

**WOW**

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# Part I

## Section 1a

No doubt, the most important thing is to leave them amazed. It doesn't matter why they're amazed, as long as you go viral, as long as it spreads like a locust swarm across the Internet. Because who cares if what you're doing is stupid or ingenious or even immoral when your goal is to entertain? People just want to watch and hear something out of the ordinary to wake them up out of their torpid sleep and that feeling of unconditional surrender.

(That was their thinking before "the idea").

"The idea," much to their surprise, created the biggest *wow* imaginable. It may not seem believable at first but then you'll understand, not only is it believable, it's happening to you, right now.

I will begin with the father, as so many stories do.

His name was Cowell. James Patrick Cowell XXXII, to be precise. His mom thought to herself, how many sons are born as the 32nd descendent of his namesake? Not Louis the XIV. Not Henry the VIII. So she made up a white lie that James was the one.

James Patrick Cowell XXXII was usually called James by his friends. He often told those he met that 1,024 was the square root of himself. Of course, no one knew what that meant. He enjoyed their confusion, then would go on to explain that XXXII multiplied by XXXII was 1,024.

Most of the people he met didn't get it even after he explained it. So either he was too smart for his own good, or he was hanging out with the wrong kind of people. People far beneath his lineage.

James had a career. He was a detective. At first he solved little mysteries like finding lost cats or stolen cars or

catching unfaithful cowards in the act. Later in his career, however, he began to discover bigger things, odder things, like the fact that his own wife was from another planet.

It dawned on him all at once – one night when she was giggling, that her giggling was about the fact that earth wasn't going to be here much longer, at least not in a recognizable form.

Earthlings were finally going to get what they deserved. And here she was giggling about it. (She is no longer laughing, by the way.)

## Section 1b

Gwyneth Cowell was by no means someone who you would think would be easy to murder. She was smart, relative to humans anyway. (But only moderately smart for a non-human.) And she was also quite fast when running, even with heels on. Not faster than a bullet by any means, but then again, some bullets didn't fare too well against her, according to data recently uncovered. In fact, James presumed they had a way of ricocheting into the one who pulled the trigger. A bazooka might do the trick. She would definitely have a harder time against a bazooka. But how was James supposed to get his hands on a bazooka?

There was one other problem James Cowell the XXXII had to consider: there was a nagging doubt in his mind – it was possible that none of what he was thinking was true: Maybe she *was* human. Maybe bullets would work just fine, with no ricochet. (This thought crossed his mind over a meatloaf special and a beer one night at his favorite local bar.)

Doubts about her belonging to an alien race got stronger when they weren't arguing with each other. In these moments of what one might call something akin to "civility" he gave credence to the fact that it was possible his imagination was running away with him in a paranoid detective kind of way.

"Ah, Gwen, you know what I need?" he mused one night. He was drinking an evening coffee, highly caffeinated, one of his many bad legal habits.

"The answer is no," Gwen said, remembering their last disaster in bed. She got up from her soft green TV chair and tried to open a stuck window. This was the same stuck

window she had tried to open every summer night since the day they were married. "Besides, he'll be home any minute."

"I'm not talking about that," he frowned, noting her tone of disgust.

"Then what?" she surrendered.

"I need a vacation, is what I need. I need to clear my head."

"A vacation? *With who?* Not with me, I have to work!"

"Whom."

"What?"

"With 'whom,' not with 'who.'"

"What the hell are you, an English professor now?"

"I'm just saying, if we're going to talk to each other we should try to speak with good grammar," he huffed.

"And what if we don't, is the grammar police gonna bust our door down?"

"Are."

"What?"

". . . 'are' the grammar police. . . ."

"Screw you, you creep!"

On and on this kind of dialogue would flow, without any one thought actually being followed to the end, like phrases constantly ending in commas.

James and Gwyneth's only child, James XXXIII, walked in late from work. He was working a night shift at a yoghurt ice cream store downtown. He was on summer break, living at home, trying to make enough money to live somewhere else by next summer break.

The story is really about him.

## Section 1c

James Cowell XXXIII was the first and only born son of James Cowell XXXII, who decided to continue his mother's rather odd joke with one of his own. Unlike his rather unremarkable looking short balding father, James XXXIII was a strapping young man. He was tall and thin but muscular, with dark straight hair worn a little too long for a business suit, which is one of the many reasons he was working in a frozen yoghurt store.

He wore thin nerdy glasses for his near sightedness, which was getting worse. He had a dark complexion, yet not in any way greasy dark; he was just tanned from playing in the first months of summer. In the winter he turned pale like a sun setting in a winter sky. He had striking blue eyes, especially when contrasted with his summer tan, ears that were a little too small if measured against the median ear size, a Roman nose of somewhat healthy length, let's call it robust but without it being so big as to be the butt of someone's joke. His neck possessed a slightly overlarge Adam's apple as far as the median sized Adam's apple goes, and hidden underneath his frozen yoghurt stained blue tee shirt was a hairy but by no means ape-like chest. His arms were gangly but very coordinated when it came to sports. In fact, he had rather inhuman strength at the plate, not due to his arms, but due to his ridiculous wrist speed and hips that could turn as if on a swivel. His legs were thin for an athlete, no thick calves for this boy James, yet he could run a marathon without losing the timing of his breath. James XXXIII was always in control, it seemed, not in an arrogant way, or a needy way. The control just seemed to happen naturally, maybe because he wasn't trying very hard.

Below his thin calves were the red sneakers he wore all the time, even to the funeral of his grandmother. He rarely wore socks. Therefore, his left big toe had a white cloud at the top of the nail that would come and go with medication. It was odd indeed that even over-the-counter fungal cream would work on James XXXIII's nail, yet remained ineffective for the vast majority of fungus infected nails in the world. This and many other things about the boy couldn't quite be explained.

How, for instance, could he be so sure of himself, so strong in mind, body, and spirit growing up in a house with two verifiably dysfunctional parents addicted to TV, Facebook, YouTube, i-Phone apps, new age music, Starbucks, Oreos, white bread, religion (Gwen), mangy dogs, stray cats, a sarcastic parakeet, a psychopathic artist named Angela Grim, whose prints made the walls look smaller and darker than they really were, a garden with only dead brown things but steadfastly defined as a garden instead of an abandoned yard, three cars, two of which had been up on wooden slats for years in the front yard waiting for the mechanic from purgatory to release them, so that they might some day run free across the Interstate of their dreams, Prozac, Xanax, Zoloft (for the unmedicated these are not the names of Nobel prize winning Russian novelists), and not least of all, frozen yoghurt.

James the XXXIII would always bring home a gallon of chocolate at the end of his shift and watch his parents get even rounder by inhaling it before, God forbid, it melted.

After they were done scraping the bottom of the white plastic non-recyclable one gallon box with their two fighting

white plastic spoons, mercifully made from something like petrified sugar cane, they decided to tell their son the news.

“Son,” his father burped. “We have something serious to tell you.”

“Does it have anything to do with adult onset diabetes?” the son asked.

“No!” his father yelled. Not that he was angry, yelling was his conversational tone.

His mother giggled. She thought her son should be a stand up comedian, but her husband didn’t get the humor. He just seemed annoyed all the time. Detective work was very stressful.

“Okay, can I take one more guess?”

“You know what, smart Alec? Forget it!” his father belted out over his new iPad. “I’ll go back to my virtual reading.”

“A mystery novel?” His son was making what they called a repair attempt. An “I’m sorry,” without having to admit to anything.

“There are no mystery novels to me, son, I’m a detective. I figure things out by the end of the first chapter.”

“Yeah, okay dad. Lost cats lead to terrorists in the Capitol Building, I see the connection.”

“You know, Jimmy, you’ve got some mouth on you.”

“Sorry, pops, what’s the news you were going to surprise and shock me with? I’m not a detective, and I have a date in twenty minutes so lay it on me in Cliff notes, okay? Speaking of which, can I borrow. . .”

“The car! The *car*, right? I told you I’m a detective, and no.”

“Why not?”

“Because you’re a terrible kid. Unless you bring home an extra gallon tomorrow.”

“Okay, sure, anything to cause your untimely demise.” He pulled his shirt over his head ready to jump into the shower.

“Forget it,” the father said, “no hot water left after Gwen’s marathon evening bath.”

“By the way, there is an inheritance of some kind hidden somewhere, is there not? You can’t be living like this with no hope, nothing stashed away, no secret . . . is that what you’re about to tell me? Are we rich from your penny stock investing?”

“You sure know how to talk trash to your old man, don’t you? Gwen, where the hell did you get this kid from, the city dump?” He reached in his pocket and threw the keys over to his son’s outstretched hands. James XXXIII began to saunter away.

“We’re getting a divorce, James,” his mother said quietly. It was as if the word “divorce” was sacred, like the word “angel” – spoken in such a hushed tone.

“You’re getting a divorce again?” James said? “That’s the big news? Well, I have something to match that. Did you see ‘The LA Times’ headline today? The sun is turning *yellow!*”

“I hope this isn’t going to segue into another one of your urinating jokes, James,” his mom scolded. “You know, they’re not so funny.”

“We mean it this time,” said James XXXII.

“Roger that, dad,” his son said, as he put his shirt back on and grabbed a jacket off of the coat rack. “Let me get this straight – mom and you are going to separate, and then

you'll survive for how many days before we find you walking around shoeless, starving, and holding a gun to your head? You can't live without her and you know it. "

"You're too young to understand," his father responded in an uncharacteristically soft voice. "You're only nineteen, you know nothing about these things."

"Well, you may be right about that, but now that I have the keys to the car I intend to learn more about it. Wish me luck. And if I don't come home tonight, know my prayers have been answered."

## Section 1d

“They’re fine,” James said, as Sunny jumped into the car. They kissed briefly and he sped off.

“What did you tell them this time? You have a secret girlfriend to attend to?”

“Something like that. But I would never tell my father there’s a secret anything. He’s a detective, remember? It piques his otherwise non-existent curiosity. Professional pride. You have to just make everything seem normal and uninteresting. Then he just goes back to reading his i-books and plotting ways of escaping my mom which are about as rational as a ten year old.”

Sunny had been James’ girlfriend for about two years now. She was going to UCLA majoring in film, while also studying acting and media, while James was at UCSD studying a variety of subjects which included psychology and religious studies. There was no questioning each other’s loyalty while they were off at different schools. There was no doubt whatsoever. They had plans that superseded doubt.

The night air was warm, with the sky dusted in a pleasant, by now familiar orange haze. Although in the last few years a bit of black seemed to be sneaking through the West Hollywood atmosphere from time to time. Sometimes L.A. natives would stop and point skyward- what is that? The night sky has turned black!

Sunny looked beautiful, as always. Auburn ringlets framed her pale face. She wore a white tee shirt, jeans, and an M.J. fedora hat. Her arm rested comfortably out the window of James’ dad’s beat up grey Honda as it tore down Sunset Blvd at an ear shattering thirty miles per hour. It needed a new muffler.

Most nineteen year olds would have been a little self conscious about the car that they picked their girlfriend up in. Either something newer, or something much older would have created an aura of cool. But James XXXIII had no sense of shame about driving around in this piece of junk with his girl, which in her mind made him uber-cool.

“Your dad’s okay,” Sunny offered. “Behind that ex-New York, gruff exterior is a guy with some heart. I see through his tough talk.”

James said nothing.

They pulled up to the office. This was ground zero. The office is where she spent most of her time. In this medium-sized spartan room next to the UCLA campus were a couple of new Mac computers and an old soft couch where she would usually fall asleep at 2 a.m.

## Section 1e

*Never before.*

*Of extreme value.*

*Dramatic.*

*Dynamic.*

*Controversial.*

*Wisdom for One World: "WOW!"*

*Bigger than Big.*

*Threatening, but with the Hope of Redemption.*

These were the kinds of notes Sunny and James would jot down, then burn.

No one must ever find them.

They would need to remember.

"WOW!" was interesting. Exciting sounding. Good.

They had a lot of details to work out. They knew that would most likely fail.

## Section 1f

James XXXII wasn't really thinking about detective work that Saturday afternoon. He was cleaning out an old closet in his son's makeshift bedroom, which had been an attic long ago. Now that James XXXIII was in college, and his room was functional only as a dust catcher, the plan was to make this into James XXXII's new home office.

A detective had to have a shingle back in his prime. He had his office downtown. But truthfully, most of his work in the last number of years was done on the web. So he could do most of his work from anywhere that had Wi-Fi.

Background checks were his specialty now, specifically with potential business partners checking up on each other's private lives, and investors wanting to know the financial details and potential criminal records of their prospective hedge fund managers.

Murders were something he had investigated only a few times in his career, as well as one kidnapping of an oil magnate's estranged wife. It didn't take a rocket scientist to guess who was behind the kidnapping since she'd taken half of her husband's money in a divorce that was as messy as the BP oil spill. The husband is now behind bars. She's living in Buenos Aires, married to a copper magnate.

But James XXXII wasn't so much a police investigator as he was a researcher of records.

That's why what he found in the closet was so odd. It was a letter hidden in a glass jar, typed in some kind of code:

Πεοπλε οφ Εαρτη:

Ωε αρε ηερε το ηελπ ψου ασ λονγ ασ ψου χροοπερατε.  
Ωε ωιλλ χομμυνιχατε ωιτη ψου τηρουγη σομεονε ωε  
χηροοσε, ονε οφ ψουρ οων. Ωε δο νοτ ωαντ το ηαρμ  
ψου αλτηουγη ιφ ψου δο νοτ ηεεδ υσ τηε εαρτη ασ  
ψου κνω ιτ ωιλλ βεχομε α πλαχε ωιτηουτ λιγητ.

Ωηατ ωε ωαντ μοστ οφ αλλ ισ το τεαχη ψου ηω το  
μακε μονεψ.

Αλωαψσ α ωορτηψ γοαλ φορ τηοσε οφ ψου ωηο  
ωατχη τελεωισιον, εσπεχιαλλψ τηε Σηοππινγ  
Νετωορκ.

Βυτ τηισ ισ νοτ μονεψ ιν ψουρ χυρρενχψ. Ανδ  
αλτηουγη Ι ηοπε ψου τηουγητ τηατ ωασ φυννψ, τηισ  
ισ νοτ α φοκε. Τηε μονεψ ωε αρε ρεφερρινγ το ισ  
μονεψ ιν ουρ χυρρενχψ. Τηισ μεανσ ψου μυστ βεχομε  
περψ σμαρτ. Φαρ σμαρτερ τηαν ψου αρε νοω. Ιτ  
μεανσ ψου μυστ βεχομε αωαρε οφ ωηατ ισ τρυλψ  
παλυαβλε. Τηε ονε ωε χηροοσε φορομ ψουρ ηυμαν ραχε  
ωιλλ τρψ το ηελπ ψου το μακε τηε νεχεσσαρψ  
επολυτιοναρψ λεαπ.

Ιφ ψου δο νοτ συχχεεδ ψου ωιλλ βε ερασεδ. Ψου ωιλλ  
νο λονγερ εξιστ. Νοτ ονλψ ωιλλ ψουρ βοδψ διε, βυτ  
ψουρ σουλ ωιλλ βε κιλλεδ. Τηισ ισ περψ δανγερους  
σινχε ιτ μεανσ ψουρ σουλ χαν νεπερ εξιστ αγαιν ιν  
ανψ φορμ. Σο πλεασε φολλω ινστρυχτιονσ  
χαρεφυλλψ.

Τηε ονε ωηο ωε ηαπε χηοσεν το ηελπ ψου ισ αμονγ  
ψου νοω. Σηε ισ α περσον χοννεχτεδ το ονε οφ τηοσε

ωηο λιωεσ ωηερε τηισ λεττερ δωελλσ. Μεεκ ασ σηε  
μαψ σεεμ σηε ηασ ποωερσ υντολδ. Ποωερ το  
ρεωερσε τηε χουρσε οφ μοστ οφ τηε ενεργψ ον ψουρ  
πλανετ, ωηιχη ισ νωω μοπινγ ιτσελφ ιντο α ηαρμφυλ  
πλαχε; ποωερ το στοπ βυλλετσ αιμεδ ιν ηερ  
διρεχτιον; ποωερ το χηανγε τηε περψ χορε οφ ωηο  
ψου αρε. Πλεασε φολλω ανψητηινγ ρεασοναβλε σηε  
χηοοσεσ το σαψ ασ ουρ ιντερμεδιαρψ. Ιφ ψου δο νοτ,  
ωε ωιλλ νοτ ηαπε το πυνιση ψου διρεχτλψ.

Βεχαυσε ψου ωιλλ βε χομμιττινγ σιιχιδε οφ τηε  
λωεστ φορμ.

-- Ζολαρ

He considered himself a more than adequate code breaker, and an award winning crossword puzzlist – which he illogically presumed could come in handy in a situation like this.

He didn't think it would be all that hard to break these somehow familiar looking symbols into a coherent form, unless this was a joke, some meaningless scribble that...but who? Why would anyone have put this here? His curiosity was piqued.

It took him only a few days to break the code, which was an odd form of Wingding font. It was supposedly from a space alien.

He laughed at the idea at first, but after he read the entire letter several times he didn't know what to think. It eventually led to his suspicion that Gwen was one of "them:"

*People of Earth:*

*We are here to help you as long as you cooperate. We will communicate with you through someone we choose, one of your own. We do not want to harm you, although if you do not heed us the earth as you know it will become a place without light.*

*What we want most of all is to teach you how to make money.*

*Always a worthy goal for those of you who watch television, especially the Shopping Network.*

*But this is not money in your currency. And although I hope you thought that was funny, this is not a joke. The money we are referring to is money in our currency. This means you must become very smart. Far smarter than you are now. It means you must become aware of what is truly valuable and reach out. The one we choose from your human race will try to help you make the necessary evolutionary leap.*

*If you do not succeed you will be erased. You will no longer exist. Not only will your body die, but your soul will be killed. This is very dangerous since it means your soul can never exist again in any form. So please follow instructions carefully.*

*The one who we have chosen to help you is among you now. She is a person connected to one of those who lives where this letter dwells. Meek as she may seem she has powers untold. Power to reverse the course of most of the energy on your planet, which is now moving itself into a harmful place; power to stop bullets aimed in her direction; power to change the very core of who you are.*

*Please follow anything reasonable she chooses to say as our intermediary.*

*If you do not, we will not have to punish you directly. Because you will be committing suicide of the lowest form.*

- ZOLAR

ZOLAR?

He asked his son about the letter but was met first with laughter, then sarcasm, then derision. This was a familiar emotional progression in the Cowell family.

James Sr. would have certainly felt embarrassed for believing in such a thing as a letter from a space alien, yet, if his son knew nothing about it, then where did the letter come from? What was the motive?

He tossed and turned in his sleep for days. He began drinking scotch, no ice, and bad wine. When he finally approached Gwen with the letter and read it aloud he was secretly blitzed, so as to calm his nerves. She was going to think he had completely lost it. At least he had the excuse of being drunk as a fallback position. It was an old detective trick.

But her reaction floored him. She seemed to become very agitated. She seemed concerned that he had found the letter and was able to translate it:

“Why did you spend days of your work time translating this, James? How could you even know it was going to say anything important?” Gwen asked in what seemed to him to be a strongly accusatory tone.

"I translated it because I am a detective, damn it. That's what I do! Even though you see little or no value in my work, it's *who I am*," he blathered, trying not to slur his words.

"'Drunk' is also who you are! What are you doing to yourself, you swamp rat? It's two o'clock on a weekday afternoon. Look what you're becoming!"

"And who are *you*," he slammed his hand down on the table but the timing was a little late so it came off more like a bad actor bombing an audition. But he told himself that was only because his mind was thinking faster, and his words were coming out faster, than his reflexes. He was *beyond* mentally sharp! In fact, he was feeling downright intuitive. The alcohol had taken all the walls of normal perception and torn them down to baseline. He could see every building block, and how things were erected. As a detective this had great value.

"Yes, who indeed are you?" he repeated in a low hiss, as if to hint to her that her little game was up. He could figure out *any* mystery. Even her.

"You shouldn't have translated that stupid thing," she said. "It's either a dumb prank or it sounds dangerous."

"Well, you should know," he shot back.

"What's *that* supposed to mean?" she ricocheted back.

"Oh, nothing," he said in a haughty tone.

"What are you getting at, you fat slob?" she yelled louder.

"Anger isn't necessary," he volleyed.

"*You* are not necessary, you know that?" she screamed.

"You are a human waste of time. A one man 'AA' meeting,

walking around the house with this stupid letter clutched in your sweaty little hands. It's a PRANK, you old fool!"

"Your prank, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, my prank. I spent days typing a new language I invented in Wing Ding, just to screw with your already screwed up mind! How can you be stupid enough to try and drag me into this? And...stupid enough to reveal this to me? Ah, yes...! Don't you see? If I was the 'she' they're referring to, then I would know you were on to me now. And I'd have to get rid of you, now wouldn't I?" She crossed her arms and smiled.

This stunned him. How could he have made such an insanelly stupid tactical blunder. What if she was right?

He tried to assess what level of the game she was playing. He wouldn't have made this mistake if he hadn't been drinking so much. Yet being in this altered state also opened up all these other layers of perception....

"What would you like for dinner, you putz?"

"I don't care," he mumbled.

"How about *duck!*" she laughed.

"What?"

"*Duck!*" she yelled.

He crouched down quickly. He looked through all the windows onto the empty street. *They had never eaten duck in their lives!* He was sure she was threatening him.

She began to laugh. It was a laugh he had never heard before. It was a sinister giggle.

He quickly left the house and ate dinner at a local bar (the meatloaf special). He had a lot of thinking to do. Meat always helped him think, especially when it was washed down with little cognac.

## Section 1g

The concept came to them while they were hiking in the hills on Catalina Island. They climbed to a place where there were beautiful views of the harbor. The water looked crystal blue and God-like. Almost like a mirror for humans to discover themselves in.

They began running, running, running, laughing as they tripped along high above the water's edge. Sunny raced after him. They were breathless, falling, falling, falling together into a soft place on the ground, no one around, clothes falling, running, running, running so powerfully inside the other, so quick, so filled with passion, stolen and inhaled from the lining of the clouds. So lightening bright, so expansive. All was one. All was quiet afterwards. A space for pure thought existed between them.

That's when it came to him. He didn't want to scare her. But she was the only one that knew him at all, he had to let her in on it. He whispered it to her quietly. Still breathing hard, he revealed the plan as it unfolded in his mind, piece by piece. He would need his secret kept so the idea could expand across the world like the sky catching fire!

He would need her more than ever now.

They laughed. They roared with laughter. It turned into a ludicrous giggling. They couldn't stop. Hour after hour the idea grew. Tears of laughter emerged from their eyes. They had been searching for so long. Searching together for the answer.

All the time spent in Sunny's office exploring each other's minds and bodies, searching for something to light up and explode their lives. Now it was here.

James and Sunny wrote the letter in code, placed it in James' closet, knowing his father was going to be making the room into a new office. They waited for him to discover it. What they didn't know was that it would happen so soon. Now there was no time to waste.

## Section 1h

Sunny was born to wealthy parents. Her father worked in the financial industry. But they were considered white trash on a relative scale – they lived on the outskirts of Beverly Hills, across the tracks from the 3c7 crowd. They left their garage door open, even at night -- a visual travesty that greatly upset the neighbors.

It was hard to be a tom boy in a place like Beverly Hills, but Sunny managed. While her teen counter-parts wore several necklaces at once, rings on every finger and slinky halter tops, Sunny, with her little girl red hair turning light brown by her freshman year in high school, and her freckles fading, only wore blue jeans, a sweatshirt and her favorite basketball sneakers.

By the time Sunny was eighteen she had conformed a bit: although her ears and navel remained unpierced, she wore her cut off jeans a bit too high, wore a tee-shirt that was a bit too small, donned colored sneakers with socks that stopped at the ankles, and treasured one ring on her fourth finger: it was a cubic zirconium ring that had been won for her at a carnival by James Cowell XXXIII. He promised her a lot back then. He promised they would be famous one day. He promised she would be able to dress any way she wanted to and no one would tease her, in fact, everyone would rush out to buy whatever piece of garbage she decided to throw on that morning just to look like her. It made her blush. She would laugh and blush and put her head on his shoulder and wonder was he crazy, or crazy brilliant?

James was her first and only boyfriend. She loved him. This would usually lead to thoughts of marriage. But Sunny

thought there was plenty of time for living the conventional life. Now was a time to try something enormously different. But what?

James reeled at the thought of working long hours with nothing to show for it, like his father. He didn't see the value (and certainly saw no glory) in being a two-bit detective running background checks over the Internet and being able to beat everyone in West Hollywood at crossword puzzles. Was this the kind of legacy James XXXIII wanted to leave James XXXIV?

Actually, if there was one thing he knew for sure, it was that there would be no James XXXIV. He hated being the descendant of his dead grandmother's joke. There was no way he would perpetuate it. It was just one of the many reasons he wanted to burn his past and start fresh.

When James met Sunny it was quite literally sunny. Not only was it a gorgeous day at the Santa Monica pier, but there were jugglers, and African dancers, and tight rope walkers dotting the park, laughing, smiling, sweating. Sunny melted him. He felt bathed in light when he was around her. She had a dazzling but quirky personality that exuded from her like an aura that he thought only he could see. He learned later others could see it as well.

She chose him from the beginning out of many suitors; the choice was obvious for her. They were both strange. Both disgusted with the way things were. Both wanting something big and wild out of life. After their first kiss there was no question about the fact that electricity was not just an eleven letter word, or something that needed a metal plug and a circuit breaker. There were no circuit breakers in their world.

Of course, that's what James XXXII thought when he first met the love of his life, Gwyneth. He never imagined what a nightmare love at first sight could turn out to be. Something like loathing and lost in the dark.

How could this cynical cycle, followed by an alphabet of apathy, and awful alliterations be broken? And never again repeated? That was what motivated James XXXIII day and night.

## Section 1i

Gwen was the one who filed the papers. She was not going to live with this gruff, careless, paranoid, hot-tempered drunk any more. She had been thinking about divorce since little James XXXIII was no more than knee-high to a garbage can.

No.

You see, he had infected her in every way, even the way she thought, even with the analogies she chose. Knee-high to a garbage can? That was just not *her*. Even her own thoughts had become grotesque to her. Now with James XXXIII ready to leave home for the last time she was ready to move on. She had no responsibilities anymore. She adored the boy and brought him up as well as she could, showered him with her full attention, gave him everything, sheltered him from his father's stupidity and meanness as best as she could. She had been so patient.

And, yes, time and selected memories of a particular Christmas morning, or a walk in the neighborhood and a particularly funny joke they shared -- perhaps she was also feeling a little hesitant about throwing all this time away with the gruff one. Her husband was a silly man but harmless. After so many years -- twenty five years to be exact -- with one man, could another man actually be better? She had dreamed for years of meeting a new lover, a more sensitive lover, maybe from Latin America. Or were they all just intolerable apes? It was the known versus the unknown.

She knew life could be a lot worse. She had read books and seen TV shows about the abuse, the brute force, the madness. She imagined some strong handsome man she had fallen for pushing her down on the bed and ripping at her

like a tsunami wave, before turning away, fulfilled, and closing the door behind him. And would she let him come back again? She didn't quite trust herself. Plenty of men could be worse than the old coot she had been with for so long, all of her best years. Finding someone worse would be the end of her.

In the end, she vowed she would not seek out another man, ever. She would be content to live alone as soon as the divorce papers were served. She would find herself a nice sunbathed one bedroom apartment to put a few of her favorite plastic flowers in. She would sneak them out of the house along with the pretty jars they sat in. She would draw a warm bath and dream endlessly, with no one rushing her to finish just so their bladder could be drained. It would take decades to wash the coating of James XXXII off of her. She would sit in the bath for ten years and sip liquid vitamins and vintage red wine to stay alive until she was completely clean. Then she would put on a pretty nightgown without fear of being mauled by him, sit in front of the TV without having him rip the remote away from her, eat a tuna sandwich late at night without having to endure him warning her that her teeth would rot unless she flossed before bed. Ah, what a glorious life awaited her.

James XXXII was equally happy when the divorce papers arrived. The first thing he would do was throw out all the damn plastic flowers she had in every room, drooping eternally from their petite little glass jars. The second thing he would do was take those glass jars and fill them with beer, scotch, Kool-Aid, iced coffee – *valuable things*, not lilies from a plastic garden – and put them in the fridge with the temp turned to near freezing. He thought of all the times she

had complained that the cold settings were wasting energy and he was stuck with tepid beer and packaged meat that was wet with water vapor rotting almost overnight. Never again! Energy savings *that*, you stinkin' piece of...of...ex-wife! Ah, he liked the sound of that.

Then, the third thing he'd do was, let's see, maybe call an old girlfriend? What was he talking about? That was a little crazy, he had to admit. The only other girlfriend he'd ever had was now dead from an overdose, or from choking on a midnight roast beef sandwich while listening to "The Mamas and the Papas," depending on who you believed. Did she even like roast beef? Didn't Mama Cass choke on a ham sandwich? Those would have been leads he would have followed up on, if he'd been a free man.

The fourth thing he'd do was, well, nothing. His knew the minute she left that his life would pretty much be over. Who was he kidding, even his own son didn't care about him any more.

## **Part II**

## Section 2a

They decided to birth the idea on YouTube. They thought that was the best “delivery system,” as James called it. The risk was it would be seen as too much of a joke or a hoax. But then what wasn’t a hoax? Acai berry diets? Stomach vibrating belts? Presidential candidates? Peace treaties? Wonder Bread? Religions? Reliable cars? Milli Vanilli? Reservatrol? Nuclear disarmament? Expensive wine? Paul is Dead? Landing on the moon? The innocence of babies? Enlightenment?

*Everything* is a hoax when you think about it! Everything we see with our eyes and grasp with our senses. Every thought we think, every goal we have, every breath we take, all a hoax.

Well, yes, but there are hoaxes, and then there are hoaxes, as James XXXII used to say. He was the ultimate rationalist.

One could only hope that beyond the skepticism, which was certainly to be expected, something good would come of it. Beyond the nasty online jokes, the critics, the cynics, something would catch, something would strike a universal chord.

And if you want to strike a universal chord, why wouldn’t you just go straight out into the universe to source it?

It started with a video of Sunny, dressed casually but in a feminine way, a way that exuded sincerity and intimacy without any of the overt sexuality one might see these days. She wore a blue silk shirt. Her auburn hair was cut just below her ears. She wore a hint of lipstick and a beautiful pair of ear rings to give her credibility. Add to this the

backdrop, which created the feeling more akin to a CNN interview than a home video, with an image of some amorphous city lit up at night superimposed behind her. She began speaking in a nervous voice:

“At first I thought, honestly, I had gone a little crazy. I was shown a letter, decoded from a language no one had ever seen before. I thought it was strange, perhaps a hoax of some kind, except for the fact that the decoding came from a professional detective with nothing to gain. He himself was perplexed. But the very next day, my life changed. I began to dial into a voice that calls itself “Zolar.” Zolar claims to be the author of the letter. He said he lives in a dimension unknown to us, but that soon our dimensions will merge. And that we must be ready or we’ll be too weak to survive.

“I don’t know yet if this voice is talking about literal merging or metaphorical merging. He spoke about me metaphorically, I assure you, because I have no unnatural powers. I cannot reverse the course of energy, I don’t even know what that means! I can’t even stop the cynicism I will face by revealing this to you.

“But this is no prank. Zolar is real, at least in some reality he is real, and he says he is ready to answer questions we might have for him. He told me he isn’t willing to answer questions about this material world since there is no point to it and he has no desire to change the natural course of events before the merging. But he will answer questions about our spiritual world, our minds, our souls, and anything that will not have a negative future affect by revealing it.

“So I am inviting you to go to my web link at [NewWorldWisdom.com](http://NewWorldWisdom.com), where you can submit your

questions to Zolar for free. I will be back in two weeks with a new video to give you Zolar's answers.

"If you don't believe what I'm saying, I dare you to send in questions anyway. Ask yourself, what do you have to lose?

"I will honor all questions. But I do not know which he will choose to answer or why. His logic seems to be based on a different wavelength than ours. But I assure you there is a lot to learn from this experience. And according to him if we do not learn it the price will be unthinkably devastating for all of us. So please help me by submitting your deepest questions in life, why are we here, where do we go when we die? There seems to be no question of this nature that he will not be willing to answer. And the answers are unlike any you have ever imagined."

The Wingding letters come up on the screen. The full text of the original language is shown, quickly, followed by a long scrolling view of the translation.

Then the screen then goes dark on the YouTube link.

## Section 2b

Number of viewers shown on the right of the screen after one hour: 6.

But then, the magic of “botting the system” went to work. For a small fee they manufactured 100,000 views overnight by using a systematic program that generated fake views. It was a trick virtually unknown at the time.

The momentum of having 100,000 hits overnight called it to the attention of the general YouTube public. By day two they had 50,500 real hits. The first week ended with 400,254 views. The web site itself got 73,752 views, not a bad hit rate for one week but nothing spectacular.

There were 245 questions submitted, 32 of them were pranks. (The numbers and the off-color responses were all well within the statistical parameters James had expected.)

“Dear Sunny: I am Zolar’s hot son, ZuluMan. How would you like to meet tonight at the crossroads of reality and Sunset Blvd?”

*Nice to hear from a home boy. Go to the crossroads around 8pm and wait for me there until your bones rot.*

“I have a clue for you about who Zolar really is. Notice that Zolar rhymes with molar? Zolar is a dentist. He will be the first dentist to ever pull teeth from inside someone’s head. I hear he uses laughing gas. Enjoy.... PS: After he pulls your teeth be careful he’s not pulling your leg like I am. Ha, Ha.”

*I loved the use of Ha, ha at the end. Otherwise, how would we have known you were joking?*

“Hey Zoey, can I call you Zoey? Look sweetie pie, I have one question. What’s the winning number gonna be for the New York State lottery this month? It’s twenty three million bucks. You give me the right answer and I’ll split it with you right smack dab down the middle.”

*Try taking your birthday and multiplying it by pi.*

These are some of the questions that came rolling in during the first week, and James XXXIII’s hypothetical answers, which of course, he didn’t send. He only wrote them to cheer up Sunny, because these kinds of questions, although expected, got her a bit down. James made her laugh a few times with the things he wrote. She depended on him to keep her spirits up.

They readied their responses to the serious questions they had chosen for their second video.

“Dear Sunny: How do you know this voice you’re hearing is not just your voice?”

“For Zolar: What’s the meaning of life? And why are you threatening our lives if we don’t do what you say?”

“To Zolar: What happens when we die?”

These were the challenges they were ready to face.

Speaking of “face,” as part of the step by step plan, James began connecting their web site to not only YouTube, but Facebook, Twitter, and all sorts of other newly emerging social networks. The push was on.

## Section 2c

“2c” is an appropriate name for this next section of the book because it’s all about helping people “to see,” to become more aware, more conscious, with the advantage of using Zolar’s viewpoint.

That viewpoint was created using research found on the Internet, with James and Sunny taking what they thought were the best of all the answers on the topics at hand, then trying to add their own flair, a final touch that might sound appealing.

“You know,” James quipped, “I think we’re starting our own religion.”

“Cool!” said Sunny. She was chewing a piece of spearmint gum at the time, trying to memorize her lines.

James set up the video cameras. They would have two cameras this time. Sunny had mastered “Final Cut Pro,” so the edits would go smoothly and look great. She spit out her gum, toyed with her hair in the mirror, and they were ready.

“Hello Earth!” Sunny smiled broadly. “I don’t mind making a little fun of myself since Zolar definitely has a good sense of humor, even at his own expense, or mine.” Her smile turned into a shy serious look. Ever humble.

“Anyway, as we promised last week, we are going to answer questions we received on our web site at NewWorldWisdom.com. I hope you don’t think I see *myself* as wise. I truly don’t. I am relying entirely on Zolar for my responses. In fact, as I read these questions I will need to shut my eyes before speaking the answers. Sorry about that,” she smiled again. So far Sunny looked great through both cameras..

“The first question is, “Dear Sunny: How do you know this voice you’re hearing is not just your voice?”

“I don’t need to shut my eyes for this one. I can answer this myself. First of all, the voice didn’t come to me until after the letter was found and translated. The translation came from a professional detective who wants nothing to do with any of this. He is not seeking publicity. I don’t think he even believes what the letter says. Or maybe he just doesn’t care. But that’s exactly what Zolar is fighting against—apathy, unconscious sleep-walking through life. After I heard about the letter the voice started talking with me almost immediately. That’s all I can tell you at this point. I never heard voices before. And I am clear this voice is trying to reach all of us, not just me. That’s all I know so far.

“Here is the next question: “What’s the meaning of life? And why are you threatening our lives if we don’t do what you say?””

Sunny closed her eyes and spoke softly. “Thank you for your directness. The meaning of life is beyond your understanding and intellect, frankly. If you understood it there would be no need to search for it, and then no spiritual mystery, and therefore, no recognition of beauty, love, compassion. Therefore, the knowing defeats the goal. Suffice to say that your effort to understand the meaning is the meaning, for now. Which brings me to the next part of your question. No one is threatening you for the sake of being mean! I am not mean. I am simply warning you about the truth.... Which brings me to the next question. For it will explain the rest.”

Sunny sounded like herself again, speaking a little louder after coyly clearing her throat, “The final question for today is: “‘What happens when we die?’”

Sunny’s eyes closed and she was silent for a few seconds before speaking as Zolar again. “Death is an illusion. People think because of scientific evidence you’ve gathered that *time* is an illusion but that death is real. Actually death is the illusion. Time is *not* an illusion. There is a continuum not measured by your understanding of hours or years, but it exists within some definition you might call ‘time.’ However, for those souls who insist on staying asleep in this life the continuum falls away. It falls away from them and literally leaves them nowhere. There are not a lot of places in the universe that are nowhere. Most of the energy in the universe is part of the continuum. But there are some patches of nowhere, for lost souls, for souls that are irretrievable. Those souls are in a sense ejected out of the continuum to die. The only way, in fact, to truly ‘die,’ is to lose connection with the continuum.

“I want you to stay in step with the eternal energy. To do anything less would be a disaster unlike anything you have ever imagined.

“That is why I’m here, speaking through this neutral being you call ‘Sunny.’ I am trying, for no particular reason or purpose I can translate into your thought language, to prevent that disaster from happening – to you. In this life.”

Sunny suddenly opens her eyes and looks off camera to James, as if doing it spontaneously, “I’m very tired, can we please stop?” Her brown eyes look hazy, as if she had been dreaming, or smoking weed. She had practiced this look in the mirror for hours. It looked great. Very realistic.

We hear James' anonymous voice in the background: "Just do some kind of sign off, Sunny" he says, trying to sound techy and shy.

Sunny says, "I have to go now. I really want to help you but I need to stop for a while. Please submit more questions for next week and visit the web site at [NewWorld.Wisdom.com](http://NewWorld.Wisdom.com). It's the only way to reach me for now.... I have to go."

The screen goes blank. The video is edited and posted that evening.

Then they waited.

## Section 2d

If the second video only attracted another few hundred thousand real (non-botted) hits, you would never know about it. Because this book would never have been written.

Sunny and James held out some vague hope that something big could happen from this game they were playing. They had best and worst case scenarios which they tried to map out statistically. They figured when the joke was over they would have to go back to reality, back to school, back to searching for their individual identities. Future plans would become more sober. But something unexpected happened.

Their video, Sunny, and Zolar, with James as the mastermind behind it all, went viral.

Views exponentialized every hour each day. They hit a million views by Friday. Video one was also getting hundreds of thousands of hits a day now. And their web site was flooded twenty four hours a day with the curious, the cynical, the clinically insane, the seekers, the devotees, some of whom had also apparently been contacted by Zolar, in their dreams, or while they were driving their car to the mall. Their web site was getting hits world wide. They tracked the numbers and locations around the world by using Google Analytics.

James and Sunny sat in their office for hours on end watching the numbers multiply and the questions roll in— half a dozen per minute. They were stunned, giddy frightened, ecstatic! What should they do next? They needed time to think. They hadn't really planned on anything happening quite this fast.

By Sunday they were expected to make video three, but now they were re-thinking that. They needed to let video one and two play out a bit longer. They did a quick video with Sunny saying she was in an intense meditation, trying to coordinate all the questions flooding in, but that in ten days at exactly 8 pm eastern time she would do a simultaneous YouTube video taping and live pod cast that would be broadcast all over the web, all over the world.

Views on YouTube jumped again, this time into the multiple millions. Sunny prepared for the biggest night of her life.

Meanwhile, James was busy connecting to more and more social networks. He was also fielding emails from prospective book publishers and movie producers, many of which were scams, but some of which seemed like the real deal. It would take him months to weed through the fakes and the wannabes, to see what they were offering, and decide how to expand into other kinds of media.

Meanwhile, the amount of money they had made on this prank so far was a stunning \$0.00. In fact, they hadn't even paid for the cost of buying the video cameras, lights, backdrops, computers, office rent. All that was being bankrolled by Sunny, or really Sunny's parents, who thought nothing of handing her five thousand dollars for film equipment, but who knew nothing about the YouTube posts. Yet.

In fact, no one in either of their families knew what was going on, and as far as James and Sunny's friends, well, they had no friends. They were weirdoes, outcasts, oddballs. They were just two anonymous kids who happened to be

running one of the better Internet scams anyone had seen this entire year.

It still seemed within the realm of normal, in a way. A fun way to spend their summer break. But all that would soon change.

## Section 2e

They began to feel the pressure now. So they decided to get out of LA for a few days. They borrowed Sunny's dad's "old" Mercedes – old is defined in Beverly Hills as anything with over 20,000 miles on it.

Over the southern hills they went, toward San Diego. Sunny was at the wheel. She was a far more cautious driver than James was. They whirled down the Interstate, turned off at an exit James pointed to, and drove into the UCSD campus, a place he knew well after his first year there.

After they parked the car they began to walk toward the Geisel Library, a wild architectural masterpiece that reminded them of a huge visual monument to human madness. The doors were open on this summer evening, but very few people were around. The clock was nearing 5 pm, plenty of time to wander before they would be hungry for dinner.

They looked through the books, but it reminded them too much of their burdens and responsibilities so they quickly began to roam the endless curling stairwells looking for a place to kiss, maybe more. They were talking in quiet echoey tones, legs pushing hard on the ascent, breathing hard.

Suddenly a man with wildly long hair and a matted curly beard leaped down the stairs from above them and, as if expecting them to have been there all along, pushed James against the wall by putting his strong age-withered hands around the front of James' neck.

Then he smiled at Sunny with a mouth only half filled with teeth. He said, "Money please." James was pinned to the wall with this man's one hand close to choking him to

death. She was stunned, breathing heavily from having ascended so many stairs. She began to fumble through her pockets. The man patted down James' pants pockets and pulled out his wallet. "Aaag," he said. "Eeeeahh!" Sunny gave him a twenty dollar bill, folded and wrinkled from being in her pocket, and told him that was all she had.

"Eureka!" the man squealed. "I knew God would answer my prayer! The un-i-verse willed it to be so."

James' neck had been released from the man's grip. He was coughing slightly, trying to catch his breath. The thought of trying to get his wallet back by jumping on him or punching him was met with visions of his own quick death.

The man's beard was curly reddish blonde. Small crumbs of old food seemed to be nesting in the depths of it.

"You are just a part of my dream, you know?" he smiled. "This is all my dream." He looked at Sunny in an odd way now, his eyes darting up and down her body. "Lovely," he smiled. Then he laughed. James noticed his eyes closing as his laughter morphed into a rasping cough. He used his instincts in that precise moment to grab Sunny by the hand.

But the crazy man recovered in time to reach into his pocket and pull out a gun and lined his sight at an easy target. Before they knew it he pulled the trigger.

But nothing happened.

"*Damn it!*" he screamed. "Got damn! Son of a..."

They began running up the stairwell, praying it didn't dead end on the next floor.

They heard the man cursing, then laughing, then coughing, roaring epithets to himself as he stumbled down toward the

street. His voice and footsteps were getting more distant instead of coming closer. They stopped and rested. They stayed there, as still as a prayer, except for their breathing.

## Section 2f

This event in the stairwell altered what Sunny was going to say in the YouTube and pod cast. They decided not to focus on the new questions they received, all of which for the most part dealt with the same issues: life's true meaning, death, and fear of what Zolar was going to do to all the bad boys and girls that didn't obey.

Instead, Sunny explained to an audience of millions that according to Zolar *The Secret*, and *The Teachings of Abraham*, – two modern concepts to encourage positive thinking – were deeply misunderstood, even perhaps by the people conveying the message.

“Zolar says none of these systems to increase positive thinking should be considered unhelpful or a hoax, but on the other hand it's very important to understand that positive thinking is not meant to get you what you want in the material world, ever. You are *not* entitled. You are not here to take what you want. You are not in sync with the universe when you are living and thinking in the material plane. Positive thinking and meditation are only meant to get you in sync with the spiritual realm, the realm you mostly dwell in at night when you dream, and after you die.

“If the message getting across to people through these mental systems is that the universe is like some fairy Godmother who will supply you with whatever selfish needs you focus on, then the message becomes toxic, and even deadly.

“The more you use positive thinking, and *The Secret*, and *Abraham*, for unselfish goals, for the good of all beings, and to help your mind connect to your deeper spirit, instead of enslaving your spirit to the thoughts in your mind, then

positive thinking is always good, and the wishes you have are always appropriate.

“But you may not use Zolar’s power or any other mental system to gain victories or advantages, or to simply make money. Those things will end up turning against you by the time your life is over. That is where the communicators of *The Secret* and *The Teachings of Abraham* have gone astray. They are leading their believers down a path to nowhere, literally, where you will very likely become even more separated from your true self than you were before you heard their words.

“Zolar is saying to me to tell you this: ‘Do not follow systems that lead you deeper into your own greed, or magnify your fears. I hope my message will be clearer than that for you, for your benefit. I am trying to entice you any way I can, even trying my hand at your humor to attract your attention. Because the consequences of me not getting your attention, or my lack of clarity, are too great for you to bear. You cannot afford for me to fail you.’”

## Section 2g

James' neck was still bruised. His breathing still felt tight. He was still shaken up from what had happened in the stairwell. He had heard of things like this happening, but nothing like it had ever happened to him. His father had told him stories about some of his more disgusting detective cases – a husband goes to work for his wife's father, embezzles all the money and runs off to South America where he buys a villa by the sea and writes a letter with no return address to his two children twice a year. Or the case of a man whose dog ate his money so the man found a way to, well, get his hands on the money, let's just stop there. Or the case of the woman (whose rich husband had set up a running tab for her in every store on Rodeo Drive) who bought two million dollars worth of clothes and modern art in one day, then sold it all for a hundred grand and tried to run off to Paris. My father figured maybe she would be dumb enough to stay in their favorite hotel near the Eiffel Tower. He was right. She was escorted home, without the French boy she was with. She apologized to her husband and he dropped all charges just before rushing off to a business meeting.

These stories affected James throughout his childhood, and to this day. When he reflected on all these stories his father told with such animation, such excitement, James perceived the world as a hideously absurd place filled with insanity and darkness, with an occasional crack of light escaping into the basement from a hole in the cosmic roof.

From this viewpoint Zolar was complete BS. The message they were working so hard to spread was no more valuable than bubble wrap without a breakable object.

People's minds were breakable objects, not worth protecting or communicating with.

This is how he felt. They were wasting their time. They were wasting everyone's time.

The only exception, the only mind worth protecting, was Sunny's. He adored her. He trusted only her. She was the beam of light finding its way down into the basement.

## Section 2h

The response to the new video and Podcast was truly astonishing. Things were now way out of James' areas of expertise. He felt extremely comfortable with Sunny's virtual fame, where no money was exchanged and no faces of the audience were seen. But now, with all the book and movie deals coming in like jellyfish at high tide he knew he had to find a pro to take over this end of things.

Enter July Jameson. James chose him because he was one of the most famous entertainment agents in L.A., and because of his name. Kind of like, "You lie, James' son." Pretty funny, he thought to himself.

July Jameson was a lot like James' dad in a way, except a very rich and savvy version of him. Fatter too. He wore thousand dollar ties from China, suits from Paris, imported Italian shoes. In fact, it seemed like every country in the world was making money off of him.

He was skeptical about taking on these overnight virtual spiritual super stars. He got why their fame was spreading. He just didn't know what to do with it. How do you make a movie out of such a thing without exposing what he sensed was mostly a new form of showmanship and snake oil salesmanship? How do you make money from this? The most obvious idea would be getting them a book deal to either expose how this thing went viral, or more likely, to stay in character and *be* the messenger of Zolar. He opted for the latter.

July knew everyone. That was for sure. And like James' dad, he was a detective and a de-coder, but he de-coded people's intentions. He sifted through the hundreds of email offers one by one, mumbling aloud, "Never heard of him...."

Heard of him, a real nut.... There's a crook right there, it figures he'd try to scam his way into your game quickly before you asked anyone about him – go feed the pigeons, you little shit. We are not pigeons...! Ah, Irving, wow, Irving emailed you. That's interesting, impressive, I'll call him.... Let's see, this is not a real HarperCollins email address, and never heard of this kid.... This guy, well, Malcolm is interested. He's a hot a young movie producer with one hit, one so-so project after that, which means it was a flop financially but the critics liked it. He needs something to get him back in the mix. I'll call, but he'll have to beg. I'll tell him he's not first in line. He'll have to unzip his wallet to get you.... The question is, can Sunny act beyond the role she's acting now? I don't get how this translates to a big screen, but maybe he has an idea. A quirky documentary maybe, with shaky cameras following her around and capturing her the moment Zolar has something to say to her? Nah, that sounds hokey to me. You've found your medium, why mess with it?"

He was always thinking aloud in front of James. And James always seemed to be able to follow along...just like he did with his dad on those rambling evenings when he was a child. His father talked him to sleep, rambling on about his work, and the neighbors, and his troubles with mom – almost every night of his life until he was thirteen.

Sunny did not like or trust Jameson at first. It took her quite a while to get past his toughness and his immediate assumption that this was all just a scam, a show. Sunny was changing. She was becoming more serious about her role. And she didn't want her agent talking to her like that.

Jameson sensed this. So during their third meeting he said, "Sunny, I'm honored to be working for you. You're the real deal. I love what you have to say. It's powerful, very powerful information, so we're going to say it in lights, to an audience so big, YouTube can only dream of such things."

Although Sunny often wondered who was scamming who, she began to buy into July's exuberance. Just in time too. Because soon after they signed an agreement to work with him, he presented them with a major book deal and a documentary movie deal offering a huge advance, all within three months of each other.

## **Part III**

## Section 3a

James' mom and dad were vibrating with excitement when they heard the news. They were still living together until the divorce papers went through. James XXXIII noticed a difference in the way his parents were treating each other. The sarcasm was toned down. There was a bit of playfulness in their voices when they spoke to each other. "We're casual dating," his father joked.

James XXXII also feebly tried to give his son some fatherly financial advice. He also admitted that he liked Sunny. He had never even said her name aloud before this even though they had met half a dozen times. Now Sunny was "a good girl." He meant to say "a cash cow." But he somehow restrained himself.

"By the way, son, you sure fooled me for a while there, how did you make up that language in the letter? That was quite good."

James XXXIII was long prepared for that question, "I didn't make up the language, dad. I don't know where the letter came from."

His father was stone silent.

"Sunny just started hearing voices after you told me about the letter. That's why I asked if I could have it. It's all just the weirdest thing."

"Do tell," his father responded skeptically. He was always misusing old idiomatic expressions.

James XXXII then got to his main point, "Son, I'm trying to be delicate about this, but don't you think I'm owed a few thousand bucks for finding and translating the letter? I mean now that you're getting famous," he cleared his throat, "after all, I am the founder, aren't I?"

“Being a ‘founder’ doesn’t mean that you *found* something, dad,” James laughed.

“Why not?” his dad yelled.

“A ‘founder’ is someone who starts a big company,” James said.

“Well, so you’re a big company now because I found the letter, so I’m the founder!” his father boomed. His voice sounded amplified. Not a hint of a smile crossed his lips. Instead only a pair of thick furled eyebrows awaiting a response. He was serious. His eyes were vacuous, but holding out a vague hope like an old beggar holding a tin cup.

“Okay, you can be the founder, pops. I’ll give you some money and set you up with as much beer as your fridge can hold.”

“I don’t like beer,” he admitted. “Only pale ale.”

James’ mom was teary, “James, how is Sunny? Is she seeing a psychologist?”

“No mom, she’s actually very at peace with what’s going on. She loves listening to the voice she hears. There’s a lot of wisdom there.”

“And he’s a nice man?”

“Who?”

“Zoo-man.”

“Zolar? Yes, well, he’s a...we don’t really know what he...” James paused. This was his mother he was talking to.

“Yes, mom, he’s a very nice man, and he comes from good parents.”

She nodded happily.

On the other side of town Sunny was visiting her parents.

When she pulled up to the house and climbed the spiral walkway of her youth she spotted her father pacing in the open garage talking in a very animated way on his cell phone.

“Earl, we just got home from Barcelona only to find a *huge* piece of junk in our backyard. What’s going on...? What do you mean it’s the Italian marble fireplace I ordered. If that marble is from Italy then I’m from Harlem! You know what I mean? And you don’t want to mess with a dude from Harlem, do you?... How do I know? *How do I know?* What is this, the Spanish Inquisition? I know because I’ve got Italian spies in the marble business, okay? And they’re from Harlem too. Now you get your guys over here and take this four ton piece of crap out of my backyard or it’s going to end up as Exhibit A when I sue your ass in court.... Yeah, Friday’s fine.”

He hung up and noticed his daughter waiting patiently at the steps. “Hallo, sweetie! I didn’t see you there. Sorry about that. You know, you try and trust people, give them the key to the castle while you’re gone, but everyone’s running a scam, know what I mean?”

She nodded.

“Want to come in the backyard and roast some fake marshmallows in our fake Italian marble fireplace?”

“No thanks.”

“Come in, mom’s been waiting for you.” He comes up to her and gives her a soft kiss on the cheek.

For supper they had a beautiful meal, brought in from Sunny’s favorite restaurant. Her mom couldn’t cook. Unfortunately, neither could Sunny. They talked about how beautiful Barcelona was. They told a funny story about

nearly being strip-searched at the airport on the way home. Then the subject came around to their daughter. They were ecstatic that her film schooling had paid off so soon. They told her she looked great on camera and that she should consider an acting career.

“What you’ve done is amazing, sweetie, but I hope you don’t get into big trouble for this,” her dad said. “Do you have a good attorney?”

She tried to tell them that Zolar was real, but she noticed them getting a little concerned with her mental health so she backed off. “Well, anyway, I’m glad to be home,” she smiled. “I missed you guys.”

“And James?” her mother asked.

“He’s wonderful.”

“How wonderful? Is he *‘I love you’* wonderful?”

Sunny blushed a little but nodded.

“Thank God!” Her mom was always concerned her Tom Boy behavior meant she was going to end up a lesbian. James was a God-send.

At some point both James and Sunny told their parents why they had come to visit. They were dropping out of school. They were way too busy to keep up with their studies.

They expected disapproval. But with all the money being offered to them from the book and movie deals everyone treated the news with an “of course, of course, you’re working now.”

Mission 1 accomplished.

They also had one other bit of news to relay. James and Sunny informed their parents they were moving in together.

*"Oh my God, dear, when's the wedding?"* Gwen asked?  
James XXXII said, "Leave the boy alone, Gwen. He needs to sow his oats for a while, eh boy?"

Of course, Sunny's parents had another take on things entirely.

*"Be careful, dear, once you live with them, men change,"* Sunny's mom offered profoundly.

*"Don't get pregnant, Sunny,"* her dad offered pragmatically. *"You're not going to make another dime if you get pregnant."*

Sunny said, "Mom, dad, before I go I feel like, at least for one brief, strangely out of character moment, I need to try to reach you."

*"Reach us? How?"*

*"There are things going on outside the world of finance and outdoor fireplaces and Rodeo Drive. Or Watts! Or Afghanistan or the White House. There are bigger things going on!"*

*"Oh my, what's going on?"* her mom asked nervously.

*"Nothing about us, mom. I mean on a much much larger scale."*

*"Okay,"* her father said. *"You want to do your Zolar thing for us one time? We don't mind. We've seen the videos. They've very good! We liked them!"*

*"There's more to it than just liking the videos,"* she said patiently.

*"Meaning what?"* her father was the one getting nervous now. She could tell because he started pulling at his

wedding ring. This was a habit Sunny used to notice even as a child.

In the end, she just didn't have the heart to say aloud what she was thinking in her head. Instead, she gave them each a kiss. That's, after all, the point behind what she really wanted to say.

James and Sunny left their parents with the following observations:

Gwen and James XXXII were happier than they'd been in many years. The divorce papers gave them the freedom to leave at any time. Therefore, they didn't have to. They were also ecstatic that they were no longer financially responsible for James' tuition. In fact, this was like a reverse mortgage! He was going to be paying them! James XXXII felt like a proud Chinese farmer whose son was now breaking his back harvesting all the crops while he was sitting back watching ping pong tournaments on his black and white TV and eating spare ribs.

Sunny's parents started closing their garage door, sometimes even during the day. They had an image to uphold now. They were rich white trash no more. They were the mother and father of the world's most famous channeler of a voice from outer space. How cute was that?

## Section 3b

Their first book called, "Who Is Zolar, and Why Should You Listen?" described how Zolar came to be. It included the original and translated letters. It printed out the first YouTube video talks. It reprinted the answers to the first sets of questions in the early videos. And then it answered the ten best new questions submitted from fans.

The first documentary consisted of Malcolm Manning, the famous young film producer, following Sunny and James around with a two-man crew for two months. The public's fascination was growing. He didn't want to do a serious Scorsese thing. He didn't want to do a lighthearted abstract kind of "A Hard Day's Night with Zolar," thing, although the studio begged him to consider it. He didn't want to do an expose, like "60 minutes."

In the end, he found his comfort zone. He captured James' sincere intellect and wry sense of humor. He magnified Sunny's unflappable loveliness. By the time he was done editing, the visual snap shots were so magnificent, the things James and Sunny said became secondary to Martin Manning's film-making brilliance. Which, of course, was the whole point.

Months after the good reviews appeared, doubts began to surface in the media. The big one came from the usually liberal New York Times, openly wondering how Sunny and James could pull off a scam this big. Obviously this was all made up. "Zolar is no more real than Avatar! Except Zolar cost nothing to make! So while we tip our hats, and our brains, to her ingenuity, the fact is the facts don't add up."

July and James decided to be very pro active about this. They had been waiting for the accusations to get to a fever pitch. They were ready with a response.

July Jameson still assumed that James and Sunny were true believers in Zolar. He of course suspected that this was all a big fantasy. But he also assumed that James and Sunny were drinking their own Kool-aid. They always seemed completely sincere about Zolar being real when they talked to him. And it wasn't his job to probe. This wasn't a trial. It was entertainment. That was his job – to market entertainers, authors, actors, producers, rock stars. So he tried not to think too hard about what was real and what wasn't. Everyone he worked with was living in one fantasy or another.

Sunny decided to deal with the accusations directly. She answered the most obvious questions on her web site and James and July sent out a press release:

Why didn't Zolar just go through Sunny to begin with? Why the letter? And why not write the letter in English?

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO BE CHANELING VOICES. ZOLAR CHOSE THIS WAY AS THE BEST WAY TO GET PUBLICITY AND GATHER PEOPLE'S FOCUSED ATTENTION. HIS ONLY DEFENSE IN CHOOSING THIS WAY RATHER THAN BEING MORE DIRECT IS, THIS WAY WORKED.

Sunny's boyfriend's father is the one who discovered the letter? How suspicious is that?

AGAIN, WHY IS IT ALL THAT HARD TO IMAGINE IF THIS ENDED UP BEING THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY ZOLAR COULD GET THE MESSAGE OUT TO THE

WORLD? JAMES' DAD DID NOT MAKE ALL THIS UP, I ASSURE YOU! I HAVE ONLY MET HIM FOUR OR FIVE TIMES. THERE HAS BEEN NO COORDINATION BETWEEN US.

Why choose this unknown girl, Sunny? What's so special about her? Why didn't he choose a religious leader, or the president, or Oprah?

THIS IS NOT SOMETHING I HAVE AN ANSWER TO. OTHER THAN THE FACT THAT THESE OTHER PEOPLE ALREADY HAD AN AGENDA FOR THEMSELVES. I WAS AN OPEN CHANNEL, ALTHOUGH I NEVER THOUGHT OF MYSELF LIKE THAT. I CERTAINLY HAD NO AGENDA. BUT AGAIN, ZOLAR CHOSE ME, AND I HAVE MANAGED TO SUCCESSFULLY COMMUNICATE AND SPREAD HIS MESSAGE, AT LEAST SO FAR. SO I GUESS HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING.

Is Sunny her real name, or just another part of the scam?

SUNNY IS MY BIRTH NAME. I THINK IT FITS ME SINCE I'M GENERALLY A PRETTY SUNNY PERSON.

MY FRIEND JAMES SUGGESTS THAT I ADD THIS FOR THE RECORD: I HAVE NO CRIMINAL RECORD. NO HISTORY OF MENTAL ILLNESS. I AM NOT A NUT, OR TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OF ANYONE, I AM NOT MEAN-SPIRITED, OR A HARDENED SCAM ARTIST. I'M JUST TELLING YOU WHAT I AM HEARING FROM SOMEONE WHO CLAIMS TO BE LIVING IN ANOTHER REALITY. I MYSELF DON'T CLAIM TO BE. I'M JUST THE MESSENGER.

Why does this “entity” or whatever it is, even bother caring about us? What’s his motive?

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MOTIVATES HIM TO DO THIS. I CAN TELL YOU FOR SURE HE HASN’T ASKED FOR MONEY! HE’S NOT INTERESTED IN MATERIAL THINGS. MAYBE HE CARES ABOUT OUR BEST INTERESTS SIMPLY BECAUSE HE DOES.

Why now? Why didn’t this guy show up a thousand years ago?

MAYBE HE DID. MAYBE HE’S TRIED TELLING US THESE THINGS A THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE. MAYBE NO ONE’S BEEN LISTENING.

So you’re going to become rich from all this? How much will you give to charity? Or are you going to buy a house in Beverly Hills and retire now?

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, I GREW UP IN BEVERLY HILLS. I DON’T NEED TO LIVE THERE AGAIN. MONEY IS NOT MY MOTIVATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, I DO WANT TO GET PAID FOR WRITING A BOOK, OR DOING A DOCUMENTARY. THAT’S MY RIGHT – I AM PAID FOR MY TIME AND EFFORT. IT’S NOT HARMING ANYONE. I’M NOT TAKING ANYONE’S MONEY THAT CAN’T AFFORD TO PAY ME. AND THE INFORMATION ON THIS WEB SITE IS FREE AND WILL REMAIN FREE.

ONCE MY FINANCIAL NEEDS ARE MET AND I HAVE TAKEN CARE OF THOSE I LOVE, I INTEND TO START A

FOUNDATION PROMOTING ZOLAR'S IDEAS AND THOUGHTS. BUT I CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THIS. I THINK IT'S A LEGITIMATE INQUIRY.

Does Zolar help you when you're answering your critics?

NOT SO FAR, AS FAR AS I CAN TELL.

Does anyone else help you when you answer your critics, including your boyfriend or his father?

SOMETIMES JAMES HAS GOOD IDEAS. HE HELPS ME WITH EVERYTHING IN MY LIFE. HIS FATHER IS NOT SOMEONE I SPEAK WITH ABOUT THIS.

Did James' father, being a detective, look for any kind of alien fingerprints on the letter?

NO. I THINK AT FIRST HE ASSUMED IT WAS A JOKE. HE WAS INTERESTED IN CRACKING THE CODE AS A CHALLENGE, STILL THINKING IT WAS A JOKE. BY THE TIME HE HAD DECODED THE LETTER HE HAD HANDLED IT FOR SO LONG, AND THEN SHOWED IT TO JAMES, WHO ALSO HANDLED IT, IT WAS TOO LATE.

Was the letter checked to see if the paper was "earth" paper? And what about the language? I heard it was just a bunch of Wingding font?

THE PAPER WAS REGULAR PRINTING PAPER. AND IT WAS WINGDING FONT. ZOLAR DOES NOT SPEAK

“WINGDING!” HE WAS SIMPLY SETTING UP A CHALLENGE FOR JAMES’ DAD FOR REASONS WE CAN’T UNDERSTAND OTHER THAN THE FACT THAT THE WAY THIS ALL HAPPENED HAS GAINED INCREDIBLE EXPOSURE FOR HIS MESSAGE. THE MESSAGE IS THE POINT OF ALL THIS, NOT HOW THE MESSAGE WAS DISCOVERED OR WHY IT HAD BEEN ABLE TO SPREAD SO QUICKLY. IT’S VERY IMPORTANT TO ZOLAR, AND THEREFORE TO ME THAT WE STAY ON POINT. LET’S NOT LOSE SIGHT THAT ZOLAR IS TRYING TO WARN US THAT UNLESS SOMETHING CHANGES SOON WE ARE WALKING RIGHT OFF A WATERFALL, AND THERE WON’T BE A WAY TO CLIMB BACK UP. HE’S TRYING TO PREVENT A CATASTROPHE TO OUR SOULS. THE REST OF THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE JUST A WASTE OF TIME. I AM ANSWERING THEM SO WE CAN MOVE THEM OUT OF THE WAY AND GET TO THE MESSAGE ITSELF.

What is James Cowell’s role in all this?

JAMES IS VERY SUPPORTIVE. WE LOVE EACH OTHER. HE IS TRYING TO HELP ME GET THE MESSAGE OUT AS BEST AS HE CAN THROUGH THE INTERNET. HE KNOWS ZOLAR IS REAL ON SOME LEVEL THAT NEITHER HE OR I CAN COMPREHEND, AND HE’S JUST TRYING TO HELP ME ANY WAY HE CAN. WE’VE CERTAINLY BECOME CLOSER DURING THE LAST YEAR SINCE THIS HAS ALL HAPPENED. HE IS MY BEST FRIEND. AND, PLEASE KEEP THIS A SECRET, BUT I HOPE WE GET MARRIED SOMEDAY WHEN WE ARE A

BIT OLDER AND READY TO HANDLE SOMETHING  
THAT BIG. RIGHT NOW, THIS IS BIG ENOUGH!

### Section 3c

Her response to a hostile press only furthered her notoriety and increased her credibility.

Sunny was now described as:

Beautifully innocent  
The *real* "Beautiful Mind"  
She's as good as her book  
Winning  
Damn cute  
Wildly convincing  
Perplexingly direct  
Logical and without malice  
Heartfelt  
Brilliant for someone so young  
An icon of the new left  
The new darling of the New Age  
Dead center  
The sexiest spiritual guru alive  
Spot on  
Spotless reasoning, flawless

The ever brilliant July Jameson timed a second Malcolm Manning documentary to be released two weeks after her responses came out.

It included calm smiling answers to her critics. It filmed Sunny admonishing her devoted followers not to begrudge the press, saying they had very astute questions, and then telling them to "doubt everything that doesn't feel both sensible and true."

After that, Sunny became a star.

## Section 3d

Sunny and James were living a life in 3-D. Three separate dimensions that often seemed sectioned-off from each other.

One dimension was “the message.” Their continuing effort to spread it. Clarify it. Give advice about it. And occasional whispers between the two of them late at night about how to justify the game they were playing with the world.

Another dimension was their relationship, which was becoming more and more complex with the emergence of Sunny as a famous world-wide figure. And the secret James held, which, if exposed, would ruin her in micro-seconds.

James himself had also become famous, as co-author of the book and as one of the “stars” of the documentary. He had enjoyed being the man behind the curtain more than some well-known figure. He was relieved that Sunny was getting most of the attention. And as far as their relationship was concerned, Sunny’s love for him was so uncomplicated, so unwavering, she never made him feel emotions like jealousy or doubt. Sunny was the perfect “carrier of the message.” She was honest, pure, unselfconscious, and really had no agenda up until now. They were still the same two kids that fell in love. It was just harder to be carefree because they were riding a rocket. They were responsible for the controls. One wrong move, one accidental push of a wrong button and the rocket blows.

The final dimension was the material world. Where should they live, what should they buy?

They didn’t feel ready for such adult decisions. They really didn’t need to buy anything, in fact! They didn’t start

this prank just to make money. They fantasized about it, sure, but they also knew going viral wouldn't in and of itself make them a dime. They just wanted to do it for the challenge. For kicks.

Now that this college prank had turned into a huge enterprise they were busy hiring people to deal with all the money. Sunny's dad was an investment advisor so he was a big help. But they also needed a full-time attorney, accountant and bookkeeper, as well as someone to work with July, to say nothing of the defined benefit plans they were told to set-up, and the pension advisors that suddenly appeared out of the blue as their loyal fans and best friends. There was ADP to pay the employees, real estate agents showing them property.

The message had turned into a bit of a mess.

An entire book could be written about James and Sunny dealing with any of these three dimensions. But this book intends to stay on track with its own story, it's own message for you. Suffice to say, their lives were getting very very complicated.

### Section 3e

July Jameson pulled into his circular driveway. The man had not often been snookered, especially by a client. But he felt something queasy in the pit of his stomach. This either meant he needed a double dose of Alka Seltzer because of the damn Mexican restaurant he kept going back to for lunch, or, well, maybe it was Sunny. They had been working together for over a year now, and she was starting to get under his skin. He was starting to watch her old YouTube posts and read her book. He couldn't take his eyes off of her. Sometimes he even caught himself in the shower, or driving to work, thinking about some of the things she was saying.

He squeezed his way through the front door. "Bethany, this is the weirdest thing." He was always walking in from work calling something out to his wife through the echoey marble hallway as if they were in the middle of a conversation. His bejeweled wife was wearing make-up as thick as icing on a birthday cake. Her lipstick made her lips look like two ropes of red licorice. The plastic surgery she'd had done on her double chin now made it the only tight part of her body. He wondered what she looked like these days without all the make-up, shivered, then tried to think about something more pleasant.

She was coming out of the kitchen with a tray of chips and salsa to share before dinner. They were left over from his lunch yesterday at the aforementioned Mexican restaurant. He tried to be polite as he turned it down.

"July dear, I don't think with all the crazy clients you represent that whatever you're about to tell me is 'the

weirdest thing,” she smiled. She was so good at playing hostess.

“Point well taken, Beth, let’s just say I’m curiously perplexed then. I just can’t believe what I’m about to say, but this Sunny girl is really starting to get to me.”

“How so?” Bethany’s first thought was – if he’s fantasizing about this girl like he fantasized about cute thin little Bridget Fonda when he represented her years ago I’m going to swat him with a wet newspaper, I swear to God. He’s too old and fat for this kind of thing.

“Sometimes I almost...no, I can’t say it, you’ll think I’m crazy.”

“Does she look like her?”

“Who?”

“Bridget!”

“For God’s sake, Bethany, don’t be ridiculous. Stop with the Bridget thing. I just had a crush on her from afar.

“Mmm, hmm.”

“I’m serious now, Beth, do you want to hear this or not.”

“Of course dear.” She regained her hostess-like demeanor as she set the chips and salsa down between them.

“Sometimes I think there’s a one-in-a-thousand chance that this girl might be telling the truth. She’s very convincing.”

Out of habit, he reached over and took a few chips, globbing on a tablespoon of onion laden salsa. He cupped his free hand under the concoction so as not to stain his white shirt imported from Spain (he ruined the last one this way) and pushed the whole thing in his mouth at once with his jaw shivering involuntarily.

He rushed to swallow since he firmly believed in not speaking with his mouth full. He found it disgusting when clients talked to him with their mouths filled with mush, sometimes with little drips of mayonnaise zigzagging from the corners of their mouth.

While he was proud of his principled ways, his gastronomic morality had caused him terrible bouts of heartburn more than once in his life – in fact, more than dozens of times, as he tried to obliterate the food instead of slowly chewing it, because he was always afraid he wouldn't be able to say what he was thinking before getting interrupted or the subject changed.

He felt a big sharp piece of chip cut its way down through his esophagus. He cleared his throat. "I know it's crazy, Beth. And I by no means trust my judgment about these things. I mean, I remember one night Ozzie Osborne got me so stinkin' drunk that he actually convinced me it was logical for him to eat a live bat's head on stage?"

"Do you know how many times you've told me that story before?"

"Yes, and I know I promised never to tell it to you again before dinner, but..."

"Keep your promise, dear," she smiled. She thought – this man is such a ripe candidate for Alzheimer's, I swear. Although she did marvel at how much better he was at preventing stains on his shirt lately.

"She's just a very very charismatic girl. Half of it is that she's not trying to be charismatic, you know? She has no swagger about her. No sense of entitlement. No haughtiness." He stopped, suddenly deep in thought, his voice lowered. "She's so sincere about this Zolar character.

She's either the best scam artist I've ever met, and I've met quite a few, or something mysterious is going on.... He laughed nervously, "Nah, I'm just a big gullible goof."

"Or she's schizophrenic," Bethany offered, swallowing a glass of white wine as if it had turned to water.

"No, I called Feldstein. Remember him? The psychiatrist?"

"Michael Jackson's shrink?"

"Yeah. So I called him last Tuesday, in fact, and I say, Martin, have you seen this girl on YouTube? You have? Well, she's a client of mine. What do you think? Is she a certified nut job, or what?"

"And you know what he says to me?"

"What?" Bethany asked breathlessly. She was getting into the conversation now. She was a gossip junkie.

"He said, 'The Zolar girl? She's an interesting kid. I actually submitted a question last week!'"

"Can you believe it?" Jameson started laughing, coughing up a few specks of chip as things got a little out of control. His eyes teared-up. He didn't exactly know why.

"Who the hell is this girl?"

"You're smitten!"

"Dear, please, let me tell you what happened as best as I can. I thought these two kids were just pulling some pseudo-Buddhist wool over the eyes of the uninitiated. But...okay, do you remember the Indian saint we met at that party for Dave Mathews?"

"I liked that nice South African medicine man, myself."

"Yes, well the Indian saint went into his reincarnation routine and everyone was going gaga over him, except, I

said to myself, how are you going to prove something like that?"

"What's your point, dear, I'm getting hungry."

"Eat the chips, I don't want anymore."

"No, I have a nice dinner waiting! And the chips frankly are a bit stale. Don't bring them home anymore."

"Sure, fine. Anyway, one day Sunny's in my office and I said, so does Zolar talk about reincarnation? And she said, 'Yes.' And I thought, okay, here we go. I say to her, 'Sunny, can I tape this, in case we get something good?' I wanted to see if I could get her to contradict herself, but I knew I might have to listen a few times before finding it. Because Zolar – I mean Sunny – is always saying that people should be able to know instinctually what they're saying is true. No faith needed. That's a very good hook. But what could anyone really 'know' about something like reincarnation, right? To my surprise she says, 'I guess taping it would be okay.'

"Now remember, Beth, the real brains behind this thing, James Cowell, isn't there with us. She's on her own. So I turn on my dictation machine and, well, listen to this."

He fumbles around in his brief case and finds the tiny black digital recorder and flicks it on. Sunny's voice is heard:

"Zolar tells me that very few here truly understand the reality of reincarnation. In one way, it's empirically obvious that we reincarnate every morning when we awaken from sleep. We are not who we were, nor will we ever be exactly that person again. We will never exactly repeat the experiences that we had, or think the same sequential waves of thoughts ever again.

“For that matter, you reincarnate and shift consciousness every moment, with every thought. That is the most true definition of reincarnation.

“But as far as a physical rebirth of the soul into a new human body or living form here on earth, or anywhere else, this is not what happens. It’s not what the soul does. Something as deeply filled with responsibility as the soul does not get to have a second chance. It falls from the continuum like a leaf from a tree and either merges back into the soil, or fails and gets carried away to a random destiny that is not ‘leaf.’

“If your soul refuses to wake-up during your lifetime you will exit the continuum as if you were nothing more than an exhale. Your soul will disperse into a place that is not connected to anything. Like space rubbish heading towards the north star. Like the inside of a black hole.”

Jameson flicks off the switch. “Can you believe she just improvised that on the spot?”

“Yes, impressive. I’ll have to watch the posts tonight. You’ve got me curious.”

She stands up abruptly and sighs, “Well, that was a bit heavy for an appetizer, But I’ll live!” She smiles that hostess smile he has become so accustomed to. “Come to dinner, I made burritos, your favorite.”

He burped without excusing himself and took a deep breath. He went upstairs to take out the Alka Seltzer before coming down to the dinner table. It was going to be a long evening.

### Section 3f

Fame, riches, tour dates on the book and lecture circuit. These are the things that took up most of James' and Sunny's energy and focus now.

During the times they were "home" – they'd bought a house in Malibu – they tried to find a normal routine. If there is such a thing as normal for twenty one year old media mega-stars. He would work-out down in the home gym overlooking the Pacific. She would try to cook in a kitchen with views of a rose garden and copper pots hanging from iron hooks. She would cut and slice and dice all the food on the white-tiled island, complete with its own sink. She'd serve the meal to him proudly. Unfortunately, she cooked like a Tom boy. Anything more adventurous than a peanut butter sandwich was destined to get burnt and tortured.

Then *he* would try to cook. He would clang about and she would hear things sizzling while she read her book. She'd sneak a look in once in a while to see him flipping things in the pan and stirring some thick concoction on the back burner.

Then they would decide to go out to a restaurant.

But then they'd be mobbed. Even in Malibu, thin tip-toey women would come up to Sunny during her main course and whisper their admiration for her and her beautiful work.

"It changed my relationship with my mother."

"It freed me to leave my abusive actor boyfriend. Now I do yoga and meditate and lift five pound weights and chant, 'thank you.'"

“Can you autograph my Yogananda book? Just write, ‘To Helen of Troy from Zolar.’”

“Oh, what beautiful handwriting you have, or is it his? Anyway, enjoy your...you eat meat? Oh, how...interesting. Have you ever heard of ‘Praise, don’t braise?’ It’s a beautiful organization run by my very good friend....”

So then she’d try to cook again.

That was their life at home, flawed but filled with mostly fun times.

However, one thing – one very very dark thing – stayed with them day and night: Whenever their minds were able to focus and come to rest, it all came back to the lie. The fact that Zolar was a made-up thing.

The message was just an amalgam of Hindu and Buddhist thought, positive thinking, and good old hell and brimstone to add some spice along with a sense of urgency.

James had learned about some of these things in his religion classes at school years ago. He furthered his learning from the library, the Internet and Wikipedia articles.

But Sunny had never studied. Long ago, she used to listen to James talk for hours, asking questions of him, demanding he clarify, dig deeper, having discussions with him until four a.m. These were sweet and beautiful moments when they were forming their ideas from seed.

But she had been playing the role of Zolar’s channel for almost two years now. She knew how to play the role perfectly, with no script needed.

And she even swore to James that sometimes she no longer knew where these thoughts were coming from. She

just seemed to allow herself to speak and all this wisdom would come out. And she'd listen.

### Section 3g

“James, do you have a minute to talk?” Sunny said. She was standing at the door of his office.

“Five minutes,” he promised, waving her off with his hand as he tried to answer the last dozen emails of the day.

“I think you should stop now. It’s about us.”

He looked sideways from the computer and met her gaze. “What is it? Is something wrong?”

She smiled.

“A movie? We got another movie deal?”

“The movie of a lifetime, James.”

He swiveled his chair around to meet her gaze full on.

“The movie is called ‘our child.’ I’m pregnant!”

“Ohhhh my God!” He leaped up and immediately began pacing the room until he remembered to hug her. She was standing there with her arms wide open.

“This is amazing, Sunny. I’m...You know what? We have to start canceling the tour. You can’t be doing that. You’ll need to rest.”

“Slow down, James,” she laughed. “I’ll be okay. It gives me joy to do this. And London will be fun. And Paris looks amazing in the pictures! Won’t it be fun to go? The baby will be okay.”

## Section 3h

James had felt all along that this second book had to break new ground. If it was just more of the same the public could easily lose interest overnight. Sunny agreed. She wanted to focus on what Zolar actually wanted people to do after they heard the message. The message was clear about why people needed to change, but what about a step-by-step program of how to do it?

He began to study dozens of successful how-to books. He jotted down the best of the ideas. Sunny would add her thoughts as well, which now seemed to come mostly from an intuitive sense. Then together they created their own syntax and style. They realized the writers of these self-help and how-to books had probably done the same thing they were doing, and that they were merely a long link in a chain that went all the way back to the self-help and spiritual books of the '60s. Which went back even further to the self-help books called the *Torah*, the *Bible*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

The final outline for the book, called, "WOW," looked like this:

## WOW

### What is WOW?

~WOW is the “Whirl of Wonder” you might call “ecstasy,” or “pure love” where all souls wish to exist for all time.

~When you experience any form of love or wonder or ecstasy, it feels great, doesn't it? You feel totally “connected” in some inexplicable way. In fact, it feels better than anything else you have ever experienced. In fact, we all strive for it *every second!* We are always trying to mirror the state of WOW.

~It's where your soul, the deepest part of your self, wants to exist.

~But your mind is not skilled enough or aware enough to connect to WOW all the time.

~Your mind often concocts unskillful solutions to get back there that are destined to fail and make things worse. You become more entangled.

~That's because the mind exists in the material world, and therefore is too often coming up with material world solutions to reach a reality that exists beyond it.

### How Can I Connect to WOW More Often?

~There is a “continuum” of energy that is in an eternal state of ecstasy.

~Your soul, when it attempts to reach out to that ecstasy, comes closer to being connected *simply by reaching out to it!*... Except when the mind interferes by substituting thoughts of greed or fear in-between you and the connection.

~For those who insist on staying asleep, and who stop reaching out altogether, the continuum, in turn, becomes unreachable. Those souls are left in a state of psychic and spiritual “nowhere,” where they eventually “die.”

~The only way, in fact, to really permanently “die,” is if your soul loses connection with the continuum.

### **Mind as Mirror**

~The mind is a mirror, not a source of light itself. It reflects anything that gets its attention, good or bad. The mind itself has no conscience or consciousness. Only the soul can provide conscious direction to the mind.

**How do you make sure your soul is in control of the mind, and not vice-versa?**

~Notice which thoughts help you to reach out, and which prevent you from reaching out. Only follow successions of thoughts that are leading you toward reaching out.

This happens when your motivation is:  
pure love  
compassion

empathy  
forgiveness  
blamelessness  
courage without violence  
justice without hatred

You are not reaching out when the motivation is:

greed  
fear  
hate  
self interest

You get the idea?

*This next thing is VERY important...*

*Your soul does not have to succeed at reaching out all the time to connect with the continuum after life.  
But each attempt to reach out is a step in the right direction,  
and each time you ignore the attempt to reach out, it's a step away.*

**How do I know what you are saying is the truth?**

~Act only upon what you know to be true. Be honest with yourself. Re-read everything I've said. See what's true.

~The rest of what I am saying is simply for you to consider, or to use as a metaphor, or to doubt entirely.

**Why is the Continuum doing all this?**

~The continuum isn't "doing" anything. It simply exists. It does not judge you, or decide whether to keep your soul or throw it out. It is not a God or a judge. Rather, the soul must either find a way over the course of its lifetime to reconnect or not. But the continuum doesn't care, or *not* care. It's simply what is.

I'd also like to try to answer this question in a more poetic way that I also think conveys the truth:

~The continuum exists in a dimension you might describe as the state of joy.

~Joy is an even greater ecstatic experience when there is an awareness of everything, including suffering. The soul carries this deeper experience and adds it to the continuum.

~The bigger the continuum gets the more wholly ecstatic it, and everything connected with it, becomes.

~The ecstasy I am referring to is not the *concept* of pure love. It's *the actual ecstatic experience* of pure love. If you have ever felt ecstasy or pure love even for an instant, you would have to multiply that feeling by a trillion trillions to even begin to understand "what is."

## Awakening or Death

~If your goal in this life is simply to be happy all the time, you will fail. Happiness is a transient condition. Happiness is controlled by thought, not by the soul. Happiness is not ecstasy or love. It's simply an infantile list of needs being fulfilled.

~If you attempt to be happy by putting a demand on others, or by allowing greed or fear to grow, then you cut yourself off from the continuum, tear by tear, shred by shred.

~If by the end of your life, you are so cut off that there are no connective threads left, you fall away and “die.”

~If enough humans fall away from the continuum, the earth itself will become a place without light. It will be an abandoned place without connection.

~To awaken from greed and fear you must allow your soul to guide you, instead of allowing thoughts born of greed and fear to guide you. Then you will find the connection to your true self, and to your optimal destiny.

**What you do with this knowledge is your choice.**

~I cannot magically alter your course. It has to come from inside you.

~What you do with this knowledge will affect you now, later, and forever.

~You have no choice but to choose one reality or the other. That is what humans do. That’s your destiny: to choose. May you choose well.

# Part IV

## Section 4a

James and Sunny began their book tour as *WOW* was released world-wide.

The reviews were by and large quite positive. Although if it was ever discovered that two kids from southern California were making all this up, and that these were not Zolar's channeled thoughts, interest in the book would have surely evaporated.

Instead they were getting the same old wacky responses, like, "If Zolar is real why doesn't he go on TV like a real space alien would and righteously freak everyone out? Like in the original version of 'The Day the Earth Stood Still.'"

And: "How can you "reach out" when your arms are holding so much money?"

And: "Why do you want to start a new religion when every time we do it ends up starting a damn war?"

They also tried to deflect the cynics of this new message, who didn't care where it was coming from – those who called Sunny and James "socialists," "communists," "anti-capitalists," "anti-American," "gutless new age wimps," "anti-Jew," "Anti-Christian," "simplistic positivists," "positively simplistic," "Whiners of Doom," and all sorts of other well thought out catch phrases.

The one that really stuck in their throats, inevitable as it was, came from news that Zolar séances were leading to Zolar gatherings, which were leading to self-anointed leaders of these Zolar gatherings who were starting to dictate who should do and think what, with consequences if they dared disobey.

They started every talk by reminding people that they didn't want to start a new religion. Zolar didn't want anyone starting a new religion. They didn't want to be Saints of a new religion. They didn't want anyone else calling themselves Saints of Zolar. Or devotees of Zolar, or monks of Zolar. In fact, they didn't want anyone to quit their old religion. They didn't want songs written for ceremonies created for every chapter of their new book!

"There is a big difference between religion and spirituality," Sunny said. "All religions can have spiritual believers that are plugged into the spiritual elements of the message. And all religions can and will have those who are believers but their actions don't mirror the message."

This just got people more riled up.

They were certainly creating a buzz for themselves. Not that they wanted this kind of buzz or needed more publicity than they already had. Jameson was beside himself. "Any buzz is good buzz," he reminded them, as if to throw their original thinking right back in their faces. "You kids are doing a great job!"

## Section 4b

It was in Paris that everything happened. Paris! A place they had dreamed of going someday, and now they were going as literary royalty.

They had just come from London. They took the Eurostar under the English Channel and arrived at their hotel near Tuileries Gardens at sunset. They ate a picnic dinner French style – a baguette, some cheese, some fruit – near the lake. They watched little boys and girls playing with wooden sail boats, watching them glide away and return again. Then they were taken by the hand and led home to dinner. The sun was still high at nine in the evening. Time felt so different here.

Paris was as magical as they had imagined. They thought about spending more time in this place someday, after this long grueling tour, after the baby was born. Maybe they could play with the baby in a park where they saw a swing set and a merry-go-round. Maybe they would hire an au pair to come along so they could go out at night. White marble statues loomed over them as they ate quietly. Ancient statues. Life's reminder of lives past.

They went to bed early. Sunny was exhausted after another long day. But at dawn she fell ill. She thought it was morning sickness at first, but then certain signs, the bleeding, the cramping. And then it happened. She lost the baby. Everything had happened so fast there wasn't even time to call a doctor.

Now she lay in bed about as weak and sick and depressed as she had ever been in her life. She was a failure as a woman – that's what she kept thinking. She was sinking fast.

James was equally devastated. He knew they'd have to cancel the tour now. Far worse, he knew he'd lost the chance to be a father. He had a child. The child was dead. He felt as if a piece of him had died in the middle of the night.

He almost said aloud, "Things can't get any worse." The darkest moment of his life was washing over him. Their life had been so blessed, so easy since they'd met. Until this.

And then, as if on cue, the phone rang.

It was James' mother calling. Through her tears of shock she told James XXXIII that James XXXII had died a few hours ago of a heart attack.

The funeral? Well, mom, I don't know right now. You see something has happened here as well.

He knew he needed to stay with Sunny. And of course he chose to stay with her. She couldn't fly. She needed to rest for at least a few days. But that meant his mother would be left to grieve alone.

## Section 4c

Gwen was free now. James XXXII would never paw after her again. Would never correct her grammar again, or tell her that her homemade chocolate chip cookies that were lined up on the cookie sheet looked like dots of code, with each chocolate chip representing either a letter or a concept. He would then proceed to eat a dozen cookies before taking his next breath. Early in their marriage she would laugh at things like this. Later it annoyed her. She saw him as eccentric and selfish and gaining too much weight. But now? What if he were still here to drink the cold juice she had just served herself as she turned to get a napkin, and what if he were here to make her tea when she came home late from work, or open the door for her when they went to a nice restaurant. She remembered the one suit he had, still hanging in the closet next to his thick black dress shoes and a rack of ties so old they would occasionally come back in style. Remembered when he had a head of hair, before he had gotten so horribly overweight, when he would walk into the room and pick the boy up in his strong arms and swing him until little James screamed with fear and excitement. And all the times he insisted on taking her shopping for new clothes – he had good taste in women’s clothes. He could always find something pretty hiding in the rack, something that looked just right on her. Made her face glow, and her waist look naturally curved. And the time Gwen broke her arm in a clumsy fall, he cooked for both of them for a straight month. Never once complained. This was the same man who admitted he was attracted to the baby sitter, who never watered a plant in his life, who called daisies buttercups and couldn’t tell the difference between a rose

and a petunia. Some detective. So many thoughts flooding through her, like the time they went on a rare vacation; he chose Italy. The boy stayed with his grandmother, God rest her eccentric soul. He spent months planning every waking hour, mapping out step by step their time in Rome, then Florence, then Venice, where on their last day as a spontaneous act, so unlike him, he paid a King's ransom in Euros just to take her on a Gondola ride. Put his arm around her proudly. Looked around amazed at the colorful buildings that seemed to spin giddy around them like a merry-go-round. Kissed her cheek, wanting nothing more. In that moment he had everything he wanted. That was one moment....

Her car pulled into the church now. She straightened her black dress as she got out of the car. She was neat, he was always a crumpled mess. She was devout, he made fun of her faith. The priest came over to her and acknowledged her like a long lost friend, although he had just seen her this past Sunday. "Gwen, I'm so sorry." He put his hand formally on her shoulder. "About what?" she thought. They were getting divorced anyway. Some day she planned on never seeing him again. Death took care of that. Death forced her to keep that promise.

The casket was placed in the front of the church. James was now closer to that enormous looming reenactment of Jesus suffering on the cross than he had ever wanted to be. She decided to keep the casket closed.

Her son, James, couldn't make the funeral for obvious reasons. Her heart sank, lost in true grief as she remembered why, and mourned the loss of her grandchild. The loss felt worse, in many ways, than the loss of this stubborn old

weirdo. Her grandchild was the future. He represented the past for her, even when he was still alive. Grandma Gwen. How she looked forward to holding that baby. Yes, well, maybe some day they will....

The Priest abruptly began the ceremony. Friends James XXXII used to play cards with were gathered, speaking a little too loudly, already drunk, in one group of seats. Friends James met at crossword puzzle tournaments sat pedantically in wrinkled gray suits in another section. Every one of them wore glasses. Damn crossword puzzles damage the eyes, she thought.

No relatives on either side. All dead.

No old girlfriends either. His one true love before they met, her name was Ramona, left him suddenly when they were in their early twenties. He had said she reminded him of a character named Ramona in a Henry Miller book. Unfortunately, she had read it. Unfortunately, he hadn't. He was just trying to impress her with his intellect. But he may as well have said – you remind me of Catherine in the book, "East of Eden." You remind me of Frankenstein. You remind me of a female Richard Nixon. You remind me of Death Valley.

He read books endlessly, but only tried one Henry Miller book. It was the first book he borrowed from the library after she left him. He couldn't get past the first page. Or the first sentence, for that matter. "Woof, woof woof!" What kind of nut would start a book like that? It wouldn't have mattered though, even if James had read Henry Miller cover to cover. It seemed like nothing ever sank in. Nothing to talk about as he ceremoniously slammed yet another book closed at the finish. The last page seemed no more important

than the first. Reading was just another one of his mindless legal addictions.

“All gathered here today, we come to mourn, yet also celebrate the life of James the forty...twenty.” He stumbled over the Roman numerals. Why would a priest be expected to know Latin?

“James the thirty second, my buddy,” yelled one of his card playing friends. It was totally inappropriate, of course. But he had started the day with a Bloody Mary or two, appropriately named, he thought, since he was going to church.

“Shhhhh,” hissed one of his deeply affronted crossword puzzle friends. How rude!

The Priest said, “Yes, the thirty second,” as he tugged at his glasses. He continued. “James was a good man. An outstanding citizen, a loving wife...I mean, husband.”

This brought snickers from the congregation. The priest was beginning to sweat. His regular congregation was used to these harmless faux pas, but James’ friends didn’t belong to this church, and had never seen him in action before.

“Next thing you know he’ll call him a Martian instead of an earthling,” laughed one of his card playing buddies, nudging the other.

“Yeah, Zolar, I mean James....” his buddy whispered back, snickering.

“Shhhhhh!” This was spit loudly from another crossworder a row behind them.

The priest attempted another go at competency. “James Coward, I mean Cowell, was a man of great compassion.”

Another sputter of laughter arose from the back, this time louder.

“Compassion for who?” said one of the crossworders, getting into the free form nature of the ceremony. He thought everyone would understand that he meant James showed no compassion when he competed as a crossword puzzler. He was fierce, like Attila the Hun! No mercy. Although he did recall through one of his crossword puzzles that Attila was misunderstood in the West, revered as a noble King by some Arabic...

“Exactly!” said the old priest. “*Exactly!*” An embarrassed hush came over the crowd. Even the card players were stunned.

“*Here was a man . . .*” the priest’s words boomed – he had found his truth now – he could hear his suddenly sonorous voice echo back to him, reflecting off the stained glass windows. No need for an organ player to create ambience. He thought, here is a moment where I can truly serve God. Here is a moment when I can make my mark in the community, maybe even steal away some of those overflow crowds at The First Church of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, with their little billboard sign outside with all those pithy sayings – “Come in for a faith lift,” it said one week. “Don’t let Jesus spend Sunday alone,” said another. Who the hell makes this crap up anyway? Father McLeary? He’d heard a few of his sermons. They were as boring as the back face of a mountain. Now he suddenly turns into Mark Twain? Maybe we should get a billboard...

“... *Here was a man* married to a wonderful, pious, women who doesn’t have an enemy in the world,” (“or a friend in the world,” one of the card players mumbled, remembering when his wife tried to make friends with Gwen but was met with a thunderous ambivalence), “yet

this man, was *not* compassionate with her, or to Jesus the Lord, since he never once stepped into these hallowed halls except to doubt and mock!" He turned his eyes squarely upon all of James' doubting mocking friends who were staring at him like a flock of geese stunned by a flashlight.

The congregation was silent at last, he thought. He had them in the palm of his hand! "The palm of his hand..." something like that on a billboard would work.... It was too bad more of his flock weren't here to hear him now. But perhaps it was best this way, he was honing a new style. No more quoting this saint and that great preacher. He had even quoted Martin Luther King from time to time. Now *he* would be the great orator on this end of town, maybe even quoted by others some day! Now wouldn't that be something!

"*This man* also bore a son. His namesake. Who is now blaspheming his way to fame on the Internet, taking all the words of Jesus and turning them topsy-turvey."

"Now wait a minute!" Gwen protested from the first pew.

The priest ignored her. He was almost to his main point. Mustn't be stopped now.

"*Here is a son* who's disrespect for his church, his God, and his family is so heinous that he didn't even bother to come to his own father's funeral! That's what he thinks of his father, and the Holy Father!"

"Just a minute!" Gwen squealed, now in tears from the front row.

"What possible reason could he have for missing the death of his father?" the priest echoed mountainously, his finger now pointing right at her.

"*You!*" she screamed. "Why should he be preached to by a silly man who only cares about himself."

Amidst the dead silence she got up unsteadily, with her wrinkled dress caught on her pantyhose, pushed the hem down modestly, and quickly exited the church. She waited outside by her car, pacing with anger and shame, until the hearse pulled up to take the casket to the funeral parlor.

She arrived at "Matthews Funeral Home" alone. All of James' friends went from the church straight to the bar across the street to recall the farce that had just taken place over beer and shots of tequila.

"The priest got nailed!" they screamed. "You should have seen his old wife land that punch. It was like, "I knew John Kennedy, and, you're no John Kennedy!"

"Yeah, how about: '*You silly man!*' and the priest's glasses start to fall off! He totally lost it. Oh God, it was beautiful!"

"I bet he needs a drink."

"Not in this bar. Not if I'm here."

## Section 4d

Gwen stepped into massively air-conditioned silence. Imagine being deaf in a meat freezer. The funeral director smelled as if he'd taken a shower with men's cologne. Brute? His breath smelled of alcohol and huevos rancheros. He greeted Gwen with sad dog eyes, a practiced expression that tried to emulate Paul McCartney, but ended up looking more like Christopher Lloyd in "Back to the Future."

She said goodbye to James in an empty room. She was alone with him, as they had always been.

The windowless room was filled with the smell of air freshener. Dozens of plush chairs beckoned to no one. There were more live flowers in every corner than she had ever seen in her life. This was costing her a crazy amount of money. But now the show was over.

## Section 4e

Have you ever seen clouds reversing their direction in the sky, hesitant and confused, with the wind whipping life around in senseless ways, ways that gave them no clue about which way to go?

They were on their own, mere backdrops on a huge blue canvass, it seemed, fighting even against the natural movement of time.

Have you ever felt like that? Like you were going to drift apart from yourself and blow away before you even figured out who you were, or where you were going?

Me too.

## Section 4f

Sunny and James arrived home on a gray winter day. Their big house felt empty and unlived in. Life felt missing from the rooms. The windows seemed not to reflect anything. The views they remembered seemed to have become lost.

Sunny was recovering well, but James was not. He didn't know how to even begin to take all this in. Nothing truly bad had ever happened to him before this. He had escaped close calls, had deflected his father's craziness. And that meant all of his conclusions about life, and death, and after-life were drawn from pure theory – beautifully logical concepts stolen from books, and confirmed only by some haughty untested place of knowing called ego.

How easy it should be to overcome pain and heartbreak and abuse and oppression and bad luck, as long as you have faith, right? As long as you're awakened! Just take a breath and follow the light. *Right? Follow the light?* What bullshit!

What a disgusting fake he was. He couldn't even look himself in the mirror. His thoughts were cascading like a monsoon. He was...out of control.

Yet he expected everyone else in the world to follow his words and do better than he could during their times of pain and tragedy. Reach out with love in times of fear. Follow Zolar into the continuum. Maybe he was the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Maybe they both were.

James felt like a reflection of his father – a detective with no sense of true observation. A man people would turn to for help, but inside himself, he was helpless.

Sunny was sitting beside him. She was drinking a cup of tea as he lay there in silent agony on their bed.

“Sunny,” he whispered. “It seems like my father died totally disconnected. He was never really a James XXXII; not truly connected to his past. Didn’t really seem to be connected to anyone or anything in the present. And now maybe he’s disconnected from the future. Off the grid. Maybe the continuum, if there is such a thing, exhaled him like a breath of frost.”

Sunny thought about this. Then she said something she had only now considered. A new revelation. “Or maybe he still has a chance, James,” Sunny said, “because he still has a connection to you. Part of him is still in your dreams and thoughts, in your cells. Maybe you can save him if you want to.”

Sunny reached over to her nightstand. “I’ve been looking over this poem, thinking I should read it to you. It’s Rilke:

“Sometimes a man stands up during supper  
and walks outdoors and keeps walking,  
because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.  
And his children say blessings on him  
as if he were dead.

“Another man remains inside his own house.  
Stays there, inside the dishes and in the glasses,  
So that his children have to go far out into the world  
Toward that same church, which he forgot.”

Sunny looked at him seriously but lovingly: “You went far out into the world toward that church that he forgot, James. And I’m proud of you for that.”

“Yes, but now, here I am trapped inside the dishes and the glasses. I feel so claustrophobic. If you weren’t here, I swear, I’d run so far, until I couldn’t run anymore, until my legs collapsed from trying. *We are fooling the entire world now, Sunny!* We are completely snookering tens of millions of people begging for a lifeline. And what are we really giving them? A space alien televangelist? I don’t want to keep up the lie anymore.”

Sunny leans closer to him and says: “James, you were born a hoax too! You are not the 33<sup>rd</sup> descendant of James the 1<sup>st</sup>. So you also were never truly connected to a continuum on this plane. You were born into a lie. In fact, you were born as the lie of a lie! But maybe your destiny is to turn the lies into the truth. Maybe that’s what we’re doing together!”

“Two lies don’t make the truth. Do the math.”

She took offense at his tone more than his words. But she decided to let it go. “I can’t imagine the sadness in you right now, James. I feel like I’ve had life itself stolen from me – my baby – I was beginning to know that soul, more each day. But you – you’ve had the father, and the son, and the holy ghost of Zolar all taken from you at once.”

“Clever.”

“I’m just clever? Why are you so cold now?” Her voice was still calm. “You are using all your brilliant air-tight logic against yourself. But then either way, you lose. Either your logic fails you, or worse, your logic wins. But the truth is somewhere in the middle. Because you should know that no

one can be consistently connected, not even a saint. I thought Zolar made that very clear to everyone. But if he didn't, he needs to drive that home before taking his leave, okay? Because that information is too important to leave out."

"Are you saying we should write another book?"

"No, this isn't about 'we' anymore. It's not about our readers anymore. I am saying this to you, *for you*. You are asking yourself 'what's the point?' Everything you've read, and passed on to others must be a fake! Beauty and love must be fakes too! Because that's the way it feels. So why try anymore? Why give anymore?"

"But we have to grieve, and go to the bottom, and feed off the algae and minerals there. That's where the nutrients are. We can't know whether the escape route we choose through such dark places will ever lead us back out. We can't pre-map the way out, like you can in a book. It's an experience. It's life. We may emerge. We may die. We may just drift apart."

"But then one day, you awaken to a morning just like yesterday morning, except for reasons you can't understand, you're free. You see the beauty more fully. The sky is more vibrant than ever before – maybe because we'd lost sight for a while. And suddenly we're a little more deeply connected than before."

"Sounds like we should create a board game...."

"Maybe! But listen to me, James Cowell. *Here is the truth*. You want the truth, right? I haven't been able to tell this to anyone. Even to you, until now. I guess I just didn't have the courage. But I need to tell you now."

She took a deep breath, and her eyes became wet with emotion as her voice rose in terror, and from excitement!

“We think we know that we made this whole thing up, right? Maybe we did. Or...maybe Zolar has been setting all this up through us since the very beginning! Since before we even knew it was beginning. Maybe the created is the creator. Do you see?

“Interesting, but ridiculous.”

“The bullet didn’t come out of the gun.”

“What?”

“The gun! The madman’s gun, James. He fired it at us but it didn’t go off.... The letter. It said: ‘Meek as she may seem she has powers untold. Power to reverse the course of most of the energy on your planet, which is now moving itself into a harmful place; power to stop bullets aimed in her direction; power to change the very core of who you are.’”

“Why did you write the part about bullets?”

“I meant bullets of cynicism and negativity. It was a metaphor.”

“But James, think about it now, what in the world made you chose a word like ‘bullet’ at that moment? It really didn’t make any sense to reach that far out for a metaphor and then not explain yourself. You always explain your metaphors. You’re not Rilke, you’re a teacher. You must explain. But you didn’t. You just left that word there like a mystery unresolved. It was too far of a reach but you didn’t care. Why?”

“What are you getting at?” James laughed nervously.

“I mean, maybe Zolar was speaking through you from the beginning. Maybe we’re the ones who’ve been played.”

“Wow.”

“You’re not convinced are you?”

“I don’t know....” He shook his head. “No, I’m not. It just can’t be. I’ve never heard anyone inside my head talk to me. I’ve been in complete control of this whole scam ever since I invented the idea that night on Catalina Island, right in front of you, remember? *Remember?*”

“It was a mystical night. We fell into an altered dimension.”

“Yes we did,” he smiled.

“Yes,” she repeated.

Then she added: “Did Walt Disney create Pinocchio, or did Pinocchio’s fame create the icon called, ‘Walt Disney?’”

“You’re losing me.”

“Never mind.” She became silent for a moment before speaking her next words.

“Let’s put it this way,” she said quietly. “This is the weirdest thing I’ve ever said to you, James, but I feel like I am hearing Zolar speak to me right now, for your benefit, and he says.... ‘Let me tell James something so irrefutable that it will change his entire perception of what’s going on.’”

“So you’re going to scam *me* now, for my own good?”

“Listen to what he just said, James! ‘Let me tell James something so *irrefutable* that it will change his entire perception of what’s going on.’”

“Zolar is going to change me now? Sunny, are you...”

“I’m serious, James! Stop talking for a moment. Here is Zolar’s message to you, and to everyone reading this book as well, since he is telling me that a book will be written about all this. A book is going to be written about what really happened...”

“...But wait, sorry James, here is what he wants to say to you....”

She closed her eyes, just like she used to do on the YouTube videos and the book tours.

“James, there is no need whatsoever for you to know if I am true or if I am your lie. Or if I am Sunny, or if I am a hoax, or if I am *your* hoax – it doesn’t matter! Do not bother asking the question ever again. It’s completely unnecessary.

“What is necessary instead is to ask yourself a simple question – do the words Sunny and I speak make sense to you? Will they help you grow as a person? Will they enrich your life? Is it wise to follow these words, or your words? If the words you are hearing from me do not help you grow and reach out, then discard them. I am your hoax.

“However, if the words I have spoken can help you become a happier and more peaceful person, if it makes it easier for you to love others, not just Sunny, but all, and learn to forgive all, and truly smile, freely, with a breath breathed fully, then why question where the words are coming from? The words themselves are real. Just take the gift at face value and follow what comes next!”

## Section 4g

We have come to the present time. James is asleep now. I am writing, as usual. And I am going to tell you the truth.

I've come to believe this entire book is being channeled through me by Zolar. He is trying to awaken us, whether we are ready to listen or not. He is trying to reach us through humor, through mystery, through logic, through magic, through literary metaphor and trickery, through any modality available to him, for our benefit.

He is asking us to change our perception, and make the most of this time of ours on earth. He is asking us to change in all ways, for always, before the continuum ejects us, before we fall out of step with our truest destiny, before time ends, before it's too late.