



Free excerpt # 2 – Copyright 2013

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“The death of one man is a tragedy. The death of millions is a statistic.”

--Joseph Stalin

“You make love like a freshman.”

“And you make love like a woman breaking in a wild stallion.”

We had lived together in my parent’s home for three weeks, sleeping in separate bedrooms which we kept bolted from the inside. She taught me how to target shoot from tree limbs while I educated her on how everything worked in our shared fortress, but we rarely engaged in conversation about our lives before the Die-Off.

And then late this afternoon, she turned to me while we picked apples in the orchard and kissed me.

Within minutes we were in bed, naked and entwined; the two of us entering an exciting new world.

The deed done, Andria climbed off and laid beside me, the flesh on her tan back and buttocks sporting a series of scars. “Scratch.”

I accepted my duties, restricting the urge to hug her from behind lest she crush my windpipe with an elbow to the throat.

“You may have noticed that I have control issues, Eisenbraun. I guess it comes from being on my own since I was fifteen. A little lower. Now harder, use your nails. . .God, that’s good. So what’s your story? How’d you learn to do all this?”

“I studied a lot. You know. . .lack of a social life.”

“Funny, I pegged you as a jock. How tall are you? Six-foot five? Maybe two-twenty? Bet you played basketball.”

“Track and field. Mom was a natural athlete, I inherited her foot speed. Did some long jump and the hundred meters in high school until the varsity football coach forced me to try out as a receiver. I couldn’t catch a cold, let alone a football. Stone hands Eisenbraun, they called me on the field, Jew bastard off it. Things changed after they switched me to free safety and found out the Jew liked to hit.”

“Chip on your shoulder, huh? That makes us kindred spirits. Did you play ball in college?”

“I wanted to, but the Pentagon ordered me not to play. Guess they were afraid of concussions damaging the old noggin’.”

“The Pentagon?”

“My uncle was a general, a big-wig with D.A.R.P.A. When I was fourteen I created an algorithm for a video game that ended up being used to train gamers to fly military drones. Three years later my uncle was placed in-charge of a top-secret initiative, called Omega. I left school during my sophomore year in college to work with his team.”

God, I was blathering like a little girl.

“And?”

“And it’s top-secret. Now you tell. Where are you from? Who taught you to hunt?”

“I’m part Seminole, and don’t change the subject. Tell me about Omega. And no bullshit about it being top-secret. The world’s in the shitter because of assholes like your uncle.”

“My uncle wasn’t an asshole and Omega wasn’t a weapon. It was actually an initiative that could have averted the die-off. The Omega Project was a \$750 billion energy program, seeded in secrecy by the Pentagon during the Obama years to replace fossil fuels with fusion energy.”

“Just what the world needs, more nuclear waste.”

“No, no, that’s fission. Fusion is clean energy that’s released when two hydrogen atoms are merged together. The technology’s biggest challenge was that the Sun-like temperatures required to generate a chain reaction also released neutrino particles which destroyed the reactor’s vessel. The solution to the problem required fusing deuterium with Helium-3 which stabilized the process.”

“English, Eisenbraun.”

“To stabilize fusion required Helium-3, a stabilizing element that originates from the sun. The problem was that only a few cups worth of Helium-3 ever reaches our planet thanks to Earth’s dense atmosphere. The moon, however, possesses over a million metric tons of the stuff, enough to generate energy for the next thousand years.”

“So Omega was a secret mission to mine Helium-3 from the moon?”

“Exactly.”

“But you mentioned the Pentagon. Why involve those warmongers?”

“First, because the dysfunctional assholes in Congress would never have considered funding such a radical energy plan at a time when politics was focused on unemployment, even though the program created a lot of jobs. Second, because the Pentagon not only had access to

the money, they also had the ability to operate the program in secrecy without Congressional oversight. Still, the scientific challenges were considerable, requiring NASA to design new lunar shuttles to transport the Helium-3, plus a habitat that could safely house a mining crew – don't forget, each astronaut required large supplies of food, water, and oxygen.”

“I thought there's water on the moon – scratch my butt.”

“There's ice, so yes, there's water. There's also moon dust, which became a major challenge. Moon dust particles act like glass shards, making them a constant threat to the astronauts' skin and eyes. There's also limits on what the human body can endure, especially when it comes to long-term exposure to gravitational forces one-sixth that of Earth. Between the health concerns and the costs – about a million dollars per astronaut per day – my uncle decided to go in a different direction. . .drones.”

“Drones?” She rolled over, positioning her head on my chest – her right hand casually stroking my penis. “Keep talking.”

“By, uh. . . drones, I meant replacing the lunar astronauts with mining equipment that could be remotely operated back here on Earth. All that was needed to do the job was a super computer to operate the drones. The way my uncle figured it, if a computer could remotely operate everything from a passenger jet to a surgical appendage performing brain surgery, then why not a mining operation on the moon? That was the reason my uncle recruited me for Omega, to join the best and brightest scientists in designing and engineering GOLEM.”

“What's GOLEM?”

I sucked in a breath as her lips kissed my stomach. “GOLEM? It's an acronym that stood for Geological Offsite Lunar Excavation Machine. Whoever made it up stole it from a bible story about a soulless being, created by man, to service his needs. See, GOLEM wasn't

going to just be a super computer, it was going to be the ultimate in artificial intelligence – a machine that could think and adapt in order to control complex multi-layered tasks a quarter of a million miles away.”

I closed my eyes, willing her mouth to venture lower.

She stopped. “Keep talking, Eisenbraun. How did a young track and field nerd like you get involved with GOLEM?”

“My uncle was confident I could resolve the computer’s design flaws, so he assigned me to work under GOLEM’s director, Monique DeFriend. DeFriend was the former head of CSAIL, a prestigious artificial intelligence lab. DeFriend buried me in menial tasks, until I submitted a design for GOLEM’s DNA matrix which blew everyone away. Two days later she placed me in-charge of GOLEM’s programming. I had just turned twenty.”

“Nice. So what happened?”

“What happened? The G.D.O. happened. The world went to hell.”

Andria released me, her mood darkening. “Who are you to complain? You survived, Eisenbraun. You, with your solar panels and water filters and lake water. I didn’t have seeds and canned goods; I didn’t have a backyard filled with fruit trees.”

“You also didn’t have starving anti-Semites as neighbors. When the government collapsed my parents preached secrecy to my younger sisters – ‘if the neighbors find out we have food, they’ll take first and ask for handouts later,’ but it’s hard for teens not to want to help when their friends are literally starving to death.

“I was on my way home from the chaos in Washington the day our neighbors struck. My parents and sisters were butchered for three bags of brown rice and a bushel of apples. The rest of our supplies remained hidden in the garage attic.”

“I’m sorry.” She laid back down, her hand draped across my chest. “After they murdered your family. . .what did you do?”

“First I buried my family behind the orchard wall. Then I used the rest of our gasoline to burn down the murderers’ homes while they slept. I’ve been alone here ever since.”

“You’re an angry little bastard, Eisenbraun, but you’re no longer alone.”

She climbed on top of me and kissed me, her tongue harsh as it probed my mouth, her hand stroking my loin until I entered her again.

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