restaurant. *“What is going on?”*

Dimos Lorenzo Nardone is sitting at a table with Adrian, Ada’s husband. He is very careful not to show it is Ada on the other end. When Ada said she was at the Sky Room, his body turned cold and sweat covered his forehead. Ada proceeds to recount the events to Lorenzo.

“Do not worry. Be calm; we will think of something.” Dimos Lorenzo Nardone attempts to calm the situation.

“Where are you now, Lorenzo?” Ada asks.

“I am with Adrian, my friend, having lunch on Pine Avenue.”

“Adrian!! Why? What is going on? Are you confessing? Don’t please, Lorenzo...Don’t be stupid”

“Oh no, no. Don’t worry. MMM. How about dinner tonight? We will talk about it then. Let us say we meet at the same place at 6:30?”

Lorenzo shows some apprehension as Adrian is listening.

“Ok, Ciao for now and see you later.”

He looks at Adrian and explains that the call was from a client having some concerns. He proceeds to explain to Adrian how he found the love letter addressed to his wife, Laura.

“Her car was blocking mine, and I had to return to the office on an urgent matter. I asked her to move her car, but she was busy doing something. She said the car keys were in her purse and asked that I move the car myself. When I opened the purse to take the keys, I found a folded blue letter that made me curious, I opened it. It was a letter to Laura. I read it and I put it back where it was.”

“*What was in the letter?* In anxiety Adrian asks; he stiffens and pulls his right hand up to his neck and fretfully pretends to be leveling down his hair.

“My darling, Laura, that was the best sex I have ever had; you are so, so, so sexy. I cannot wait to do that again soon – How about next Thursday – same place, same time? Let me know – Love, A.”

Adrian is unable to control his shaking hands and knees. He does not have words to say to Lorenzo. A tremendous sense of guilt comes upon him like an avalanche. He takes a large gulp of his red wine and gets up to go to the men’s room.

“*Are you feeling well?*” Lorenzo asks Adrian in perplexity.

“Yes, I will be right back.”

He walks away toward the end of the restaurant. Lorenzo is alone in deep thought slowly sipping on his wine. He hears a phone ringing; the sound is coming from a table near by.

"This is same ring tone as Laura's phone." He makes nothing of it, continues sipping on his wine. Laura answers.

"Jesus!" She gasps. *"I should have been more careful. Well, ok, at 6:30 then. Thanks. Bye."* She hangs up and apologizes to Ada.

"It was my dentist. They changed my appointment to 6:30 tonight."

"Listen, Ada. We will talk about this again; I will call you. I am not sure what I must do. I have to go home now. Thank you for being a good friend, Ada."

They both exit the restaurant and each stands on the curb waiting for a taxi. From a distance, Laura sees a man who bears a resemblance to her husband; her heart sinks for a moment and shares with Ada pointing at the man,

"This man looks a lot like Lorenzo, doesn't he?" They both ignore the thought; each gets in a taxi and wave goodbye.

At 6:20, Adrian appears at La Triviata Restaurant and soon Laura follows. They greet each other and wait for the hostess. Suddenly their faces turn hunted and sullen; Ada and Lorenzo mysteriously materialize next to them.

Juliana stresses that he should consider all that and not just be as passive and stupid as he appears to be. Now he is very deep into that dark corner in his mind. He is now thinking of murdering his wife and starts counting reasons as to why he has to do it. Juliana is abetting

him. She asks that he consider Sofia's motivations for taking him to the hospital. She assures him he is well and has no health problems; she also accentuates what she and Maigret have done for him and that they will always protect him.

He finally gets a moment of sleep repetitively interrupted by incoherent and unrelated thoughts. It is just a normal thing for him by now.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: HOMICIDE

It is early morning Sunday. Sofia Di Marco is at home making coffee and getting ready to go to the hospital to see her husband. She prays that he is better and is out of his abstraction.

She hopes that Dr. Philip Sporty started him on medication. She trusts Dr. Sporty and is confident he will help her husband. She is completely oblivious to what is about to happen. She drinks her coffee and prepares to take a shower.

He, Juliana, and Maigret are on their way to Sofia's apartment to carry out their sinister

plan. He is driving dangerously and he is listening to words of encouragement and comfort from both Juliana and Maigret. Every second, he holds and examines the knife Maigret has given him. He looks at it for a moment, then, puts it on the seat between his legs. He senses he is not himself; but then again, he has not been himself for a long while now.

Abruptly he asks Juliana about the complaint and brief. He is quite desperate to know for certain that the court will accept and address the case. Juliana assures him that the matter is a done deal and that she is beyond certain that God will be tried and convicted. He smiles widely and experiences a sense of victory.

“Finally, the truth will be out and the world will know how savage the being they believe in as God really is.” He enthusiastically declares.

He parks his car in front of the apartment building where he and Sofia live. The three of them, he, Juliana, and Maigret get out. Before he gets out of the car, he puts the knife in his trousers’ pocket. They go into the apartment and he slowly opens the door, taking all precautionary measures to be quite and not to be seen.

When they enter the apartment, they hear the noise of the shower in the bathroom. Maigret explains that it is a perfect opportunity as Sofia is in the shower. Juliana

tells him to just get the knife and go kill Sofia now before they all lose the project. He is distinctly shaking and tangled. As he approaches the bathroom, he turns around; he hands the knife to Juliana and tells her he simply cannot do it and will not do it. Maigret's urging, and inducement and pledges fail to sway him to enter that bathroom.

"*Damn it.*" Juliana whispers in an angry voice. "*Maigret or I will do it.*"

A short argument ensues between Juliana and Maigret as to who should go into that bathroom and silence Sofia forever. Juliana is decisively persuaded she will have to do it herself. She takes the sharp knife from his quivering hand. There is some resistance from him, but ultimately he lets go of the knife.

Juliana goes into the bathroom slowly, slides open the shower door and surprises Sofia. Sofia is utterly surprised:

"*How did you get out of the hospital mio amore? Did Dr. Sporty release you? I was just getting ready to go to the hospital to see you mio amore.*"

Juliana suddenly and mercilessly plunges the sharp knife into Sofia's abdomen.

"*Why mio amore? Why?*"

Sofia shrieks and tries to get away. She struggles to get out of the shower, but Juliana mercilessly slits Sofia's throat. Sofia falls in the bathtub and Juliana continues to stab her repeatedly.

He hears Sofia's crying for help, but he stands there paralyzed and with no feeling or any expressions. It is as though he were not even here.

Blood is splashing everywhere. Sofia lies peacefully dead in the bathtub and Juliana's face, hands and clothes are all stained with fresh blood that is dripping as she walks out of the bathroom.

"Mission accomplished. Now we get to work and prepare for the trial." She coldly says.

Meanwhile, Maigret makes a mess in the apartment. He throws papers all over the floor; he bashes upside-down any table or chair he sees; he breaks any item he puts his hands on; and he lays the couch on its backside. He makes a wreck out of the apartment. He wants to make sure that the killing of Sofia appears to be a result of a burglary attempt or some kind of a home invasion. The last thing he does is breaking the balcony's glass door.

Neighbors hear the commotion and call the police for help. Shortly after, he hears sirens sounds coming from everywhere. He shakes his head violently and goes into the bathtub. He holds Sofia and cries uncontrollably.

The police knocks hard on the door, but there is no response. The police resorts to breaking the front door down and enters the apartment. They notice the wreck and realize that there was a great deal of violence

here. One officer calls the station and asks for homicide, forensics, and an autopsy doctor.

With their guns drawn, two police officers follow the fresh bloodstains all over the apartment and enter the bathroom. They see the gruesome sight of Sofia held by her husband who is distraught, sobbing, talking but making no coherent sentences and seems in a state of a jolt but totally numb.

One police officer could not handle the scene and runs outside. Other officers enter the bathroom and help him out of there. They notice that he holds a bloody knife in his hands. An officer puts on some gloves, comes cautiously close to him with gun drawn and slowly takes the knife away from him and puts it in a plastic bag. Another officer takes him outside; he has blood all over his face, hands and untidy clothes. The officer asks that he sit at the kitchen table; it is the only table that is not turned. On his way from the bathroom to the table, blood is dripping all over.

Now, forensics staff is in the apartment. Two detectives from the Long Beach Police Department arrive followed by the medical examiner. Detective Heidi Kemble, who is a stern, experienced and strong willed detective in her mid thirties and Detective Mica Bauer, in his mid forties, known to be tough, persistent and with an extra ordinary talent for observation and for details.

The medical examiner, Dr. Robinson Schwartz, is a well-respected scientist whose endowment for details renders him a genius. Dr. Schwartz is in his late sixties, elegant and radiates with confidence and veneration.

Police staff is taking many pictures while the two detectives scan the premises looking for clues. A fingerprint expert is collecting evidence. Other officers place a corridor around the whole area with yellow tapes.

Detective Mica Bauer comes across a manuscript on the floor titled “The Indictment of God” and goes down on his knees to examine the document; he puts gloves on, picks up the manuscript and opens it. He reads a list of negative verses from religious books. He sees names of different people. He takes the document, puts it in a plastic bag and shows it to his partner Detective Heidi Kemble.

While Dr. Robinson Schwartz is in the bathroom examining Sofia’s body, Detectives Kemble and Bauer pull up chairs and sit next to him at the kitchen table.

“Now calm down please and tell us what exactly happened here. Do you like a glass of water?” Detective Heidi Kemble asks him.

“She killed my beautiful wife Sofia. She killed her in cold blood. Both of them did.” He says while sobbing and shaking uncontrollably.

“Who did?” Kemble asks.

“Juliana and Maigret. Yes, they both, Juliana and Maigret killed her. They wanted me to do it, but I refused. I love my wife.” He cries.

Detective Mica Bauer recognizes the names from the manuscript.

“Who are they these Juliana and Maigret?” Bauer inquires.

“They were supposed to be my friends. They were helping me complete my project and protected me from Morsi and his terrorist group.” He explains. Bauer recognizes the name Morsi from the manuscript, but he and Heidi are very baffled and are not quite sure what they are faced with.

They see Dr. Robinson Schwartz coming out of the bathroom. They excuse themselves for a minute and ask that he stays seated until they come back.

“It is a violent stab wound to the abdomen, slitting of the throat, and several stab wounds in the body. There was little struggle. She must have been taken by surprise and known her killer. It must have taken her about ten to fifteen minutes to expire. The wounds are fresh, which indicates that the attack happened within the last hour. I will know more when we take her to the lab.” Dr. Schwartz tells detectives Kemble and Bauer and leaves the apartment saying, “goodbye boys.”

The doctor and the detectives order the removal of the body to the lab for a complete autopsy. Staff members of the Long Beach Police Department place Sofia’s body on a

stretcher, cover her with a white sheet and take her to their van and drive off.

In the meantime, officers are still collecting evidence, taking pictures, and hunting for fingerprints. They collected a lot of papers, newspaper articles, printouts from a computer. They also remove the computer and take all materials to the station's lab.

Detectives Heidi Kemble and Mica walk back to the kitchen where he is still sitting sobbing and confused. The detectives open their notepads and start their preliminary examination and questioning.

"Now tell us everything you know." They ask.

He starts telling them the whole story of wanting to bring God to justice and prosecute him in the International Court of Human Rights. He tells them that his lawyer friend, Juliana, was helping him drafting the complaints and brief. He explained the story of Maigret's involvement and spoke about the Los Angeles Police Department Salvo Bruno and about Morsi and his wife Marina.

Then he continues to detail the incident of defacing his front door with the phrase *blasphemous bastards*. He details detective Salvo Bruno's investigation and detective Raul Del Rio of the Anaheim Police Department and his success in tracking down a man by the name of Gamal Nour-Eldeen, who is an associate of Morsi Sheikh Ahmad. He explains to the detectives that Salvo and Del Rio found that

Gamal Nour-Eldeen was running his terrorist activities from a motel in Anaheim; he adds details about the piece of paper Detective Morris Maigret found after the defacing of the front door.

He continues detailing that both Gamal and Morsi are involved in terrorist activities and that the FBI guys took the case because it was a national security matter. He continues explaining that Juliana has completed the complaint and the brief and is about to present it to the court.

Both detectives Heidi and Mica look at each other in amazement at the story. Each asks the other if they have all the information on paper now. They affirm they both did.

They ask him if he has any relatives to stay with for now because he has to leave the apartment. He tells them about a sister who lives in Los Alamitos and gives them her address and phone number. Detective Heidi picks up her mobile phone and calls the number. She asks him about his sister's name. He says it is Savanna.

"Hello, may I speak with Savanna, please? This is Detective Heidi Kemble from the Long Beach Police Department." She politely and calmly asks.

"This is Savanna, may I help you?" Savanna replies.

"Sorry to bother you Madam, but we have a situation here with your brother. I cannot explain right

now, but we suggest that he stays with you for a few days. Can we bring him over?" Heidi requests.

"Yes, of course. I hope he is well. Is he?" savanna asks anxiously.

"Yes, yes. But something dreadful happened and we will tell you when we arrive. Ok?" Heidi explains.

"Ok then. Will you bring him over now?" Savanna wants to know.

"Yes, we will be on our way shortly." Heidi assures her.

He, the two detectives, Heidi and Mica, and another uniformed police officer arrive in Los Alamitos where Savanna lives. They all exit the car and find Savanna waiting anxiously by the front door of her house.

She runs and hugs her visibly disturbed brother and they all go into the house.

"Madam," Detective Mica Bauer starts, "I am afraid we have some disturbing news; your sister-in-law, Sofia Di Marco, has been murdered and we need your brother to be here for a while." Detective Heidi Kemble interpolates, "Please be sure that he remains in the house; we will be in touch soon. Here is my card. Please call us if you learn anything about the incident."

The detectives and the police officer leave for the station. Now, Savanna is crying and getting too close to her brother expressing empathy and encouragement. He, on the other hand, is not in the ambit or sphere of veritable existence. He sits there with a smile and a tear,

a laugh and a cry, attentiveness, and absence, and with distinct detachment. He is in his own sphere of existence. Then he tells Savanna that he wants to call their father. Savanna is perplexed and tells him that their father died more than five years ago. He does not hear her or pay attention to her disbelief.

In the thoughts generated in that dark side of his mind he ruminates; he wants to phone his father like he used to do. He does not have his current number; he does not have his address. His father is dead. Why does he reach for his mobile phone and try to call him?

"I do not understand, but neither do you, my dear baby sister, Savanna." He mumbles.

He still picks up the phone and dials the number he still has saved on his mobile phone. Each time he does so, he hears a recorded message that says:

"The number you have reached has been disconnected or is no longer in service; please check the number and dial again."

He checks the number, and he dials again, but he gets the same message. But he wants to phone his dad. The message does not say he is dead; the message does not say that he is disconnected or no longer in service. He tries again.

All his trying goes in vain, yet he still tries. Why does he try? He is not sure why he tries, but he dreadfully wants to speak with his father. He calls the operator.

“Operator, I have been trying to call my father for some time now and I just cannot get through,” he says.

The operator tries the number while he is with her on the phone. They both hear a recorded message:

“The number you have reached has been disconnected or is no longer in service; please check the number and dial again.”

“Sorry sir,” the operator says. *“The number is incorrect.”* She insists.

He checks the number and he dials again. This time he dials in his head with no phone in hand. He hears a voice.

“Oh!! Good!! Finally!!” He bellows breathlessly. *“Allo, Dad, it is me, your son,”* He cries. Only silence is on the other end. *“Allo!! Allo!! Allo!! Dad?”* He repeats many times.

He hears a voice. It is a very loud voice. It is like a thunderstorm. It is like a bomb. It is like his dad’s voice.

“I am dead, son; I am dead,” the voice enlightens.

“I know; I know; I just want to hear your voice” He says.

He hangs up. He smokes a pack of Dunhill cigarettes. He drinks a bottle of Courvoisier, his dad’s favorite drink. He tells Savanna, who experienced the whole occurrence in incredulity and disbelief, good night baby sis. He gets up and goes to sleep.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE REAL INVESTIGATION

It is early Monday morning at the Long Beach Police Department. Detectives Heidi Kemble and Mica Bauer are quite busy trying to make sense of Sofia Di Marco's murder. They get the autopsy report. It is basically the same thing the doctor told them at the scene of the crime. It was a violent stab wound to the abdomen, a slitting of the throat, and several stab wounds in the body. There was little struggle. She must have known her assailant. She must have been taken by surprise. It must have taken her about ten to fifteen minutes to expire. The wounds were fresh, which indicate that the attack happened within the last hour of discovering the body. The doctor had nothing else to add except assuring the detectives that there is no evidence of sexual assault; there is no evidence of head trauma. And the struggle was minor and of no medical significance.

The detectives now know for certain that there was no robbery. They are puzzled. They are looking for a motive. It is evident to them that the murder was with intent; but they

cannot find a motive. Sofia did not have any life insurance policy. They checked her finances and nothing irregular showed up. She was an educated woman, but did not work. Her husband is an English professor and an unexceptional writer who published a few unsuccessful books.

"There is no motive here." Kemble tells Bauer.

They started investigating the husband and his background. There are no criminal records of any kind. They begin examining the story he told them and the people he disclosed to them.

"Hello. This is Detective Heidi Kimble from the Long Beach Police Department. May I speak with Detective Salvo Bruno, please?" She calls the Los Angeles Police Department.

She is confounded to hear that there is no detective by that name in the whole department.

She asks, *"Do you have any records of a vandalism incident or charges that took place in Long Beach on June third or fourth which involved a defacing of an apartment front door?"*

The person on the other end puts her on hold for a few minutes to check the records. She comes back with the mystifying information,

"No, Detective Kemble. There is no record here of such an incident."

Heidi thanks her and hangs up the phone. She is beyond stunned at the moment.

Meanwhile, Detective Mica Bauer calls the Anaheim Police Department to ask for Detective Raul Del Rio. Disconcerted, Mica Bauer discovers that there is no such a detective. He calls Heidi and shares the information. She tells him that the same with the LAPD guy.

"He does not exist." She discontentedly says. *"What the fuck do we have here?"*

"This is most irregular and weird, Mica." She adds. Mica asks her to check on Marina and Morsi.

All searches for such names as Marina and Morsi Sheikh Ahmad turn nothing; these people do not exist. Additionally, Gamal Nour-Eldeen does not exist. Both Detectives Kemble and Bauer are puzzled. They begin to put the pieces together and start thinking that Sofia De Marco's husband is a schizophrenia patient.

Detective Heidi Kemble calls Savanna.

"Hello, is this Savanna?" Heidi asks.

"Yes." Savanna replies.

"This is Detective Kemble, Heidi Kemble. We met last night. May I ask you a question? Heidi politely and sensitively asks. "Does your brother suffer from any mental illness like, for example, schizophrenia?"

"All my family thinks so, but he was never formally diagnosed. I am not sure, but he is certainly not well. He had a phone conversation last night with

my Dad who died more than five years ago." Savanna explains.

"I see, thank you and we will be in touch with you soon. Is he at the house? Please keep an eye on him and do not permit him to go out. If he gets violent, call us immediately, ok?" Heidi says compulsorily.

Detective Heidi Kemble shares her new information with Detective Bauer.

The next move for them is to check hospitals and see if he has ever been admitted. They share the task and each calls some hospitals. They call Long Beach Memorial Hospital, Los Alamitos Hospital, Log Beach Community Hospital and the Hogue hospital. They have no luck thus far.

While Heidi and Mica are talking and discussing their hospital search experience in the coffee room at the police department, a young police officer named Marisela De La Cruz fortunately interferes and asks,

"Have you guys checked emergency rooms? It is possible that he was in an emergency room and was never admitted." They look at each other and run back to their desks.

They both started to call the hospitals back trying to find if he has ever been in an emergency room. Luckily, Heidi calls Long Beach Memorial Hospital on Atlantic Avenue in Long Beach. One nurse next to whom was Dr. Philip Sporty, receives the call from detective Heidi Kemble inquiring about a psychiatric patient coming to the emergency

room lately. When Dr. Sporty hears the conversation, he interrupts saying yes,

“The patient was here in the emergency room and I was going through the admission process, but he escaped from the hospital.”

The nurse informs Detective Kemble that yes indeed there was a patient and they have his records. The nurse could not give any more information because of the strict medical privacy laws.

Both Detectives Kemble and Bauer persuade the District Attorney to seek a court order and a judge’s signature to obtain those records.

Shortly after they get the order, they both drive to the hospital and meet with Dr. Philip Sporty. The doctor tells them that he diagnosed the patient as a schizophrenic and that he warned his wife, Sofia di Marco, that he could get violent at any moment. He added that he was in the process of admitting him to the hospital. The doctor cannot explain how the patient left the hospital.

Kemble and Bauer thank the doctor, take the information with them and go back to the office to sort all this out. As they are driving back to the station, neither of them feels like talking. They are both beyond dumbfounded and speechless.

They arrive at the station and go to Bauer’s office. They get some coffee and start recapping all the evidence.

Heidi starts talking:

“Ok, so we have no clear motive. The intent is not well defined, either. We now know that all the names of people he gave us are feigns. We have no Marina, no Morsi, No Salvo, no Raul Del Rio, no Juliana or Morris Maigret. They are all figments and fabrications of his dark side of his mind. We also checked with the FBI, and they have no records of any of that. We now know he is diagnosed with schizophrenia, and we have his medical records. He was the one holding the knife. Forensics analysis shows no other fingerprints on the knife or in the apartment but his. His notes show his fears of persecution because of his attempt to bring God to justice before an International Tribunal. So, the motive may have been a sense of threat that Sofia di Marco would jeopardize his project to bring God to justice.”

She explains and asks Mica if he is with her so far. He responds in the affirmative and assures her he is following. She continues.

“Now we need a warrant for his arrest and charge him with murdering his wife. I am not sure how this will play out in court.”

Detective Mica Bauer says,

“Ok. We take all this information to the DA office and ask that they obtain a warrant for his arrest. I think the case is solved. This is the eeriest and creepiest case of my whole career.”

It is late evening now and there is nothing more they can do. Bauer asks Heidi to go home and relax.

“As for me, I need a drink, pronto. I will go have a few drinks and go home to sleep, hopefully peacefully tonight. See you tomorrow morning Heidi. Ciao and good night.” Mica Bauer says.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE ARREST

He is at his sister, Savanna's house. He is unable to sleep. He suffered, but in silence, an epileptic attack. He survived it. He is now in his semi-consciousness state of mind. He is unaware of what awaits him tomorrow; he does not know he is a suspect and will be arrested in the morning.

He is thinking of Sofia, his beautiful wife his very dead beautiful wife. He is entirely oblivious. He feels that all he does now is wait. As it has been for years, he waits. He waits for his doctors; he waits for his dentist. He waits. He waits for his chemotherapy; he waits for his meds. He waits for his check. That has been all.

“What is the day today?” He asks.

His consciousness of time turns vague. He wakes up and waits for the sun to set; when it does, he waits for it to rise. He is not certain whether his days are long or short, yet, he is confident his years are very short.

His dark side of his mind takes him back to his apartment. He picks up a book from his bookshelves; he opens it, reads a few pages and lays it on his desk only to start another book knowing he will never finish. He waits for his concentration to improve; it does not seem to. Since his youth evaporated so rapidly, his concentration has weakened, his ability to remember things has declined, and his talent to effectively enunciate his thoughts has vanished.

"There is something I have to do."

He thinks but does not recall what it is he has to do. He waits to remember; he never does. There is always a nagging feeling that he has something to do, but does not know what it is. Perhaps there is nothing. Or perhaps he is waiting for Juliana and Maigret to show up.

He lies down only to realize he has to get up; he gets up, but does not remember why. A revelation dictates the possible reason for getting up – it is to smoke a cigarette.

"Where are the bloody cigarettes?"

He searches everywhere for them; just about when he is to abandon the search, he realizes the packet of Dunhill cigarette has been in his hand all along. It is now time to find a lighter; there are no lighters to be seen because it is in his pocket. He grins, mumbles a few expletives, and resigns, and waits. He is not sure for what, but he waits. While waiting and inhaling much needed nicotine, he thinks. He never thinks of tomorrows; he is unaware he will be arrested tomorrow. He always

thinks of yesterdays. The days make tomorrows unpleasant to contemplate. Yesterdays are fortified for they are known and are already experienced and lived. Tomorrows are so far away; they require a long waiting for the sun to rise and set and rise again.

His solitude most of his life, and now at his sister's house has started to make him weary. Though he is not fully aware of his loneliness, cognizance is reborn when he hears the doorbell rings. His trance is interrupted; he thinks it is Juliana and he gets up to open the door; though he sees a shadow through the glass door, once he opens, he finds no one there. He smirks, mutters a few expletives, suspends, and waits. He is still not sure for what, but he waits.

It was last night when he saw him again. They have become acquainted; they share a drink or two often. Their talks are kept to a minimum; they prefer to indulge in the ritual of wine drinking. He likes to listen to the stories Azrael shares with him.

"You will laugh at this one," Azrael enthusiastically interrupts the silence.

"I had a visit to make at 3:10 early morning, and the man I was supposed to transport – He was only forty-two and a few months- was in a hotel room with his mistress – actually, he was not with her exactly, he was on top of her, all nude and happy. He had no clue of what was about to happen. He did not know his time was up and he was ready to have his best orgasm. Oh! I know where your mind is taking you now." He

chuckles. “*And just as, you know,*” he smiles, “*his time was up,*” he sniggered, somewhat noisily.

“*What a great way to ...*” He addressed Azrael with a fake smile.

“*When you come for me, I mean when my time is up and we part together, I hope I will be in a similar situation; do you decide on the time, or is it assigned to you?*”

Azrael ignored the question. They both dived back into their drinking with nothing said. Time has come for them to part-SEPARATELY, and they repeated to each other, “Au revoir.” He wishes that Azrael would say ‘good bye’ not ‘au revoir’.

He often thinks of many things at the same time; his mind races like a baboon on steroid. Nothing he can do that can make his mind rest or take a leave. He thinks about the day, and of yesterdays; he thinks and thinks and nothing helps him to stop thinking. He now thinks how he was a man who loved women; he thinks of how he was a man who hated them. He thinks of each encounter; he thinks of each moment he lived. He thinks of Sofia and how he met her; he thinks of the complaint against God and whether Juliana submitted it to court.

His life projects itself upon the narrow screen of his brain in fast motion. He watches and remembers. Nothing seems to be in order; nothing seems to correlate. He ponders how writers are lonely animals. How he is a desolate

creature. He lives within a terribly narrow space between keyboard strokes and his inklings. He often fabricates a larger space so he can maneuver and endure. The thoughts, hence the words, do not come to him that easily, so the exertion to gasp is endless. He cannot breathe; neither the thoughts nor the words materialize and he is running out of air, which is scarce in his limited space. What he breathes is the Dunhill tobacco he smokes, one cigarette after another, in an attempt to control the moment, but often with brutal failure. But memories come back as he strikes each key.

"Ah! Solitude!" He whispers.

"It is the sperm that fertilizes the egg of a tale to be told. Will conception take place this night? Will it be tomorrow? Will it ever be?"

He knows not, so he stares at the keyboard and waits.

"Here comes a thought. No- not good;" he says that a thousand times, writes a few hundred words, then waits for the next thousand thoughts.

"Will I see Azrael later?" He interrupts his contemplations. *"He didn't answer my question. Does he decide on the time, or is the time assigned to him?"*

He determines to ask again the next time he sees him. He waits for Azrael to appear and hopes that this time will also end with an au revoir.

Sadly, it is close to an au revoir. It is 8:18 AM and Savanna's doorbell rings. Savanna runs to the door before her brother does. It is the two detectives and two other uniformed officers.

"*Good morning Madam.*" Heidi greets Savanna. "*We have a warrant for the arrest of your brother; may we come in, please.*"

Savanna breaks into tears and calls for her brother to come to the door.

"*Good morning sir.*" Says Detective Bauer. "*Officer Jacobson here will read you your Miranda Rights. You are under arrest for the murder of Sofia di Marco.*" Detective Bauer continues.

As officer Jacobson begins to read the Miranda Rights, another uniformed officer tries to handcuff the suspect. The suspect maneuvers around the detectives and officers and starts running. Heidi with her gun drawn shouts:

"*Please stop or I will shoot.*"

Detective Bauer, also with his gun drawn, shouts for him to stop.

He does not adhere to the warnings and continues running without knowing why he is running. Juliana and Maigret are next to him running and encouraging him to run faster and faster. One of the uniformed officer fires one shot.

From a distance, they see him lying on his face motionless. They cautiously approach him while Savanna is screaming and crying.

The officer who fired the shot has to be a great shooter; the bullet went through his heart. While lying motionless and breathing his last moments of existence, Juliana kneels down and whispers to him:

“We made it. I filed the complaint and the brief with the court this morning. You made it my friend. You got God to be impeached. All savages must face justice.”

He smiles and rethinks his visit with Azrael when he said,

“I had a visit to make at 3:10 early morning, and the man I was supposed to transport – He was only forty-two and a few months- was in a hotel room with his mistress – actually, he was not with her exactly, he was on top of her, all nude and happy. He had no clue of what was about to happen. He did not know his time was up and he was ready to have his best orgasm ...” He chuckles. *“And just as, you know, his time was up,”* he sniggered, somewhat noisily.

“What a great way to die” He addressed Azrael with a fake smile.

That was then. Now he is alone without Sofia. Four police officers, and many curious pedestrians surround him. He closes his eyes, sees Azrael for the last time, and, with Azrael he departs to the unknown world where his father and brother and friends have been for a while.

EPILOGUE

Now the police works on sorting out the shooting and the whole affair. It is not an easy task for them; nothing more is there for them

to learn. He is dead. His body automatically goes to the coroner for autopsy.

The uniformed officer who fired the fatal shot is put on administrative leave pending an investigation. It was clear that he the suspect was not armed and the two detectives, Heidi Kemble and Mica Bauer, knew he was a mental patient.

Despite that he made it clear to his family and friends that when he dies, his body should go to scientific research, his family, for religious reasons, being Christian Copts, decide to bury him. His sister, Savanna, orders that his tombstone reads:

"Here Laid to Rest a Victim of the Human Condition."

The police eventually return all the items and documents they have collected from his and Sofia's apartment to Savanna. Savanna is distraught and in deep grief.

A few days go by, Savanna picks up the document his brother wrote. His ideas, his writing, and his goal to bring God to justice intrigue her. She finds the complaint and the brief to be convincing, compelling, and gripping. She reads the papers many times and the more she reads, the more she is absorbed and persuaded.

Savanna puts the complaint and brief in shape and order and sits at her desk thinking and contemplating. She finds an unusual

strong impulse to continue what her now dead brother started.

She picks up the phone and shares her inclination with one of her best friends, Nathan Jenkins. Jenkins is an attorney with an extensive experience as a trial lawyer.

Nathan Jenkins listens attentively to Savanna and he also becomes intrigued and enthralled with the idea. He sees it feasible and, from a legal perspective, sound. He agrees to meet with Savanna the next day.

Savanna hands Jenkins the documents; he scans through them and he is now more captivated. He tells Savanna that he will rewrite the complaint and the brief and will, indeed, submit them to the International Court.

The following Monday, Nathan Jenkins has all the documents he needs and proceeds to submit the complaint to the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nation Office at Geneva.

Not long after, all media organizations and networks learn of the acceptance of the complaint. The news has become a media explosion. Everywhere one looks, there are newspapers, magazines, radio and television news networks that report on the unprecedented case.

Savanna is at home preparing dinner while her television is on. She suddenly hears a

breaking news bulletin where the anchor affirms in a somewhat stunned voice:

“The International Court on Human Rights accepts to hear allegations against God. God is, indeed, on trial.”

She takes a deep breath and with a smile and a tear, she continues her cooking. She pours a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon, raises it up and in trembling voice she says, “Here is to you sweet brother.”

