

PROLOGUE: SID AND ROSE

Present day...San Marcos, San Diego County, California

When Dr. Joshua Lawrence used the brains of Sid and Rose Edelstein, he knew they were Jews. In fact, since Lawrence had been raised to hate Jews by his parents in Santa Cruz, all of his scientific planning to bring about The Singularity was focused on creating a plan whereby Jews would be seen as the scourge of humanity, and so their eradication would be welcomed and not mourned.

In 1990, these two Jewish scientists were in charge of the research and development at Omshanti ashram when Dr. Lawrence began his work there. Dr. Lawrence made it his purpose in life to use Sid and Rose and their child Rachel to conquer the chaotic mess that was human society. Now that his plan had been changed, the back-up option was being carried out without Lawrence in direct control. Perhaps it was more fitting to have the final plan being instigated without Dr. Lawrence. After all, once The Singularity began, all biological humans would be radically changed to fit the correct world order.

There was only one major plan programmed into the two androids, and it was developed to be carried out even in the event of the death of the programmer. When Dr. Lawrence was murdered inside his lab, this program inside of Sid and Rose immediately went into action. The only reason this plan had not been initiated was that Dr. Lawrence sent the two androids secret WiFi signals each day to keep the secret plan in hibernation. As soon as this signal was not transmitted, Sid and Rose began to carry out Lawrence's ordered sequence of specific instructions.

Sid and Rose Edelstein looked and felt human. They were the ultimate androids, perfected by the latest computer, genetic, and robotic technology. One could tell Sid and Rose were not biologically human because the nervous system of a human is not perfectly wired the way theirs were. Therefore, Dr. Lawrence, their creator, was not able to perfect the idiosyncratic little tics and motions that biological humans projected. However, this was not necessary for this ultimate plan. Since Sid and Rose were technically the first Jewish androids, they would have advantages when they made their Aliyah to Israel.

The miracle of The Singularity was the ultimate goal. Sid and his wife could already connect with any computer by WiFi to process problems at speeds of up to 30 quadrillion bytes compared to the human brain at 3.5 quadrillion bytes. According to the most recent calculations, unless human society were taken over by machines, it would self-destruct in less than one hundred years.

Sid and Rose, at the moment, were being transported together as luggage across the Atlantic Ocean toward Israel. Their minds were off, so they could not process at the powerful speeds they soon would be during their assignment. However, even at rest, the potential was there, and their controller, who was reading and writing on a laptop in seat 42, row 6, on board El Al Flight 7513, knew that once the plan was put into motion, Sid and Rose would be the most valuable part of The Singularity puzzle.

Rachel

We made it out to the ashram in one piece, thank God, but we weren't prepared for the news we were greeted by once we arrived. I was planning ahead, so I bought the two El Al tickets to Israel through my smartphone. I argued with Jacob about paying the cost, but we agreed that it could become our first business expense, so I bought them on my card.

Linda Peterson was in Guru Sharma's office. She was the blonde candidate for bride of passion from my youth. She approached me with a concerned frown.

"Dr. Edelstein, we just received a call from Israel. It was the office of Mossad. They want you to visit them as soon as you touch down. They would only say the information they have is for your eyes and ears only. Also, we have been unable to track-down any flights that report having androids as part of their manifest of persons or luggage."

"Thank you, Linda. You may call me Rachel, by the way. Jacob and I have our tickets, and we'll get going shortly. If Mossad's getting involved, then you can bet your bagels there's some terrorist activity afoot. I hope they don't think we're suspect, but I'll let you know."

Guru Sharma looked much older and exhausted. As a girl, I remembered only his penetrating gaze and fluid motion. His gentle nature was still there when he spoke. "I often wonder if my karma has caused all of this trouble. I am going to assemble all members to pray for you, Rachel, and for Dr. Stein. You will be saving our reputation as a religious organization, and we are very grateful. Please keep us informed."

I walked over to him and took his two brown hands in mine. His sexual traumas glittered around him like messages of Ein Sof. In my frantic effort to use my new psychic ability, I had forgotten about my practice of Kabbalah. It wasn't about me or even about the ashram. It was about making certain the best interests of humanity, as a whole, were being protected.

"I will text you personally, Guru. Of course, if I'm forbidden to communicate what happens in Israel, then you'll know why I'm not messaging you. I do have one more question for you before we leave. Do you have an ashram in Israel?"

"Yes. I opened it in 2000 to celebrate the Millennium. I think we have about ninety-five members there. Dr. Yaron Levine is the Guru at our Tel Aviv location. We rent two floors at the Academic College at Yaffa, and the devotees live privately off campus."

"Did Dr. Lawrence ever go out there?" I was intrigued by this news.

"Yes, he did. He traveled there at least four times," said Guru.

"Thank you. I think I'll also pay a visit there while I'm investigating."

"I understand. May Lord Vishnu protect you both, and may Lord Shiva give you the courage to discover the guilty and punish them."

Later, as we took off from San Diego International to head for Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Yafo Airport, I looked over at my new partner, Dr. Jacob Stein, and smiled. "I think I can smell me a Professor Moriarty, my dear Watson," I said. "Also, I don't think it was a cartel member that put the hit on Dr. Lawrence."

"Oh yes? What makes you say that, Sherlock?"

"When we discussed robots cleaning up the crime scenes, I thought about my robot parents. I am also aware of how the IDF and the Israeli government in general do their business. I

think the IDF finally found some hard evidence linking Lawrence to the murders. They also knew he was an American citizen, so the only way to bring him to justice was to do what they used to do to the Nazi war criminals who were hiding out in other countries after the war.”

“You mean, they sent out the Mossad?”

“Right. For those guys, it would have been a piece of cake to terminate him.”

“Shut up, and eat these goobers. I brought them for a nosh,” he said and passed me his bag of peanuts.

PART ONE: IN OUR IMAGE

CHAPTER ONE: OMSHANTI

San Marco, San Diego County, California, 1992

Rachel

I can feel the rose oil on my skin. Mother Serene says that being chosen as the Bride of Passion is an honor. We who are candidates speak together about what it all means.

“The Guru selects the one who can bring Omshanti closer to alignment with our guiding galaxy.” Elouise looks up at the blue sky as she says this. Her head is always in the clouds.

I have a more practical guess. “He likes young girls. I’ve seen him staring at my ass when we dance the Shiva and Shakti at the monthly full moon celebration.”

“Rachel, you should be dancing as Kali, the menacing one. You are always seeing the darkest aspects of existence.” Linda is jealous because I was chosen over her. We have always been rivals, but I am the one who got his stares, and I am the one who is to be his bride of passion.

All those girls who were not selected perform the ritual of preparation inside the passion chamber. I did this last year, when I was twelve, so I know what is done to the room where it all takes place. First, the water bed is layered with rose petals. I remember seeing the soft red tongues undulate like a crimson sea as I pushed down on the end of the bed.

Another girl sprays the room with lilac scent so it becomes a floral paradise of odors that mix with the burning frankincense-jasmine incense. The smoke curls from the black rods stuck inside the tusks of the statue of the Ganesh, the elephant-headed god of new beginnings. One girl climbs a ladder to clean the ceiling mirror, which has the characters of the Hindu Trinity pasted on it. Brahma, the Creator. Vishnu, the Preserver. Shiva, the Destroyer or Transformer.

Every bride enters the passion chamber to the recorded music of Ravi Shankar. Guru says

that since we are all one family, our surname fits our nature. Serene is a state of calm joy, peaceful tranquility that can withstand the rigors of the outside world and the passions of the inside demons of temptation and fear.

However, as I enter the chamber, I do not feel serene. My heart is racing, and my palms and forehead are perspiring. No matter what my parents have told me about this ceremony, something inside me says it is not natural. Before we came to Omshanti, we lived together in Ocean Beach.

My parents are scientists. They work for Guru to develop technology that helps humanity. I might one day become a scientist, but right now I want a time machine to take me out of this room! My father said we were Jews, and my mother read me the Hebrew Scriptures every night before I went to sleep. It is one of those stories that fills my consciousness as Guru walks toward me inside the chamber.

Linda stands next to me as I recline on the bed, my perfumed body rippling on the waterbed like a lotus. She extends the red satin pillow to me. On it are the daily passion pills that are given to those girls who have had their first menstruation. I take one and place it on my tongue. I swallow, but my mouth is dry, so I gag.

Guru has a silver goblet in his hand, and he places the rim to my lips. I drink the dark blue liquid, and it is my first taste of wine. As he waves Linda away, I can hear her bare feet padding softly on the wood floor, and then the door shuts behind her. Guru says two words before my entire mind is taken over by my Jewish fantasy: "My bride."

I stand with my people on the top of Mount Masada in Israel. It is just after the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, and they were now coming after us. We know there is no hope. We are outnumbered. They have the weapons, the monstrous battering ram on the 300-foot platform. We can hear the wheels turning in the desert sand as the platform approaches the cliffs on the west side. There is only one way out because without suicide, we will be forced to worship their false gods.

Omshanti has taught me to worship false gods. And now, the tall dark man with the flowing beard is grabbing at my nightgown. I have no underwear. I have no escape.

I remember the quote from Josephus because we discussed it one night after my mother read it to me. I was told that the mystical meaning behind the quote was that we can only escape persecution by dwelling in the mystery of Yahweh's Kingdom:

"We must not choose slavery now, and with it penalties that will mean the end of everything if we fall alive into the hands of the Romans. God has given us this privilege that we can die nobly and as free Jews and leave this world as free Jews in company with our wives and children."

My passion is taken from me inside this chamber. As Linda cleans up the bloodstains on my legs and inner thighs, I come back to this world. I think about my parents coming to America.

My parents never spoke much about it. They were a part of the contingent of orphans allowed to immigrate to an abandoned Bronx YMCA in the summer of that year. My father came from Russia and my mother from Poland.

My mother told me there was a small staff of local Jews who welcomed the international contingent of children to this building in the hot summer of 1946. "Our receiving center in the Bronx was a dark multistoried structure, an absolute fire trap, with many small rooms and

few bathrooms. Not a tree nor bush was in sight from the front stoop, we were surrounded by asphalt.” My mother told me this when we lived in Ocean Beach. She said she was five years old and my father was seven.

My father never talked about anything related to these days. He was found by Russian troops abandoned in a field after the fleeing Germans had come through the night before, shooting every Jew they could round up. Somehow, one of the Russian peasants, a non-Jew, had taken him to this field and left him there.

Imagine waking up in the Tower of Babel every morning. These children came from Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, and many other countries. They did not understand each other, nor did the American staff understand them. Their Jewish orthodoxy was as varied as their national origin, but a few spoke Yiddish. Even that language was of little help since each region of the world where it is spoken has developed a distinct dialect.

“We used hands, feet and facial grimaces to get our message across the language barrier. We played Jacob's ladder, a string game played by children all over the world, to establish a common ground with the other young people,” my mother said.

The campers spanned the ages of one to officially eighteen, although they knew that some of the boys were older but were able to disguise their chronological age to qualify for a United States visa. The youngest child, found naked in a hayloft outside Kiev by a U.S. soldier, was estimated to be between one and two years old. “She came to the Bronx nameless, and we had a little naming party for her a few days after she arrived; we gave her the name Ruth, our director's name.”

I loved to hear these stories from my mother. They were the only connections I had with my past other than our lives together as a tiny family of three. When my parents were able to graduate from college in New York City, which had very inexpensive tuition in those days, they got married. As they were both engineers, they had a lot in common, and they were even able to work at the same company, IBM. They were transferred to UCSD in 1969, where IBM was financing a computer research project.

When Guru Sharma came to San Marcos in 1990, he offered them a job. They had seen him in his orange robes in downtown San Diego. My parents worked on their own assisting the homeless on weekends. Sharma was building up his ashram in San Marcos, and when he told my parents about his belief in science and human freedom, they became his first converts from the professional research and development community. I was ten when we moved out of our house in Ocean Beach to the commune in San Marcos. I was twelve when I was chosen as the Guru's “bride of passion.”

A boy named Seth runs up to me that day as I am walking back to our dormitory. His eyes are wide, and his voice trembles. “Your parents are dead! I saw them take their bodies out of the lab.”

Guru

Bhagwan Sharma told them when they entered Omshanti that they were born anew. Just as he was able to come to America without the burdens of the past, so he presented his followers with a new way of seeing this world of illusions. The answer to this mysterious

existence, where we attempt to become citizens of a country whose leaders believe military power is the only way to achieve respect, is to grasp local control over the body politic.

He began in 1990, with 208 followers, when the United States started its decline and was losing its center. He drove his Volkswagen van down Market Street, where the newly homeless could be found, and he recruited members for the new colony of Omshanti. He told them he would inspire them to think as one and to learn to work in gardens and laboratories in return for free food, guided meditation, and joyful dancing. He told them that the only way out of this nation that runs on the greed of the senses is to learn the ancient lesson of serenity.

With every new individual and family group that was brought to the rented compound in San Marcos, he was counting votes. He knew they would grow and survive only if they were able to vote enough members on the city council. All of his hopes and dreams of establishing a commune of scientific progress and spiritual harmony rested on whether or not they could gain control of that council form of government.

The date is May 21, 1992, and they have grown into a group that owns this ten acres of land with the fifteen buildings and the Omshanti Temple. They are now a 501c, tax-exempt religious organization with 875 followers. They are growing by an average of fifteen new members each week, and they recruit from other states and countries.

He now has a Rolls Royce instead of the damaged VW, and serenity permeates his every step inside Omshanti. As a licensed California pastor of the Hindu faith, he can perform marriages, which he does. However, all of the couples understand that their loving bonds are not trapped inside monogamous ritual. Instead, sexual love becomes just as important to their serenity as spiritual love. If they can share their possessions, even their wives, then they can share love on all levels of existence.

No longer does Omshanti become trapped inside the box of conformity and militant ritual. They dance, they sing, and they share joy, and they hope to keep their Andromeda Galaxy moving toward this Milky Way. Our planets have beings who share physical love and inner spiritual harmony, and Omshantians believe it is their purpose to grow in numbers so that when Andromeda finally mixes with Earth's galaxy, all humans will be prepared for the changes that will occur.

Until then, he can only create the serenity of passionate openness by initiating these brides of passion. The steps are exactly sixty-three from his room in the Serenity compound to the bridal suite. In Nepal, the living child Kumari goddesses are worshipped by Hindus and Buddhists. But they are prepubescent, and his goddesses must be women.

The power of his lingam can only be raised by entering a virgin yoni. It is, indeed, the left-handed Tantric method. His spirit is sated from this ceremony, and he does not prohibit homosexual or bisexual activities as a path to awaken the Kundalini snake inside. He only wants followers to show love and devotion toward others with whom they perform coitus.

He chose her because her parents were martyrs. She must learn that her love extends outward to encompass the universe, just as she has the universe contained within. Monogamous family constructs serve capitalistic masters. Not that having mistresses or misters is discouraged on the outside.

No, as long as the capitalists benefit from the sins, straying from the nuclear family is permitted. They must show them all how love is to be shared, just as wealth of mind and

spirit must be shared. Her parents realized this, even though they died attempting to show the world how it can be possible to harness Eros to control violence.

She gags on the passion pill, so he gives her a drink from his chalice. He looks into her dark eyes and says, "My bride."

After he cleans up, he can see the boy running toward her on the quad. They must have come to collect the bodies. When she begins to scream, he knows her time with Omshanti is over.



CHAPTER TWO: YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

Rachel

Tel Aviv, Israel, August 2014

It seemed I had left the Omshanti commune in San Diego only to enter another, more heavily armed, commune in Israel. When my parents died, Bhagwan Sharma told me he would provide for my education and welfare. He said that my parents died while working on a secret project that would allow humans to control the passionate desire within in order to prevent violent thoughts and actions without.

I later discovered the autopsies revealed they officially died from brain aneurysms caused by surgery. Sid and Rose Edelstein, from the Bronx, New York, became the first two martyrs to the Omshanti cause. I believed the key to my own childhood trauma might be found if I could determine what that project was they were working on.

True to his word, Guru Sharma supported my schooling through high school, onto undergrad and graduate work at UCSD, and finally, I received my medical degree in psychiatry in June, 2012. Most of my friends on the ashram attended my graduation that day, including our Guru, and as I looked out on the audience from the stage, I could see the wide patch of orange and red, signifying the official colors of Omshanti.

Guru Sharma told me I no longer had to live on the ashram, if I chose not to, but he hoped I would one day see that Omshanti represented the path out of the militant confusion that the world outside insisted was worth dying for. I had no other choice but to accept the Guru's offer of support, as I no longer had any family. My parents' relatives had died in concentration camps, so we were left without legal forebears, and our path to the commune became a way to find physical security and inner tranquility.

When I decided to enter the Israeli military, I had not established a therapy practice, and part of my motivation was to gain experience as a psychiatrist working with a country that I now considered "my people." When I traveled in August of 2012 to Israel as part of a free Aliyah, or Eretz Israel program, I immediately saw that my country needed me. I learned Hebrew in my training when I served in the Israeli Defense Forces.

As a response to the weekly suicide bombings in public buses, public schools, and inside hotels and nightclubs in Tel Aviv, the walls were ordered to be built to protect Israel from the West Bank population of over 300,000 Palestinians. Indeed, before the completion of the first continuous segment in July 2003 from the beginning of the Second Intifada, 73 Palestinian suicide bombings were carried out from the West Bank, killing 293 Israelis and injuring over 1,900. After the completion of the first continuous segment through the end of 2006, there were only twelve attacks based in the West Bank, killing 64 people and wounding 445. Terrorist attacks declined in 2007 and 2008 to nine in 2010.

I guess Robert Frost was being ironic with his poem about “good fences making good neighbors,” but to us Israelis, fences are a necessary burden on Palestinian transportation in order to prevent terrorist attacks. However, ever since Prime Minister Fleischman was elected and re-elected, the uproar from the World Court, Amnesty International, and other respected organizations has been louder against what they now call “the apartheid wall.” The government has exacerbated the problem by allowing new Israeli settlements to be built inside Gaza under the guise of a new nationalistic view that sees all Palestinians as the enemy.

I stood at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem when I decided to enter the IDF as an officer. It was 2012, and I had my dual citizenship. Linda from Omshanti had written to me the day before saying that their group now had over 3,000 members, and they owned many restaurants, stores and organic farms in the San Marcos area. “In fact,” she said, “we had to get our own private police force because of the death threats coming from the citizens living in the community outside our ashram.” I now understood that no matter where you lived, if you espoused a religious doctrine, you were going to have to fight to protect your freedom to be different.

Two years later, when over 4,000 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza, Israel conducted a military operation in Gaza known as Protective Edge. The invasion into Gaza lasted 51 days in July and August 2014. It was the third major Gaza operation by the Israeli armed forces in seven years, and by far the most lethal and destructive. Some 2,205 Palestinians, including 722 militants and over 500 children, and 70 Israelis (64 of whom were soldiers) were killed. Thousands of Palestinians were wounded; over 18,000 of their homes were destroyed; some 470,000 were displaced, and large areas of Gaza were essentially razed.

I became a personal protective edge for the over 700 IDF victims of post-traumatic stress disorder, and I learned firsthand that my search for how and why my parents died inside the Omshanti lab had followed me around the world and into my office in Tel Aviv on that day of 21 August, 2014.

The patient I saw that day was Sergeant Seth Berman, 30, of the elite Golani Brigade. He was pale and stooped and completely bald as he sat on the couch inside my sparse military-style office on the nightclub strip in Tel Aviv. The IDF had set my office up in a haphazard manner inside the Haaretz Hotel, and my little room had a long blue couch, a scarred metal desk, and a three-wheeled padded green chair that kept rolling around under me as I listened to the young man’s story.

I had given him my usual patient injection of 25mg of sodium thiopental combined with hypnosis. I have my certificate in therapeutic hypnosis, and I know that too much “truth serum” can lead to flights of fancy that are as far from the truth as one can get.

The combination of the two brought out the best results in my experience as a practicing psychiatrist. In fact, I personally use it to get from my office back to my IDF Officer's Quarters on the base nearby. I suffer from severe agoraphobia, or "fear of public spaces," and I need the drug to keep panic attacks at bay. I find that many Israelis also suffer from this disorder, and as terrorists increase their attacks, I expect I will see even more free-floating anxiety in the population at large.

Sergeant Berman began with his first-person narrative in Hebrew about the raid into Gaza, and I had heard many such stories over the weeks inside my office. It was near the end of his story, however, when he was beginning to come out of his trance, that I learned about how he was personally connected to me and to my own search for the truth.

He was acting out a scene from the apartment in Tel Aviv where he now lives with his mother, a nurse at the city hospital. As he spoke to me, his hands pantomimed his drug ritual, and he took from his pocket an article to read. He even danced, and when he was finished, I knew I had my own questions to ask him.

I place the bead of black tar on the spoon. The IDF gets me the best Mexican heroin government money can buy. I can see my reflection inside the silver spoon, one of my mother's kosher spoons for Passover. My upside-down, bald oval head looks like the 'alien head' Saul gave me one night in the barracks. He held his watch next to his shorts and asked me, 'Hey Seth, is this the right time?' and when I looked down I saw Saul's testicle, the alien head, sticking out from his shorts.

As I hold the needle inside my water bottle and watch it suck up the liquid into the syringe, which is also my diabetic mother's, I contemplate the irony of the fact that she is now providing me with more than the simple act of giving birth or nurturing my body. I add the water onto the spoon with the black bead, and it now looks like a little island of black hope, the only hope I now have left since the day I returned from Gaza.

I rolled into Gaza with my fellows. We all were laughing and joking about the girls we were with the night before inside a Tel Aviv dance club. Saul had ordered a bunch of chickpeas and told the girls to sit next to each other and open their mouths wide, like baby birds. He told them he was the 'world's best grenade launcher' and that he practiced by tossing garbanzo beans. Each one of the girls received a tossed bean in her mouth; he didn't miss even one! We all sang 'Hatikvah,' standing at attention, and then we crashed against each other, out on the dance floor, rocking in convulsive laughter, as the band played the latest heavy metal.

My T-shirt has an inscription on the front of it written in Hebrew letters: 'Gaza was a free-fire zone.' That day comes back to me now as I heat the bottom of the spoon with my lighter. I stir the black island with the plunger of my syringe.

'Seth, get your ass over there and get that kid. We got reports they were firing on us from this house.' I look back at my lieutenant. 'Go inside, goddammit! Use the kid as a shield. They won't fire on a kid.' I do as I am told. The kid's face looks unafraid and determined as I duck-walk him inside the shack. The stink of the place overcomes me, a mixture of burnt cooking oil and human excrement.

My Uzi peeks out from under the kid's arm, like a New Year's bottle rocket, and that's when the kid begins to smile. A huge, swarthy grin scares me. The shots ring out. The kid is hit, falls backward into my arms like a rag doll, like the black dot that melts in the spoon. I fire back, just as the young woman shoots her pistol and screams, falls to the sandy floor, writhing in agony inside her black chador. I also fall to the floor, wounded in the leg.

I shout out to the lieutenant, who is safe inside his tank, 'You better get your ass in here, Lieutenant. It's a mistake. It's one big mistake in here!' The black island of hope is now melted inside the concave of the spoon. I roll the bead of cotton between my fingertips, place it gingerly on the spoon, and the liquid fills it like Paradise being sucked into a cloud. I dip the tip of the needle into the infused cotton and pull the plunger back—pull the trigger back—pull my soul back into my body, ready for the peace to take over.

I pick up the article published by Amnesty International. I want to re-read the special part as I am injecting. It always gives me a feeling of importance when I turn on. I don't feel like the isolated, dying soldier living with his mother inside an apartment in Tel Aviv. I feel like an important journalist, reporting the facts to the world that will finally listen:

I learned early on that war forms its own culture. The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug, one I ingested for many years. It is peddled by myth makers—historians, war correspondents, filmmakers, novelists, and the state—all of whom endow it with qualities it often does possess: excitement, exoticism, power, chances to rise above our small stations in life, and a bizarre and fantastic universe that has a grotesque and dark beauty. It dominates culture, distorts memory, corrupts language and infects everything around it, even humor, which becomes preoccupied with the grim perversities of smut and death.

Fundamental questions about the meaning, or meaninglessness, of our place on the planet are laid bare when we watch those around us sink to the lowest depths. War exposes the capacity for evil that lurks just below the surface within all of us. And so it takes little in wartime to turn ordinary men into killers. Most give themselves willingly to the seduction of unlimited power to destroy, and all feel the peer pressure. Few, once in battle, can find the strength to resist.

My mother told me we were once brothers and sisters. Muslims and Jews have the same laws of kashrut: no pork, no shellfish, nothing without fins or scales, no animal that is a predator. Together, they faced the invading Infidels from Christian Europe—the Crusaders—who had the practice of eating the 'body and blood' of their god, Jesus. To Muslims and Jews, Yahweh can never be a flesh-and-blood man. Never shall we eat the flesh of any human or prophet. I knew we had more cultural practices in common with the Muslims than we both had with the Christians. And yet, now the Christians are our allies against the Muslims. How can that be so?

We pack our cultural allies into their refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank, put up our militant walls and checkpoints all around; we must know all about them, their comings and goings, as if they were an alien race or species—not our brothers and sisters in culture—all because of this land we call our own, and they call their own, and all of our leaders exploit the differences to acquire power and wealth over the other. It is so clear to me now. Exploitation and greed are at the crux of our problems—on both sides—and now the mediator must move in to fill the bottomless crevasse between them.

I am the new Messiah! This is how it's going to be, from this day forward! We shall share collectively what we have. We shall return to the barter system—no more tricky investments based on complicated algorithms that only the rich can comprehend—a simple exchange of goods and services to maintain a healthy and mediated lifestyle. No, and it is not communism.

I say unto you, we are all human beings, and our brains have become our worst enemies! The brain seeks to divide us, to make us puppets to these masters who would use us for their profit, to make us like dreamers after their dreams, not our own. And so it shall be, I am the alien prophet, from another planet, a planet where peace and brotherhood reigns supreme over all. If you do not share, if you do not hold each other in utmost regard, then I will unleash my infinite power of Judgment upon you! I come from Omshanti,

and I will lead you!

I set the filled needle down for a moment and pick up a photo album from another era. As I turn the pages, memories are injected into me like the drug I need to stay alive. My mother holds me in her arms at the same hospital where she now works. I was born on February 24, 1984 in Tel Aviv. I am a Pisces, 'very creative but subject to being too much of a dreamer,' my mother told me. There I am at my Bar Mitzvah, standing tall in my blue prayer shawl and reciting my Torah portion, the part about Job giving up his selfish plea of innocence to God and becoming resigned to the omniscient power of his Maker. There I am standing tall in my IDF uniform, my face sunburned from training in the Negev, my grin so self-assured and brimming with a confidence that has now left me forever. Finally, there I am in the ashram, my mother standing beside me next to Guru Sharma; she stares out at the camera, a Mona Lisa in her nurse's role. We left Omshanti that day and moved back to Israel.

I set the photo album down and pick the needle up again. I stare at it. I shall go forth and inject this into all Mankind so they can at last be at peace with themselves! It is the only peace I know, and it will be the only peace they will ever know. There is no peace greater than the peace of the poppy! Oh, noble flower, blooming in the desert, I share your grace with the multitudes. Like the Prophet Jesus, I will make many fishes out of one fish, many loaves out of one loaf, and many injections out of this one! May this be the one to give me the power—the eternal power to control my destiny!

The needle goes inside the crook of my arm, laid out along that red river Styx, and the smile creeps into my face, the smile of the boy, the smile of the culture of war, and my alien head falls forward to rest on my chest. I hum 'Hatikvah,' and wait for the sun to go down.

Darkness brings a calm I can finally endure, as my mother enters from the hospital, and I will once again hold her by her thin shoulders, she is getting so very thin these days, look into her dark eyes, and ask, 'So Eema? How goes the battle?'

She looks up at me, a sad, knowing face that perhaps had looked up at many other prophets and sons, in many other times and places, neither passing judgment nor unduly praising. She just stares.

I, in my reverie, go over to the CD player on the little antique German table my mother has kept for five generations of Bermans. My father, long ago passing into the night of forgotten dreams, does not hold sway anymore. She is the queen of this home. I am her prince.

I play the music and it invokes in her a time from her youth, when children ran freely inside the kibbutz, the socialist farm, and in Omshanti, the American commune. All were parents to these children; all were responsible for their welfare. There was no selfishness imposed by the outside, capitalist forces of the 'free market.' The children, my mother among them, ran, danced and played their infinite variety of games, going from one new parent to another, never discriminating, never questioning their love, never feeling ashamed or fearful that there would come a time when there might be no parent to guard them. The song was a folk song from the kibbutzim, and I caught my mother up in my arms, and we danced as if time stood still, as if there were no more wars for land, for pride, for religion, or even for God. There was only the completed circle of love, alienated from the times to come, frozen in a moment of devotion and joy inside a song of hope.

After our dance, she sits down next to me on the small divan, and I lay my alien head down in her skinny lap and close my eyes. She whispers to me, as I try to sleep, and the words encircle my mind like another kind of drug.

This crisis will pass if you can just understand that you are free without their pressures, without their intoxicants to blind you. The tumor on your brain also contains the light of new beginnings. Ganesha, the elephant-headed god. Don't be afraid, my son. The light of the Zohar, the Ein Sof, is in you. The Secret

Garden, in worlds of light hidden . . . its splendor sends forth to the ends of Creation, in the fullness of glory and is revealed in its beauty to the eyes made seeing—the Garden of Eden.’

“Seth? Do you remember me? I was chosen to be the Omshanti bride of passion on the day you told me my parents had died. You ran up to me. Remember? You were just a boy then.” My voice came out in gasps. I kept thinking about how the Guru always said there were no coincidences in one’s life. Everything happens for a reason, and it is up to me to determine what the reason is.

“Rachel. Yes! Did they ever tell you about why your parents died?” Seth Berman could have been a prophet from the Bible. His words had that kind of effect on me.

“No. Guru Sharma just told me they died working on a secret project, and he said Omshanti would support me for the rest of my life if I wanted it.”

“I’m sorry to have to be the one to tell you, but after you were sent away to school, the story came out about how your parents had committed suicide. Somebody had caught them trafficking young boys and girls into the world sex tourism trade. You know, we got a lot of homeless then to get votes, and there were a lot of kids who had no parents. They were there without identification, without a family address, and so I guess your folks saw a chance to make some extra cash. When the Bhagwan found out, I guess they couldn’t stand the shame.”

I was crushed. All these years, as I studied and improved my mind to become a doctor, my support group had been keeping this dark truth from me! However, I also knew there was a faction within Omshanti that hated the Guru and wanted to bring him and his followers down. Maybe Seth was one of these disgruntled members. He sounded as if he believed he had taken Sharma’s place as a redeemer of the planet.

“Why did you leave the group?” I asked.

“When we heard about you getting paid tuition to go to college outside Omshanti, many of us tried to petition Bhagwan to do the same for us. He refused. That’s when my mother told him she had enough. She was going to take me back to Israel where I could prosper among our own people. We didn’t know there would be all these terrorist intifadas and the Gaza invasions. And then, when they found my brain tumor.”

Seth looked down at his lap. The tears were streaming, and I realized I would need more proof to find out whether he was telling me the truth about how my parents had died. His brain tumor could be confusing his memories, and he and his mother might have believed rumors from the faction that hated the Guru and what he stood for. I needed to do some more investigating to see who was being honest with me. As it stood, everyone could be lying to me, including the Israeli government.

What was the implication of seeing a former member of Omshanti in Israel? Not only was he a former member, he was also the one member who had seen my parents’ bodies being taken from the commune on that fateful day. I thought I could perhaps put Seth Berman behind me after that day of counselling. He was obviously going to die, and all I could do was keep in touch with his decline and visit him in the hospital. This would not be the case.

Exactly three days after our therapy session, I received a phone call from a woman who said her name was Judith. I was in my office in the hotel interviewing another PTSD patient. “You talked to my son, Seth, last week. We were members of Omshanti.”

“Oh, yes! Mrs. Berman. It’s so nice to hear from you. I was going to call you to stay on

track with your son's progress. How is he?"

"He's been murdered." Her voice was shallow, as if all the tears had already been shed, and I was getting the last bit of sanity from her brain.

"Murdered? How do you know?"

"Whoever killed him sent me an email message while I was working at the hospital. The message told me my son was sacrificed because he was a blasphemer of Maithuna, which is the only hope for mankind's salvation. But it was when and how he was killed that makes this event so mysterious. The authorities said Seth had his throat slit following his ejaculation. Traces of his sperm were on his body and on the bed sheet inside our apartment. His forehead was also inscribed with a black Star of David which had a single red line running through it, like on a road sign. All they've come up with is that Maithuna means one of the positions of lovemaking in the Tantric practice of sacred sex. There was no other physical evidence at the scene. The police believe somebody may have brought him to orgasm just before he or she cut his throat. Obviously, they are looking at this as a hate crime of some sort."

"Of course! What a tragic event for you to have to deal with. Please come to see me if you need some counseling. We have so much history together with Omshanti. In fact, I am wondering if somebody from our group in California might be a possible suspect. You remember, I'm sure, how there were fanatical factions inside the commune that wanted anybody who went against Guru Sharma dead. He helped me get through school, so I owe him something, but there were other members that would threaten the lives of those who spoke ill of him--even if they were members of Omshanti."

I guess I was telling her the wrong thing, because she hung up on me, and I never heard from her again. I still wanted to investigate on my own into this murder as it seemed to implicate those of us from Omshanti who had come to Israel. In fact, as I researched the symbol for the Star of David on the Internet, I saw that some fringe groups saw a way to implicate the usual anti-Semitic rhetoric into this hexagram:

The hexagram, popularly known as the Jewish 'Star of David' or 'Seal of Solomon,' is actually an ancient pagan sex & fertility symbol! The upward triangle is a penis, penetrating the downward triangle of the vulva. Shockingly, the hexagram was unknown to ancient Jews! Jesus never saw it, nor Kings David or Solomon! Even more shockingly, the hexagram is also used by New Agers, conspiracists, witches, and even Satanists!

Guru

Guru Sharma had problems with the Jews who entered Omshanti. Many of them he just let go because they see religion as more of a culture than as a way to escape the repression of governmental regulations. Rachel Edelstein and her parents, Sid and Rose, came to Omshanti because they had no family. They were not Orthodox Jews, so the Guru's teachings did not conflict too much with their Judaic belief system. Omshanti views on accepting science as a way to improve our lot on Earth were especially acceptable to them, as they were both computer science and robotics engineers. Sharma was beginning to increase funding for his laboratory, so they were able to begin work right away on the new Serene project under Dr. Joshua Lawrence.

When Rachel's parents died, he knew he would have a problem on his hands. During their

lovmaking in the passion bridal chamber, the girl was in some kind of self-induced trance, and she began talking about being on Masada Mountain in Israel. When he entered her, she did not move a muscle. Instead, her eyes were fixed on the Ganesha statue, and he was never able to get any kind of reaction from her, even with the most heated thrusts of his pelvis. Most girls performed admirably, although some cried, but they told him later they were tears of joy at being a chosen one. Rachel simply looked down at herself bleeding and called for a handmaid to clean her off.

Now she is in Israel, and he realizes she doesn't want to return to Omshanti. She continues to email him, however, and he believes the experiences she has had as a therapist might change her attitude. Many of her patients, she believes, are possibly incurable, damaged beyond all hope. This was the main reason he established his commune. He knew that world governments were forever using their weapons to reap more power and wealth, and they left the people lonely and destitute.

Even in their own peaceful ashram, Omshantians were called worshippers of Satan and sex perverts by the strangers outside. Guru hated to establish the armed guards, but when his motorcade travels through Omshanti each day, and they have tourists amongst his followers, one of these tourists might just be an assassin bent upon his destruction. The Pope and other religious leaders are experiencing the same dangers, and so, too, has it become part of Omshanti existence.

His followers also need therapy of the kind Rachel can provide. He keeps telling her Omshanti is growing, and the group has not turned its back on modern scientific methods. In fact, he just opened up the Serene Project once again, and it will become a major part of what they will be doing in their science component.

He believes that women—especially if they can be freed of the sexual rivalries that a monogamous culture forces upon them—can become the best administrators and doctors Omshanti can have. Rachel would make a perfect therapist for Omshanti. Every woman he has appointed to a responsible position has performed above and beyond expectations. Each has been honest, trustworthy, and innovative.

Yes, Omshanti has had mishaps, such as the first Serene experiment with Rachel's parents, but the Guru wants to continue building the infrastructure that combines a free spirit with an unencumbered scientific quest. One day, Omshanti will establish the bedrock upon which a new world and even—dare he say it—a galactic convergence will take place!

Joshua

SynGen Group, San Diego, August 2014

Office Memoranda

Subject: Project Serene

I have assembled the required staff and ordered the equipment necessary to begin work on the new tests required for trials with the animals. The stated goals are the same as when initially proposed after observing the Omshanti cult for three years. We want to harness

the libido of a human subject through the use of artificial intelligence and a physiological implant that references a predetermined package of researched sexually sensitive stimuli that will enable the controller to send enough endorphins into the brain to establish a reflex conditioned response that overcomes any other outside conditioning, such as being a member of cult for several years.

I would like to begin my project next week. Therefore, it is necessary for me to have my staff assigned for at least six months, and I would also like to keep open requisitions for any more new supplies we might need.

Dr. Joshua Lawrence, Head of Genetic AI, Dept. 6A

That's what he had to write to keep the company sleuths off his back. He even had to lie to his staff to a certain extent because they have no idea that they will be researching far beyond the genetic modification of endorphins to control sexual behavior. He wants to be able to prevent any organization such as Omshanti from using so-called "free love" to control members' allegiances and behaviors. True, sex is one of the strongest instincts in the human species, but he wants the individual to be able to control his or her own drive and not any organization—even if it's SynGen. Sex should never be for sale unless the individual is in complete control of how the intercourse is conducted and to whom these precious favors are extended.

Until he was made aware of Dr. Rachel Edelstein, he thought finding a good subject for his human experiment was going to be most difficult. He needed a person who had been damaged by a sexual trauma but who was also intelligent enough to understand the underlying physical problem that must be resolved first before attempting to cure the trauma. As a member of Omshanti, Rachel was chosen to be one of the sex brides of the cult leader, one Bhagwan Sharma. As he has determined by investigating her history with the group and subsequent education, her personal drive to heal her own psychological injury has led her to become a doctor of psychiatry.

His project needs someone with the intellectual skills to appreciate what the Serene implant can do for her. In addition, since she had been a practicing therapist for the Israeli government, he can also be assured she is the personality type who can follow orders and be aware of the dangers of misusing a powerful device such as Serene.

Of course, the final ingredient is familial, as he was able to ascertain that her parents began a similar exploration into the sex drives of humans when they worked in the laboratory at Omshanti. It's not clear how they died, but he believes it was because the couple decided to use themselves as the first human trial subjects. He believes it is appropriate for Dr. Rachel Edelstein to continue this endeavor in the memory of her parents, and the irony is that it may be possible to use her parents' brains to create androids that will continue Rose and Sid forever into the future.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SERENE GENESIS

Joshua

Josh discovered the Omshanti cult as a sixteen-year-old grad student at Caltech in Pasadena. Like most geniuses, he had a prematurely developed intellect, but his social skills were not unlike the stereotypical “Sheldon Cooper” from *The Big Bang Theory*. He found that show quite lacking as to the actual lifestyles of engineers and scientists at Caltech and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. In reality, they dined at the exclusive Athenaeum on campus, which was where he learned to appreciate fine cuisine. On the TV show, we see these scientists eating takeout in their sparse apartments. In reality, scientists lived in relative luxury, as their six-figure salaries would allow, up in the large homes of La Canada Flintridge. That show, in fact, harkens back to an era when scientists shunned profit-making enterprises and believed their experimentation should be shared amongst the world’s best minds in order to improve the environmental and socio-political health of humanity.

Not so. Today, corporate think tanks and Wall Street investment firms harvest most of the great minds trained at the prestigious universities around the world. As a result, America of today is not the representative democracy that *perhaps* was envisioned by the founders, although there are arguments against that actually being the case. America of today is an oligarchy, and as such, corporations want to own genomes and not share them. They want to increase profits to their shareholders and not increase the health and wellbeing of our teeming populace.

As a sixteen-year-old, he was looking for some kind of social institution that could provide sexual gratification to a person who did not want to go through the elaborate and demeaning mating process dictated by the American culture. Why couldn’t we just “cut to the chase” and “get it on” as the childlike hippies used to say? Free love still existed, and it was being shared at the Omshanti commune in San Marcos, California. That was all he needed to know.

He made it his sole purpose to investigate this organization and find out if what it was advertising on the Internet was actually true. He could care less about the Hindu mumbo-jumbo. As an Ayn Rand enthusiast and lifelong atheist, he had long ago, by age thirteen, put away the *Bible*, *Koran*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in exchange for *Atlas*

Shrugged and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Now he wanted to see theory put into practice on a first-person level.

San Marcos wasn't too far from the Caltech campus, so he drove down there on a weekend to attend one of the group's tours of the ashram. He would be able to stay at the hotel right inside Omshanti's ten acres of "organic horticulture, modern science labs, and active meditation temple," but of course all he cared about was information concerning the perhaps more animalistic erotic sharing of body parts.

When he filled out the online questionnaire, the group contacted him, and a honey-voiced female was on the phone to welcome him. She told him that Guru Bhagwan Sharma himself had viewed his application. "As you might be aware, Omshanti is hoping to attract the greatest minds from around the world to join our group. As a result of your qualifications, Mr. Lawrence, we are placing you in our exclusive tour of the ashram. You will be able to visit our science labs and see what kind of equipment we have at your disposal as well our university-level library that is being supplemented daily with digital access to the most advanced engineering and scientific journals in the world."

He almost wanted to shout into the telephone that he could care less about their advanced science and technology. "Just show me the tits and ass!" was what his sixteen-year-old mind was thinking. However, as he knew that kind of invective would isolate him from their collective religious delusion, he kept his desires to himself and said, "Thank you. I am looking forward to the tour."

The genesis of his Serene project, as one might assume by now, began with the tour that day. He still had his journal's notes that he completed at night in their Active Meditation Hotel. You'll have to excuse the rather sophomoric descriptions of the fleshly delights, but he was, after all, a raging hormonal adolescent. Is it no wonder that the Supreme Court had finally judged the teenaged brain so lacking in decision-making abilities that no longer may the states execute such brains for murderous intent? At that age, god help us, we are not able to curtail our lustful urges.

Today we were guided, until lunch, to the horticultural hothouse and the 'futuristic' research laboratory. Four others in my 'exclusive group' were also teenage geniuses from Caltech and UCSD, and one flew all the way out from MIT. As per usual, we did not talk amongst ourselves. Instead, I assumed we each were collecting our cynical thoughts to be later transcribed into journals such as this to be shared with our fellow introverts on our secluded online bulletin boards.

*I didn't find much in the way of new research being done by these people wearing the cult's ashram orange (a color most indicative to good fortune in the Hindu culture). The hybridization of vegetables had been perfected long ago by Israeli farmers on *kibbutzim* and by Japanese using organic hydroponics inside their over 52,000 hectares of greenhouses. If I were to guess which culture makes the best horticulturalists, I would say that the ones that are island nations and are desert nations should be used as the touchstone for the best and most advanced research and development. Indeed. All that we in the U.S. seem to have developed is corn that can sterilize vast fields of non-genetically modified plants. The Omshanti scientists did have a rather unique way of growing spinach on floating beds of water suspended from the ceiling. Other than that, most of their other innovations were copies of basic cross-breeding accomplished the world over.*

As for the science lab experiments, again, although the equipment was advanced, the research being conducted that we were allowed to see was mundane. The exception was the genetic sequencing machine they

had. Twelve years ago, it cost \$1 billion to sequence a single human genome. By next year, using Life Technologies' Ion Proton machine, it will take less than a day and cost \$1,000 (not including analysis costs, of course). The Omshanti genetics lab had one of these Ion Proton machines, and this was something even Caltech did not have. The MIT woman said her school had one, but I always take what MIT says with a pound of sodium.

It didn't get interesting until after a lunch of organically grown carrots, peas and non-GMO corn and chickpeas. We were all led by the Guru Bhagwan Sharma in a guided "active meditation" that was unlike any meditation I had ever experienced. My parents, who were once hippie commune members, never exercised this kind of meditation. I had always been instructed that meditation's purpose was to keep the mind clear, relaxed, and inwardly focused. When you meditate, you are fully awake and alert, but your mind is not focused on the external world or on the events taking place around you. Meditation requires an inner state that is still and one-pointed so that the mind becomes silent. When the mind is silent and no longer distracts you, meditation deepens.

Conversely, there was the 'active meditation' of the Omshantians. We began with what I call 'navel gazing,' which is the traditional form of meditation that my parents practiced. However, then the transformation began into the 'active' part. Did I mention this all took place inside the huge 'temple' where every member of the Serene family ate and meditated as a group? Not only was I monkeying along with over 900 orange-clad, underwear-donning idiots, I was also being led into the very sexual frenzy that had provoked my interest in this group from the very beginning, when I saw the short video of several bare-breasted damsels smiling out at me on the web. Each had the necklace with the attached picture of Guru Sharma's bearded and dark face, and those hypnotic brown eyes that drilled holes into you.

All the Guru said was 'Let the demons go!' and boy did we start to demonize. The woman beside me began to scream like I had seen only once before. It was in a documentary on one of those apostolic Christian sects in which members 'spoke in tongues' and began writhing and babbling on the floor like insane inmates. It began to get interesting, however, when Bhagwan said, 'Let the love fill your lotus hearts like an eternal spring of passion!'

The woman beside me took off her orange blouse, and all I could watch was the picture of Guru Sharma as it bounced between her voluptuously bulbous and nipples young breasts. There was no music playing. The music, I assumed, came from within. After most of the congregation was half or fully naked, with penises flailing about like Kundalini snakes and buttocks jiggling like mounds of fleshly honeypots, the Guru finally said, 'Find your heart's desire!'

On cue, the members began bouncing around and staring deeply into the eyes of each other. Male on male, female on female, and of course, the traditional coupling of male and female. It was all happening before my pubescent eyes. What was I doing amid this hurricane of animal desire? Although fully erect beneath my Dockers, I stood at parade rest, my hands behind my back, observing the scene the way Dr. Oppenheimer must have on that day he watched children playing in the streets and said, 'They could solve some of my top problems in physics because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago.' I was at last finding my modes of sensory perception that had disappeared during my years of study and devotion to science. I knew that at sixteen I would finally be able to produce adult research because I had found a wellspring of passion right there in the center of that group of dancing Shivas and Shaktis. The genesis of my Serene research began with a single hypothesis: If I can create an artificially stimulating way to harness the libido of a human being, I could prevent cults like this one from controlling its members for the personal gain and enrichment of the leader. I wanted to return the control of passion back to the

individual, and use science to create a device that could physiologically monitor the body's true passion centers and replicate them for the individual to enjoy—even alone—if the brain's need so determines it.

I did not pair off with anyone that day. However, I vowed to allow myself such pleasure once I was able to create the Serene AI device that was forming in my brain like a genetically modified passion seed.

Josh decided to join the Omshanti group at some point after his graduation. He made it his quest to enjoy the world's cuisine during his research to create the Serene device, and he was also going to enjoy the world's sexual practices, one person at a time, until his device became a way for entire societies to free themselves from control by the media or by gurus such as Bhagwan Sharma, and to allow each person to become the completely unrepressed human that was waiting to be born into a new world of the elevated senses.

