

Cocktails

with GOD

in the
Heart of
the Beast

Another Bar-Room Novel by
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Contents

1. “Oh, My God!”
2. What a Nightmare
3. A Walk in the Park
4. It’s Not Over, ’Til It’s Over
5. A Nightcap from Hell!
6. Rise and Shine!
7. Here We Go Again!
8. It Never Ends!
9. Round Three
10. You’re Killing Me!
11. It Pays to Be God
12. Can’t Get Enough
13. Show Me the Money
14. Life Is Not Fair
15. Setting the Record Straight
16. One Small Victory
17. On the Road Again
18. Head West, Young Man
19. Another Bump in the Road
20. Almost Home

Drink Recipes

Campaign Promise
Deplorable Trump Supporter
Enemy of the State
Green Card
Harvey Wallbanger
Hope-’n’-Change
Screaming Bloody Liberal
Tax Cut
Term Limit
Too Big to Fail

*“Always do sober what you said you’d do drunk.
That will teach you to keep your mouth shut.”*

—Ernest Hemingway

Chapter I

“Oh, My God!”

IF GOD DIDN'T drink and encourage me to get totally annihilated right alongside him, I wouldn't know God!

Feeling there was nothing to strive for in my remaining days on earth, I wanted to act on what I felt might be my final opportunity to make a difference in this world, both for others and myself. If nothing else, I would at least be able to say I tried!

After packing my vehicle with a few things and saying goodbye to my three kids and my beautiful wife of seven years, I stopped on the way out of our small town for a tank of gas. After filling up, I went inside to pay the clerk and then pulled out onto the open road with a hot coffee in the cup holder and got on the Interstate a mile up the road. Once again, second-guessing my decision to take a hard stand on something I believed in, I shook off the self-doubt and merged into the light traffic, turning on the GPS and the cruise control. As difficult and inconvenient as it was to be leaving home on virtually my last dime, and where maybe I should have just stayed put and tried to ride out the despair in

my local surroundings, I'd taken the first step in a journey of a thousand miles across the country to our nation's capital.

Following this call from my inner voice to "act," and then after spending two days on the highway along with a sleepless night in my car at a busy truck stop, I was happy to finally reach the hotel in Washington, DC, where my oldest son had booked me a room on his smartphone, in a nice place near the epicenter of it all, for \$149 a night. After checking in, I called the wife to let her know that I made it there safe, turned on the TV in my room, and tuned into CNN. The 2016 presidential election results were about to start rolling in at any time. I filled the tub with hot water and lay back in it, massaging my knotted stomach muscles while listening to the biased pundits and political hacks as they all but declared Hillary Clinton to be our next POTUS—before any of the vote counts had even come in! After watching another segment of that donkey ride, I decided to get dressed and head downstairs to the lounge for a few drinks to help soften the almost inevitable blow to the psyche of waking up in the morning to our first, criminally insane, woman president-elect!

Taking a seat at the bar, I ordered a cocktail and kept to myself among the handful of other patrons as we all viewed the first votes begin to tally. After an hour or so of watching their confidence game of "Hillary's going to win," and knocking down two more Bacardi and Cokes, I decided I had my fill and stepped outside to have a smoke.

Feeling a good buzz coming on from the rather strong drinks, I adopted a blank stare and navigated my way out of the bar area, quietly passing by an older couple asking for directions at the front desk and a housekeeping staff member

polishing a set of sliding glass doors. Once outside, I took in a deep breath and experienced a temporary sense of relief. An inner peace of sorts penetrated my entire being to a point where I felt at ease and at one with the perfection of the universe, all things considered. Yet despite having felt completely drained only a short time earlier while sitting in the bathtub with a million negative thoughts running through my mind, I paid gratitude to our creator with a simple, "Thank You," while knowing in advance that this sense of peace would most likely be short-lived.

As I gazed about my immediate surroundings, I couldn't help but notice the oddity of the streets being so quiet for someone visiting in the heart of our nation's capital on the eve of such a high-stakes presidential election. I figured most people were probably at home, glued to the tube watching as this historic night unfolded. Personally, I was hoping that Donald Trump would pull off the greatest political upset in US history, just to teach everyone a good lesson, but then I had a knowing deep inside from all my prior research that the fix was likely already in for Hillary to win. I thought back to a statement I once heard that our presidents are not elected, they're selected by the power elite! But then again, who knows? Perhaps God would intervene in some miraculous way and hand it to Trump in a much-needed, and perhaps well-deserved, nation-saving landslide that was based on the real internal polls showing him way out in front, though not being reported as such. Anything could happen!

Lighting up the home-rolled smoke and taking a big pull to make up for lost time spent in the hotel, I tried to override my chattering mind by scanning the immediate area

for any signs of nightlife. Hearing faint, intermittent sounds of music coming from somewhere down the block, and then noticing silhouettes of people walking into a building, I figured there must be a dance club or a bar just down the road, and I headed off in that direction. Being away from home and feeling rather down, I took another drag off the smoke and began a slow, controlled walk toward the audible nightlife, all the while being aware of my surroundings and mindful of the fact that bad things can happen to good people while they are out of town and trying to escape the pressure cooker of everyday life. In a warped sense of self-assurance, I told myself that I wouldn't be as mindless or unfortunate as the twenty-some people every year who fall off the side of a cruise ship in a drunken stupor, nor would I be meeting my maker for any reason whatsoever on this night. Yet, I did maintain the realization that the inner city is a dangerous place in any town after dark, especially Washington, DC.

With the economic crash of 2008, and my subsequent loss in 2009 of virtually everything I'd ever worked for, including my lake home, I'd come to our nation's capital on a mission! And it was only by the remaining balance on my Visa card, a few bucks in cash, and maybe \$200 on my debit card that I was even able to make the trip. Being virtually dead broke and unable to secure any real meaningful work as a small building contractor, and becoming hell-bent on trying to identify the criminal politicians and crony capitalists who created this whole mess of a world we had been forced to live in as virtual slaves, I'd reached the conclusion that America, the country that I was born in and would die for, had been taken over by our enemies, both foreign and domestic, and now it appeared that they were about to hijack another

election! But this was not just another election to me, rather I surmised that this could well be our last presidential election in the United States if Trump didn't win, as we might otherwise fall to a full-on, state-run dictatorship under the guise of a New World Order if the Clintons were to get back in the White House again.

I think I finally reached rock bottom when it became apparent that the five-to-seven point lead Hillary reportedly had was either fake news or based on rigged polls, because a lead like that should have resulted in thousands attending her rallies instead of just a few hundred. It brought me to the point where I thought, *Fuck the globalist bankers and all our corrupt politicians in Washington who had been bribed or blackmailed into selling out our country and destroying everything that meant anything meaningful in life. Let them pick up the tab for my trip to our nation's hellhole!* I found solace in the thought that when the bill for the credit card I was about to max out arrived, it would probably go unpaid along with all my other obligations. Why can't I tack my bills onto the already out-of-control national debt, I wondered. Why can't I pull endless amounts of cash out of thin air, like the Federal Reserve does with paper money and digits on a computer screen, that are backed by absolutely nothing? What a scam! I couldn't wait to wake up the next morning and take to the streets in front of the Capitol and White House to blow off a good decade worth of steam, in an exercise of my First Amendment right, and perhaps uttering a few choice words. I was pissed!

Having been picked clean to the bone at the tender age of forty-five and being about as angry as a man can be without doing something to land him in prison, I came to

Washington to vent, fearing the election would be stolen for Clinton. Compounding this was the fear that if by chance Trump won, the globalists would turn off the EBT cards to start a nationwide riot, or crash the world's economic system to such an extreme that we would all be wishing that Hillary Clinton had gotten in!

Not one to acquiesce without a good fight, I came to town fully equipped with a forty-dollar megaphone, a slug of C batteries from Sam's Club, and about ten years of self-contained rage from having been victimized repeatedly by the system. It was a foregone conclusion that I would probably not have any real effect on the macrocosm of events in America with my planned, in-their-face protests, but rather that my mere presence would shake up the microcosm and maybe cause one or more of our sellout government officials to think twice about continuing their acts of raping and pillaging the American people. Armed with only one other alternative, I wasn't about to act on a teaching I had learned years' earlier that taught, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants" (Thomas Jefferson). I just wouldn't go down that road. If anything, I wanted to be remembered by my children in the end as perhaps a Gandhi-type activist on steroids versus a Rambo on meth! Still, and while feeling rather uninhibited from a lack of sleep and the three drinks at the bar, I couldn't understand why some rogue group of spit-on military vets suffering from a bad taste of treason or sedition hadn't already come to town and cleaned house with their bare hands!

Regaining my presence of mind and then flicking the half-smoked cigarette to the curb in utter disgust, I continued

walking along the dimly lit city sidewalk toward the music and took notice of a vacant storefront with an overhead fluorescent light on across the street. On the backside of a plate-glass window hung a large, cardboard sign, “Going Out of Business Sale.” I took this as confirmation of my belief that our economy was not as robust and wonderful as our lying, inept government leaders and experts had claimed it to be. Just before reaching the intersection, I came upon what appeared to be an emergency exit of the hotel where I was staying, and as I was about to pass by the opening, a tall, spooky-looking dude with slicked-back hair and a devil-worshipping energy about him stepped out of the doorway with something cupped in the palm of his hand, as he attempted to block my path.

Filled with surprise, and feeling threatened by the thought that he was coming for me with bad intent, I cranked up my forward momentum with everything I had in me and sidestepped the satanic-looking bastard at the last second and darted past him like a track star. Looking back at his right hand as it was coming up from his side, I took a few more steps and then, *bam!* I had run right into the path of a speeding minivan exiting the hotel’s parking ramp. All I remember from that point on was being thrown up in the air and then blacking out. I must have banged my head and lost consciousness when landing on the other side of the vehicle onto the hard, concrete driveway apron.

Having been knocked out for an unknown period of time, I came to, lying on my backside with a strange, gravelly voice calling out to me.

“You all right, man!?”

“What in the hell?” I screamed out with both eyes closed, rubbing the back of my head feeling around for blood.

“Get up, son. Now! We’ve got to go,” the voice said in a demanding tone.

“Get up? I’ve just been run over,” I said, wincing from the pain while taking a mental inventory of all my body parts, afraid to move a muscle.

“Come on, we have to get you up and out of here, it’s not safe. Let’s go!”

“Hold on! I’ve just been run over for Christ’s sake.” I felt a set of hands reaching under my shoulders and opening one eye saw a rather stocky, barreled-chested, biker-type dude with shoulder-length, windblown, white hair, and weathered skin in his late sixties staring down on me. He wasn’t the same guy who had confronted me near the doorway, praise God, yet he was a stranger nonetheless.

“What in the world just happened?” I asked. Without another word from the man, I felt the hands that were under my shoulders now placing death grips on my leather jacket as if preparing to lift me up.

“Stop! I might have broken something! Call 911, damn it! I want to be looked at by a medic and file a police report!” I shouted.

“We don’t have time for that,” the man said in a weightlifter’s grunt as he jerked my 160 pounds of flesh and bones up to a standing position.

“Hey! What are you doing!?” *What a lunatic, I thought. I could have a spinal injury or nerve damage and this guy is tossing me around like it’s no big deal.*

“You’ll be fine, but not if we stick around here. Let’s go!”

Still dazed and confused, I steadied my balance and scanned the area for the no-good character who was the root cause of my dilemma, but he was nowhere in sight. I turned to the gruff old man and asked, “What in the hell just happened?”

“I didn’t see you, man,” he replied in a tone that caused me to wonder if the guy might have been a little impaired. I looked over at the minivan.

“You were driving?” I snapped, looking around for other witnesses, and checking my pockets as an afterthought.

“Oh, stop with the drama, and get in the car—we have to talk!” He sounded serious. I couldn’t imagine what he needed to speak to me about that badly, so I did my best to pivot away from the encounter with this guy and the potential danger lurking behind his directive to get in the van.

“No, you stop! You can’t go around mowing people down in a public walkway and then act like you’re somehow the victim. Are you blind or what!?”

“I can see just fine! Let’s go!” he urged.

“I’m not going anywhere with you! I’m walking back to where I just came from and staying in for the night. Start watching the damned road and slow that thing down, you could have killed someone,” I lectured, looking down the street for the hotel’s main entrance.

“You can’t go back to your room, Buddy. I checked you out while you were downstairs at the bar. Look—your things are in the van,” he said, walking over and sliding open the passenger side rear door.

Buddy? Did this guy just call me Buddy? I thought it strange that he knew my first name. And what’s with him saying that he checked me out of my hotel room while I was

downstairs at the bar? And did he just say that all my things were in the van? Out of curiosity, I walked closer to the virtually nondescript, white, early 2000-series, Chrysler minivan, which was still running with its lights on and was now sitting partially out in the street. I felt the fight-or-flight response activate in me without a command.

Scared to death and acting on a suspicion that something was not right, I cautiously stepped around to examine the rear of the vehicle and felt my knees start to buckle when I saw the “Info Wars” and “Hillary for Prison” bumper stickers on the rear hatch, in the same exact position where I stuck the same stickers on my own van earlier in the year, while embarked on a three-day bender over the Fourth of July weekend. In total disbelief, I walked over to the open passenger door and peered inside. Sure enough, there was what looked to be my large duffle bag and briefcase. I was ready to burst into flames!

“You checked me out?” I screamed! “And you stole my van? That’s great! How did you get in the room, and where’d you find my keys?” He didn’t have time to respond. “My laptop and credit card better be in there!” I threatened.

“Oh, really? Like I’m going to rip you off! For Pete’s sake, give me a government job!” he yelled in a sarcastic tone. “I might have just saved your life and now you want to accuse me of being a petty thief?”

“Well, what am I supposed to think? And who are you, anyway? I don’t even know your name.” I thought that the old man might introduce himself, or produce a driver’s license, just to put me at ease or perhaps legitimize his being on the road legally while being involved in a traffic accident.

“My name is God,” the old man responded. He looked down and then back up again, staring me directly in the eyes, fully committed to his answer. I stood there completely transfixed, thinking, *No, this can't be. Not again!*

Most people would be ecstatic and overcome with bliss or feel any number of emotions that might arise from having a chance encounter with God, but I'd already been there and done that, so to speak, on two separate occasions, and I was not at all impressed with the last go-round!

The first time I encountered God, or the likeness of the creator of all things in the universe, I was involved in a bad motorcycle accident and found myself exiting my lifeless body and crossing over to the other side. The second time, about fifteen years later, I'd suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm. In the first near-death experience, I smacked a tree going 70 mph on my road bike, after leaving a wedding reception, and after making impact with a big elm, I slipped out of my body in spirit form and entered what seemed like a tunnel, soaring up at warp speed toward a brilliant white light, the likes of which I'd never seen before. I was totally immersed in a feeling of peace and love that words cannot describe, ending with my embrace of an almost invisible, but energetic figure I believed wholeheartedly to be Christ, and then my entire life up to that fateful night raced before my eyes in vivid detail.

The phrase “my life flashed before my eyes” is an accurate one, and it's as though every second of our life is caught on high-definition video from which we will be judged, or perhaps judge ourselves. What was overwhelming

and central for me in this life review were the scenes playing out where I had hurt and caused varying degrees of pain and suffering to others. After seeing this, I wanted nothing more to do with returning to my worthless life back on earth, and I made my choice known by crying out in pleading fashion to this unmistakable omnipresence, whatever name we choose to call it, but was told that my life in the physical world was not yet over. I went from semi-consciousness to being back in my body as it cartwheeled down the city sidewalk, eventually coming to rest in someone's front yard where I woke up lying on my back in a translucent state, looking up at a jet-black sky filled with stars that sparkled with absolute beauty and wonder.

In my second encounter on the other side, I went from my last memory of a brain surgeon yelling, "He's not going to make it if we don't get in there now," as a vibrating saw touched down on my skull, to feeling my spirit leave my lifeless body and dashing off to another dimension. I then spent what seemed like three days getting totally inebriated with God in the heavens while he teased, cajoled, and ridiculed me. It eventually led to a firefight between us during my life review, with God throwing furniture around the place and tearing the roof off the room I was in. This was followed by a torrential rainstorm with intermittent bolts of lightning cracking overhead.

When I came to, I was in a recovery room with a nurse telling me to wake up. I didn't understand at the time how rigid my ideas were about the world or how they were in direct conflict with God's worldview and governing law of how he wanted things to be.

This spiritual beatdown resulted in my developing a bad attitude for all-things-God. I concluded that my complete love and respect for Jesus would never waver, but that my relationship with the creator would always prove to be contemptuous at best! After all, my core belief that God didn't really give a shit about me or the world developed during my early years when my alcoholic father would come home drunk on a Friday night after work and raise all kinds of hell with family members before going to bed. A couple of days later, he would drag us five kids off to church where he would pray for forgiveness by way of a fake Catholic priest who probably believed that the secret to eternal life was found in a bottle of wine or spirits.

Standing there now on the sidewalk rubbing my head with the palm of my hand and trying to fight off my state of denial that I had most certainly encountered the Almighty once again, I took a step back, creating space to run a soundcheck on what the old man just said his name was, and asked, "Did you say God?"

"I did, but people around here know me as 'Dog'."

"Dog," I repeated aloud, trying to buy some time to process the self-professed deity in flesh, yet knowing in every cell of my body that I was in the presence of the real deal.

Not sure what he was after or just how to proceed with the situation, I put on my best poker face and responded, "Well, I must say, it's been a long time, God, I mean Dog, and as much as I would like to hang out and catch up on things, I'm not feeling that great right now, and I think it best if I just park my car and try to get back into my room." I

wanted nothing more than to get away from all the madness and to put this night behind me.

God put one hand on my shoulder and prodded me gently toward the minivan.

“Listen to me, Buddy, the hotel is out. You’re hanging with me now,” God calmly informed as he closed the sliding car door.

“Nah . . . I just want to go back to my room, but thanks for the offer—maybe tomorrow.”

“You can’t go back there, Buddy. And you’ll be safe with me, I swear!”

“Safe with you?! I can’t even walk one city block in this town without getting mugged by one of Satan’s elves and then run over by some other stooge who checks me out of my room and then steals my own car!” God shrugged as if it were no big deal to him.

“Get in the van, Buddy. You’ll be in good hands,” God said in a promising tone as he opened the front passenger door, motioning for me to get in.

Still a bit rattled from having been nearly killed only moments earlier, and then having God insist that returning to my hotel room was no longer an option, I sat down in the front passenger seat and pulled one foot in and tried to relax. If nothing else, I wanted to be with my car and my personal belongings. My next thought was that perhaps I could go with him for a while to see what was on his mind and then find a new room after that if, for some reason, I couldn’t get back in the room I had already paid for. God tapped my other leg, signaling to me that he was going to shut the door and then closed it. He then sprinted around to the driver’s side and

jumped in, placing one hand on the wheel and the other on the shift.

“Don’t drive like an idiot or we’re going to be switching seats,” I warned half-kidding. Normally, I always like to be in control when going somewhere in the car, but I felt more comfortable with God driving at the time. Most important, I was happy to be leaving the scene alive. Had God not come along at the perfect time, I might be lying on the sidewalk in a puddle of blood with a couple of slugs in the back of my skull.

“Buckle up,” God hollered, putting the van in gear. “I don’t want you to bump your head again,” he said with a hearty, devilish laugh.

“Oh, yeah, that’s hilarious! You’re lucky I didn’t call the cops and have you hauled off to jail! Where are you taking me, anyway?”

God drove out into the street and passed by the bar I had earlier been making my way toward, and then blew through a red light at the nearby intersection.

“Whooooaaa!” I said, applying an imaginary brake on the passenger-side floorboard, rethinking my decision to ride with him.

“Let’s see here, watch for Pennsylvania Avenue,” God said, with his foot feathering the gas pedal up and down like a stock car racer trying to gain position. I was silently praying that he wouldn’t cause a wreck.

“And what’s on Pennsylvania Avenue?” I asked, continuing to pray he would slow down.

“Oh, that’s just where we need to turn because of the road closures, but to answer your question, I’m taking you to one of my favorite places to hang out, just a couple of blocks

away from the White House. Everyone who is anyone in DC frequents the place, Buddy—congressmen, senators, lobbyists, all of the criminal types—you’ll love it!” he said, scanning each intersection for other cars as we passed through them, green light or not.

After a few minutes of aggressive driving through the business district, God turned a corner and pulled to the curb behind a parked police car.

“Here we are,” he announced, turning off the lights and pulling the keys from the ignition.

Still a bit foggy from banging my head, and not being familiar with the area, I looked up to see where we were. Then the bright, flashing, neon sign caught my eye:

Liars Cheats & Thieves
Where Everyone Knows Your Game!

“Oh, Lord, what the . . . I’m not going in there. You’ve got to be out of your mind, this place is a dive! Take me back to my room!”

“No, come on, you’ll be all right! It’s similar to your neighborhood taverns back home—but with benefits,” he said, getting out.

I thought for a moment and protested as God walked around and opened my door.

“I don’t . . . This looks like a good place to get killed or end up in a coma,” I screamed.

“Knock it off, you’re with me, Wilde,” he replied while helping me from the vehicle. It was the first time he called me by my last name.

“Oh, that’s comforting, you just about did me in back at the hotel.”

“Listen, Buddy, let’s get one thing straight! Right now!” He sounded agitated and squared up to me, puffing out his chest after taking a deep breath.

“I created you—in the blink of an eye,” he emphasized, “and I can take you out of this life even faster! If I wanted to kill you or let you be killed back there, I would have! I’m God, and I can do whatever I want, wherever I want, with anyone I want, for as long as I want, as often as I want, and get away with it—including murder! Are we clear on that?” He smiled and I thought, *What a prick!* This guy either suffered a major blackout right before my eyes, or he’s just really out there in his own space-time event somewhere! I wasn’t quite sure what to make of the surprising outburst but didn’t feel like I was in any position to argue.

“Good then, let’s go in and have a drink, I’m buying—the night is on me,” he said, preparing to close my door.

“Wait! Should I grab my briefcase? My entire life is on that computer, you know?”

He laughed, then slammed the door.

“Buddy, you accumulate a few gigs of rather useless personal information on a cheap laptop from Walmart and you’d have me believe that this constitutes your entire life? Leave it in the car!” He fumbled with the remote to lock it.

“Well?” I didn’t know what to say.

“No, what you have on that thing is a collection of bad data that was passed on to you by a bunch of well-meaning but ill-informed idiots, and it all amounts to nothing in the end!” I thought he might have overshot the runway by

throwing all the great people I ever learned from into the same group.

“Ok, then!” I thought he was done.

“And you are free to disagree, but not with me!” He started walking through the vacant patio area to the door.

Chapter 2

What a Nightmare

WALKING IN THE front door of Liars Cheats & Thieves, God asked if I'd like to belly up to the bar and have a seat on one of the round, padded stools. Preferring to sit back and relax, I suggested that we get a table instead. He pointed, directing me to take a chair at an empty high-top near a ticket booth that sold pull-tabs and scratch-offs. I glanced up at the election coverage on one of the TVs hanging above the bar and didn't like what I saw. CNN was showing Hillary Clinton now slightly ahead in the popular vote count in a few of the must-win states. We no more than sat down before a trendy waiter appeared out of nowhere and was on us.

“Good evening, again, Dog. Two hours, no see! Who's your friend?” the man inquired.

“This is Buddy.”

“Well, helloooo, Buddy,” he stuck his hand out to shake mine.

“My name is Eduardo, and I'll be your server tonight. Can I get you gentlemen something from the bar?”

I couldn't help but notice the large pin-on button he was wearing right above his dress shirt pocket. At first glance, I was offended and then chuckled at the audacity.

I Swear!
I Only Voted *Twice* Today!

God ordered first, "Give me a Hope-'n'-Change. In fact, make it a double, straight up, hold the academias."

The waiter cocked his head to the side and gave God a weird look. The man then turned to me as if seeking clarification. I thought for a moment . . .

"You mean macadamias?" I offered.

"Yeah, whatever," God said. "They're both nuts!"

"OK then, one double Hope-'n'-Change, hold the macadamias—and for you, sir?"

"I'll take a Rum and Coke, Bacardi if you've got it."

"Rum and Coke, my ass! Get the kid what I'm having," God demanded. "I want him to be more like me!"

"Will do! Start a tab?" the waiter asked. God pretended not to hear him.

"I guess. Why not?" I replied.

As the man went off to get our drinks, God leaned in toward me from across the table and spoke in a low voice.

"Hey, Buddy, spot me a twenty, I forgot to grab my wallet."

I found it ironic that God would be asking me to lend him money when he was the creator and sole owner of all things in the universe. I reached into my pocket and peeled a bill from my money clip. He then got up and went over to the

gambling booth to try his luck at the pull tabs. I could hear him badgering the old lady selling the tickets.

“Give me ten Wall Street Bailouts, at zero interest,” he mocked as if trying to humor the woman working behind the counter. I took the time, while God was away, to gaze around at the bar and some of its patrons. For the most part, everyone there, about two dozen people in total including staff, wore suits or casual business attire, with a couple of guys dressed like I was, wearing blue jeans or typical working-man clothes.

The original wooden bar and built-in bottle shelving appeared to be worn and dated, with much of the furniture looking as if it had been repurposed throughout the years from other venues. What stood out most, however, was the clutter on the walls containing various knickknacks and pictures of people I didn't recognize, that competed for space among a large assortment of plaques and achievement awards evidently donated by customers of years past for no other reason than to cause a good laugh.

One picture I did identify that captured my attention was of former Senator Harry Reid sporting a big black eye with a handwritten caption below that read, “This is what you get for lipping off!” I laughed, and it felt good to laugh again after all I had been through, but then my empathy kicked in for the old codger when I thought about the pain he must have suffered from whatever caused his injury.

Right about then, God came back to our table and, sitting down, he began cracking open the thin cardboard tickets as if he had played this game many times before. I was thinking what a waste of time these things were, and how I'd

probably never see that money again. On the last one he opened, God yelled, “Got a bailout! We’re talking a hundred bucks, my friend.” God then cleaned off the remaining chads of paper from the winning ticket and tossed it over toward me, asking if I’d go up and cash it in.

Reluctant to play any part in such a stupid game of chance, but hopeful to get my money back, I went up and cashed in the winning pull tab after showing the woman my ID. I came back to the table, placing the money in front of God. He picked up the stack of bills and slid me two fives, “Here’s your ten bucks back.”

“Ten? I gave you a twenty!”

“You went in half,” he countered.

“Really? Then I should get half of the prize!”

“Not in DC, things work differently around here.”

“I see.”

“Drinks are on me. Thanks, pal.” God smiled and then grabbed the ten dollars and flung a folded twenty-dollar bill toward me as if just playing around. “Loosen up, Buddy. Life is short.” I didn’t know whether to take his words as a piece of wise advice or a warning not to get out of line.

When the waiter came back, he set the drinks in front of us and inquired, “Is Hillary still in the lead?”

“That she is, but not for long! Trump’s going to start pulling ahead any minute now,” God announced with complete confidence, as he looked up at the TV and then turned to a group of four or five people laughing it up in a corner booth off to our side as if celebrating the almost certain election victory for Clinton. I could tell that God

wasn't pleased with something, or someone among the bunch. Eduardo, apparently in no mood to hear that Hillary could possibly lose the election, excused himself, telling us that if we needed anything else, to holler.

With God still focused on the group of revelers seated in the booth next to us, I sat gazing at the two cocktails and thought, *I can drink rum and Coke until the sun comes up, but these things look like they could lead to all-out anarchy before the night is over.* I pulled the boozy mix of alcohol closer to me, stirring it with the thin swizzle stick and then licking the straw to get a taste of the gin-flavored drink.

Curious to know if God favored Trump over Clinton to win the election, I broke through his preoccupation with the group he was sizing up and asked, "You want Trump to win?"

"Absolutely!"

"Do you think he still has a chance?"

"Without a doubt, Buddy."

"Are you serious?" I asked.

"No question about it. Donald J. Trump will become your next president!"

"Really? How can you be so sure?"

"My will be done, Buddy!"

"Well, I understand what you're saying but what does the desire behind your will being done have to do with the fact that there are reportedly millions of illegals and dead people voting for Hillary in this election? And God only knows, I mean you only know, how much electronic vote rigging is going on behind the scenes."

“It’s Trump all the way, baby!” he gleamed, looking up as if counting the painted-over, otherwise copper architectural ceiling panels.

“Trump? You really think he has a chance to win?”

“Absolutely!” God slipped on a pair of reading glasses and then pulled out a smartphone. He began scrolling across its surface with his index finger.

“I have to be honest, God. I’m for Trump as much as you are, but I don’t see it happening. She’s leading in Florida as we speak!”

“Not to worry, my friend. I’ve got this.”

“Got what?” God remained silent. “We are talking about Trump winning this election tonight, right? Not 2020, correct?”

“Like I said, it’s Trump all the way. Excuse me while I make a phone call.” God tapped the face of his phone a few times, put it on speaker, and then set it down on the table in front of him. I looked away to check the election coverage but tried listening in with one ear among all the other background noise, when a man’s voice answered in English with what sounded to me like a thick Russian accent.

“*Hello?*” the male voice greeted.

“*Mikhail?*”

“*Yes?*”

“*You ready?*” God asked.

“*All systems are go,*” the man answered.

“*Good! Let’s do this,*” God instructed.

“*But I think we should . . .*”

God cut the man off mid-sentence. “*No, don’t wait any longer, do it right now, as soon as you hang up!*” God demanded.

“Consider it done,” the man assured God.

“Thank you!” God powered down his phone.

“Sorry, Buddy. Complicated business but it had to be done. I had no clue what he was talking about. Now watch the Trumpster come alive!” he boasted.

“Huh?”

“Like I said, my will be done!” God peered over the top of his cheaters, raising his glass signaling me to a toast. I hesitated for a moment and then lifted the lowball glass to meet God’s hand. He tapped his drink against mine and shouted for all to hear while looking around the room, “To President Trump!” I felt every set of eyes in the bar shift to us. God swallowed his drink in one gulp and then slammed the glass down as if to draw the waiter back to our table.

“Pound it down, Buddy!” God instructed me to finish off the full drink. I took a sip.

“No, I said pound it down!” I hesitated for a moment, preparing myself for a blast of the nasty, gin-flavored cocktail’s aftertaste and then tipped it up. I set the empty glass down, wiped my mouth with the back of my hand, and then dried it off on my pant leg. I looked at God, hoping that he wouldn’t order any more shots, but no such luck. Eduardo was back and asked if we’d like another Hope-’n’-Change.

“Nah, enough of that nonsense,” God coughed into a closed fist. “Give me a Campaign Promise, and get one for Buddy also.”

“Wait, no more after that!” I felt if I had any more pure alcohol to drink, I would end up crossing the threshold that separates acquiring a good jag, from that of being go-to-jail drunk. God sat straight up.

“Well, if you’re going to get weak on me, Buddy, we’ll only have six more and then we’re outta here . . . I hate this damned bar anyway!” he laughed, motioning with his hand toward the bar for Eduardo to fetch the new drinks.

Thinking back to meeting earlier with God outside the parking ramp exit, where he made a big deal out of having to talk to me about something really important, I thought I’d hit him up on that next, but not before I took a leak.

“I need to use the restroom, God.”

“Oh, yeah, no problem, Buddy. You walk past the end of the bar, look to your right, it’s down that hall, on your left. Can’t miss it.”

Swiveling out and away from the table perhaps a bit too quickly, I felt a little empty headed. Sliding down off the wooden bar chair a few inches to the floor, I readied my step and proceeded to walk past a dozen or so patrons seated at the bar and found the hallway leading to the restrooms and a rear emergency exit. As I made my way down the long corridor, I noticed that someone had lined nearly every inch of the two walls with wood and brass plaques from the waist up to about a foot below the ceiling. I paused briefly to read a few of them and quickly realized that I had possibly stumbled across a collection of the world’s biggest political lies and gaffes ever uttered.

The first one I noticed read,

“I did not have sexual relations with that woman.”

—**Bill Clinton**

The next read,

“We have discovered weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.”

—**George W. Bush**

The next one caused me to laugh out loud,

“During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet.”

—**Al Gore**

On the opposite wall was one of my favorite political lies of all time,

“I did not inhale.”

—**Bill Clinton**

And then a real whopper,

“We have to pass the bill to find out what is in it.”

—**Nancy Pelosi on the Affordable Care Act**

And then another dandy,

“I’m not a crook.”

—**Richard Nixon**

Another read,

“If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period.”

—**Barack Obama**

And then one from TV,

“It’s not a lie if you believe it.”

—**George Costanza, *Seinfeld***

And no collection of lies would be complete without one from the Nazi himself,

“If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed.”

—**Adolf Hitler**

And finally, an oversized plaque bearing an oversized gaffe hanging right above the women’s room door,

“What difference at this point does it make?”

—**Hillary Rodham Clinton on Benghazi**

Shaking my head at the arrogance of our political leaders and their abilities to freely lie about virtually anything and everything, I reached the men’s room and went inside. I almost wanted to gag at the smell of urine, and I knew better than to touch anything without a paper towel in hand.

Then, coming from one of the restroom stalls I could hear a man, totally unaware of my presence, cussing out someone on his cell phone. I couldn’t help but listen in on the one-sided conversation as I stepped up to the urinal. The man sounded amped up on something.

“Hey, hey, hey, I don’t care what the real polls have been showing. We must get her in office or we are finished! Done! It’s over for all of us! Forever! Do you understand?”

(Pause)

“No, don’t do that. We can’t turn back now—it’s either ‘do, or die trying!’” The man laughed as if unsure of himself.

(Pause)

“Listen, we already have her up by as much as twelve points and her odds of winning are more than eighty percent.

If everyone sticks with the plan, there's no way in hell he could possibly win, barring an act of God." The man cracked up and then got real serious.

(Pause)

"I know it's still early, but we are ahead and there's a lot of people working on this!"

(Pause)

"Stop! You're not going to get in trouble!"

(Pause)

"Yes, I realize we could go to prison for a long time, but I'm telling you not to worry. The Department of Justice is more corrupt than we are. That office has more criminals working in it than Central Park!"

(Pause)

"It doesn't matter how the Trump supporters react! They're so dumbed-down from all the fake news and rigged polls that they'll never know what hit them!"

I wanted to kick the stall door open and punch someone right in the mouth! The man continued.

"When all those stupid Trump fans wake up tomorrow and realize that this lying, crooked bitch has been elected to be our first woman president, they'll piss and moan for a week or two and then go back to sleep for another twenty years."

(Pause)

"I don't give a rat's ass about any recounts! The excitement generated by the media following her victory will be so big that it could drown out news of a nuclear bomb going off in New York City!"

(Pause)

“What? If she doesn’t win? Actually, if that were to happen, and it won’t, I’d expect to see a spike in the sale of rope and the prison population to double.”

(Pause)

“Enough, man! Take a pill!” the guy laughed like a nervous game show host. *“Just a few more hours and we are home free! Check you later.”* He ended the call.

Locked in a trance over what I’d just heard from the one-sided conversation, I didn’t notice when the man unlatched the door and exited the stall. Startled, and not thinking right, I glanced over my shoulder to get a peek at him—white, about my age—mid-forties, expensive suit, and haircut. I was sure that I’d seen this guy on TV before but couldn’t remember where.

Shocked with becoming aware of my presence, the man looked down at the floor and bolted out the door. The second it closed behind him, a well-groomed, federal-agent type with wire-rimmed glasses exited the other stall, turning off a personal recording device. He looked at me as if he was going to cut my life short. I secretly prayed that God would step in at that moment and offer some backup.

Feeling caught in the middle of something I shouldn’t have been, I shifted to the mindset of whistleblower and out of sheer terror exclaimed, “Did you hear that guy? He should be locked up! I hope you got that on tape!” I zipped my pants realizing I had finished my business moments ago.

“Don’t say anything to anyone!” the man warned, opening his sports coat with his free hand to reveal a shoulder-holstered firearm and investigator badge attached to his waistline.

“Oh, don’t worry, I won’t! You can count on that.”

The man stuffed the recorder in his coat pocket and walked out as if nothing happened.

As I stood there at the sink trying to shake off the rush of adrenaline that had invaded my body, I began to well up with anger, first at the thought of my encounter with the corrupt electioneer on the phone, and then at the gun-toting undercover law enforcement officer who threatened that I'd better keep my mouth shut. This triggered my brush with nearly getting mugged or killed earlier, not to mention being run over by my own car and then shanghaied by God for reasons unknown.

Taking a deep breath and then talking to myself in the mirror, I had to ask if coming to DC was still such a good idea and a worthy cause. Realizing my potential mistake in making this trip, I thought about slipping out the back door and making a run for it back to the Midwest, where my life still promised some degree of normalcy before God had a chance to figure out that I was missing in action. But then I remembered that he had the keys to my van, and I wasn't about to take off without all my things in tow.

Totally frustrated with the whole experience, and now feeling well under the influence but still in touch with everything going on, I splashed my face with cold water, trying to shake off the encounter, and then stormed out to have a word with God. I was hot!

When I returned to the table, God asked, "What were you doing in there, Buddy, taking a bath?"

“No, I was just a little busy fending for my life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” I said in a sarcastic tone, hoping he would notice the fire in my eyes.

God smiled as if knowing what really happened and pushed the new drink in front of me signaling a toast.

“Welcome to my world, Buddy. Drink up!”

Without another word, I took the new cocktail and dumped it down my throat, slamming the glass down on the table.

“I’ve had enough, and I’m leaving, with or without you! Give me the keys!” I demanded with a slight slur of the words. God looked surprised and leaned back in his chair.

“Where are you going?” God knew I probably wouldn’t make it far once the two shots kicked in.

“Out of town!”

“As in, back home?”

“I don’t know for sure, but I’ll make it there eventually.” I placed a hand on the back of the swivel chair to steady my gait.

“But I thought you agreed to hang out with me!”

“I did, but I’m getting the fuck out of here. I’ve never been through so much bullshit in one night in my entire life—this town is a joke!” I screamed at the top of my lungs for all to hear. I continued blowing up at God.

“You can either take me back to the hotel or I’ll sleep in my car, but when morning comes I’m driving straight home and signing up for every social program I can get my friends and family, pets and dead relatives on—I’m done!”

“Take it easy, Buddy! Geeze.”

I turned the chair and sat down on it with one foot still on the floor to prevent from falling over.

God sat there for a moment and then made an offer.

“Tell you what. Let’s have one more and then we’ll head over to my place and kick back. We’ll go over some things I must speak with you about, what do you say to that?”

“No more! Let’s just go before all this booze starts kicking my ass.” God didn’t want to leave yet.

“Alrighty then, one more and we’ll move along. EDUARDO!” God yelled out and summoned the waiter to our table. The man returned a moment later to take our drink order.

“What can I get you, Dog?”

I snapped! “Get the dog a bone, I want to go home!” I yelled, wanting to let them both know how I felt about having another drink.

“I’m not sure what we want,” God said to Eduardo while laughing at my outburst and tucking one arm of his readers into his shirt collar.

“What can we have? You know, one for the road—something special, for my friend here,” he pondered. Out of the corner of my eye, I thought I saw God give Eduardo a suggestive nod. I figured they were probably conspiring to finish me off with one last cocktail from hell.

“Hmmm, you already had a Campaign Promise. How about trying a double Campaign Promise? They’re twice as good, you know?” Eduardo suggested with a smile and then blushed while looking away, knowing full well that I was on to them playing with me.

“Those are really tasty,” God said smacking his lips as if trying to retrieve the flavor. “And I really like the euphoria they bring on, but I want something different.”

“Let me think,” Eduardo said. “How about a couple of Tax Cuts, or maybe try the Green Card?”

Green Card, I thought to myself, *You dirty bastard!* I didn’t know if he came to this country legally or not, and it didn’t really matter to me as long as he behaved, but the last thing I wanted to hear out of an almost certain, foreign-born man or woman is any mocking of our country. I glanced over and locked in on the “I Only Voted *Twice Today*” button he wore. He knew I was not pleased.

“Two double Tax Cuts sound good to me,” God said, hammering the table with his fist. “But hurry up and no short pours!” God instructed. “Buddy is starting to wither, and I need to get this boy jacked up again.” Eduardo laughed and said he’d be back shortly.

With the waiter gone, God looked toward me and sensed that I might not be doing so well emotionally or physically. He reached across the table and grabbed the top of my hand to get my undivided attention and squeezed it before releasing his grip. I thought he might be softening up a bit.

“You’re going to like this next round, Buddy.”

“Maybe I will, and maybe I won’t, but one thing for sure is that I can’t go on partying all night and then wake up feeling like crap if I’m going to get out and protest in the streets.” I pulled my hand away.

“Protest?!” God let out a deep belly laugh and coughed a few times, eventually yakking his way into his next question. He sounded to me a lot like Santa Claus with a bad case of COPD.

“Just what and where do you plan to protest in the morning?” He dabbed a tear from his eye with a finger while still convulsing somewhat from his laughter.

“At the White House and the Capitol, that’s what I came here for! I’m not going to remain silent about them stealing the election for Hillary!”

“Relax, Buddy. I got this. And, as I already told you, Trump’s going to win!”

“But . . . ”

“I said chill! When we’re done here tonight I’m going to take you back to my place and give you a preview into your life’s coming attractions.”

“Oh, really?!”

“Yeah, and it’s not good, so you better relax!” he warned in all seriousness.

“What’s not so good?”

“Be patient,” God replied.

“No. I’d like to know right now; what do you so badly need to talk to me about?!”

“All in due time.”

“There’s no time like the present—so why not tell me now?” I pressed, acting like a smart-ass in return for him telling me to mellow out. God picked up on the attitude.

“You really want to know?” God was mad and leaned toward me before speaking in a whisper.

“I’ll give you a hint, Buddy, two words—term limits, and your days in office are numbered!” he added as if punishing me for pushing him on the issue.

I thought he was suggesting that I was about to become a politician and not a successful one at that. I almost slid off my chair at the idea and pulled myself back up again

with my elbows. Then rubbing my face with both hands, I apologized to God, blaming my drunkenness for any disrespect shown. Just then the waiter came back with our drinks. Detecting what might have been a sensitive moment going on between the two of us, he placed our bill on the table in front of God, told us to enjoy, and then strolled away.

To distract myself from the intensity of the exchange with God, I followed Eduardo with my eyes as he walked away from us to go behind the bar. At the same time, I noticed a white, heavyset, bearded man in his mid-to-late forties, donned in overalls and heavy work boots, slide off his barstool and shuffle across the dirty linoleum floor, stopping at our table. I figured that he was one of the locals and knew God somehow. Based on the amount of oil and grease on his clothes, I figured he was probably a mechanic. The man reached over to shake hands with God.

“Dog! What’s up, brother?” the man cracked a big smile, showcasing the last three teeth remaining in his upper jaw. I could tell that he probably lived a hard life and partied accordingly.

“Hans!” God greeted the man with a fist bump, obviously under-enthused about running into the guy.

“When did you get out?” God asked with surprise.

“Oh, man, I didn’t come over to talk about that. I spent over a month in the hole and I’m still not right!”

I was thinking, *Life in DC is like a grab bag of crazies, you never know which one you’ll draw to you.*

“Well, you never were quite right, Hans.” God laughed off the seemingly harmless cut with the man.

“So, what do you think about this election, Dog?”

“GO Trump!” God answered.

“Not me. I was all for Bernie Sanders, but that piece of trash Hillary Clinton stole the nomination right out from under him in the primary. Did you see that?”

“Yeah, but that’s done and over. Trump is pulling ahead now, and he’s going to be your next president. Hopefully, you can stay off the drugs for a while and use the new agenda of this administration coming in to get ahead in life,” God told him. “Jobs, jobs, jobs, you know.”

“I hear ya, Dog. And I wouldn’t mind cleaning up and getting back to work with Metrorail. Scraping cars is a young man’s game.”

“I imagine it is.”

“Say, you wouldn’t happen to have an extra hundred on you I can borrow, wouldya, Dog?”

“I don’t, Hans. Things are tough right now.”

“How ’bout your friend?” he asked God in a low voice.

“Buddy? He’s no better off than I am. He might have a credit card with some fun left on it but that does you no good.”

“How about a ride then to the north side when you leave?”

“A ride? Across town? Tonight? No! We’re heading straight to my place after this—you know how the cops are in DC.”

“That’s true.” The man thought for a moment. “I suppose you could just order me a drink then, and I’ll hang out with you guys for a while.”

“Not happening, Hans. We’re going to finish these and take off. Sorry, I can’t help out.”

“Some friend you are, Dog!”

“Friend? Where did you ever get the idea that we were friends? I can count at least six times where I’ve talked with you in here and bought you a cocktail, but have you ever offered to buy me one? Nope! All you do is come in pedaling your ill-gotten merchandise and suck up to anyone who’ll buy you a drink, but I’m not going for it anymore. Sorry, Hans!”

I suspected there was something much deeper going on between this guy and God than met the eye. With the exploding tension, it was obvious they must have shared some bad blood or a history of conflict from the past.

“That’s not true, Dog, and you know it!”

“Hans, you really need to get a life and that probably starts with finding a steady job.”

“Thanks for the advice, asshole!” he said, his demeanor turning ugly.

“For what?” asked God.

“Nothing, fuckhead!” Hans flipped out and pulled a medium-sized, flat-tipped screwdriver from his back pocket and holding it up in a threatening manner a few inches under God’s chin, he shrieked with spit going all over the place. I jumped off my chair in defense of God, with my arm cocked and ready to rock, prepared to punch the living hell out of the guy if he didn’t back off immediately.

“You don’t know!” the man screamed. “I’m so close to taking someone’s life right now, Dog, it’s not funny!” The man dropped his hand and turned for the door. I exhaled and thought, *Good choice, dummy!* I’ve never considered myself

to be big in physical stature, but I've been known to act a foot taller and a hundred pounds heavier anytime I started doing shots!

"Hans!" God must have felt bad and tried to call him back to the table.

"Come here, Hans!" God demanded.

"Fuck you, Dog!" Hans continued toward the door and then raised his arms over his head, flipping off God with both hands.

"Where are you going, Hans?" God sounded panicked.

"Out to get even with some people!"

"No, really? Where are you headed?"

"Find some hookers and a rock!" Hans yelled.

"No, come on . . . !" But it was too late. Hans swung the front door open, hitting it hard against the opposite wall, and he was gone. Everyone in the bar had their eyes on God.

"What in the hell are you looking at?" he shouted, and then turned to me totally pissed off.

"That's what happens when someone loses their personal war on drugs, Buddy!" he blasted.

With God sitting back down in his chair, I did a mental check to see if I had wet my pants, because I was about to jump out of my skin! With my heart racing, I was still shaken at the visual of the guy holding a screwdriver to God's throat. Everything else that happened this evening paled in comparison. With literally every ounce of energy in my body vibrating at lightning speed, I didn't know whether to get up and run out of this place or go to the men's room and splash some more cold water on my face. I then reached out to God.

“I can’t take this anymore!”

“What’s that, Buddy?” He acted like it was all no big deal and tried to downplay the almost deadly encounter.

“These people, this place, I’ve never seen anything like it! I mean, I feel like walking out the front door right now and lying down in front of the next bus that drives by.”

Oh, it’s not that bad,” God said cleaning his thumbnail with my car key, but I could tell there was something on his mind.

“Not that bad? Hear me out. As you know, I didn’t exactly grow up in the best part of town or among anyone who would become a pillar of the community. And, yeah, we had some crazy shit go down that you couldn’t pay me to go back and relive, but I must say I have never seen anything like this in my entire life! There’s something really off with this place. Why anyone in their right mind would ever want to come to DC for a visit or anything else for that matter is beyond me!”

God nodded his head to acknowledge he was still listening. He must have figured that if he let me continue speaking that I would end up talking myself down eventually.

“And to think that this is where our nation’s laws are being made! How can they even think straight or be expected to do good for the people with all the corruption and dysfunction going on?” I took a small sip of my drink.

“But tell me this, God. What is it that has held back the American people from bulldozing this entire town and starting over?”

“Ten miles square, my friend.”

“What?”

“DC—it’s a corporate nation inside a nation.”

“Huh?” I didn’t follow.

“Washington, DC, is a federal district established in the US Constitution, originally granting a land mass of ten square miles that would be under the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress, creating a district that is not part of any state.”

“How does that work, not being a part of any state?”

“Works great for the people who own and control DC, and not so well for the people who pay the tab and believe DC represents them.”

“Say again?”

“Look at it this way. Washington, DC, is an entity unto itself and contained within the original ten square miles of land allotted. America, on the other hand, is all the land mass surrounding DC and stretching out to its four borders. We’re talking two countries here, Buddy. There is Washington, DC, and then there is the united states of America. With that, let me ask, are you a US citizen living in America, or are you an American national living in the United States?”

“I still don’t follow!”

“I didn’t expect you would. Now let’s tip these up and get down the road.”

God finished his drink and was waiting for me to follow his lead. I really wanted nothing to do with the almost full, double, lowball glass of cinnamon-flavored whiskey, and then God told me to slam it down. I grabbed the drink and, diverting his attention, I pushed it away when I looked up at one of the TVs.

“Look there!” I said with amazement. “They just declared Trump the winner in three states! He might get a victory yet.”

“Oh, he’s going to win, no doubt about it.” God pulled his smartphone out of his shirt pocket.

“Well, if he does, I hope to live long enough to watch the inauguration.”

God laughed and said, “Let it go,” as he powered up his phone.

“Easy for you to say.”

“Maybe,” God tapped his phone, placing a call, and raised it to his ear. I picked up the drink and took a sip while watching the TV, but trying to listen in again on God at the same time.

“Mikhail?”

(Pause)

“How’s it going?”

(Pause)

“You’re having trouble in five states?”

(Pause)

“Which ones?”

(Pause)

“That figures. They always hold back the big city counts in the democratic strongholds until all the other counties report in, so they have time to make up whatever numbers they need to win.”

(Pause)

“Ahh, don’t do that. Remember, no fingerprints or paper trails left behind. Just make sure he comes out with at least 270 electoral votes and let her have the rest.”

(Pause)

“Appreciate it. Bye for now.”

God ended the call. I thought, *Wow! That didn’t sound kosher. What in the world was that all about?* As I was about

to ask God who he was just talking with on the phone, Eduardo walked up to our table with two new drinks.

“What’s this?” God asked.

“Sorry, forgot. Digger bought you guys a round after Hans stormed out.”

“Oh, my boy, Digger! What a guy. He still here?”

“No, he had to leave, but he said to thank you for telling Hans where to get off.”

“That was nice of him. What are these now?” God asked Eduardo, picking up one of the drinks.

“That’s called an Enemy of the State.”

“Just what America needs more of, Eduardo. What’s in it?” God asked, sizing up the drink.

“Moonshine and I forget what else, but it’s good!”

“No way! I’m not even done with this one yet!” I hiccupped, trying to stay focused on the conversation.

“Well, you better have that last drink in front of you first, Buddy! Can’t be wasting good booze like that. You might not realize it, but there are scores of people in Hazelton and other treatment centers around the world who are probably dying of thirst right now, even as we speak!” God smiled, waiting for me to finish off the lowball of Fireball Cinnamon Whisky I’d gotten earlier.

Not wanting to hear any more about it, I took a breath and then swallowed it down. “Ewww!” I wanted to throw up!

“What do people see in that?” I gasped for air trying to adjust my vision while glaring at God.

“The other side of the veil, if they drink enough of it!” God prepared for us to leave.

“What do we owe you here, Eduardo?” he asked, looking at the bill without his glasses.

“Seventy-eight dollars even.”

I thought the amount to be outrageous.

“Only in DC, but works for me,” God said, reaching into his shirt pocket to retrieve his pull-tab winnings.

“Buddy, give Eduardo twenty bucks toward a tip, and then we’ll be free to leave.”

I tried leaning to the side to get at my money clip and damned near fell off my chair. Eduardo grabbed the sleeve of my jacket and helped me balance while I fished around in my pocket. Once I peeled off the bill, I added it to God’s pile of cash. Eduardo picked up the stack of money and counted it.

“Awesome! And thanks, gentlemen, it’s been fun! Come back tomorrow or whenever you can. We’re open seven days a week.” Eduardo gave me a grin when walking away and wished me good luck with the last drink.

“Yeah, thanks! I really needed that.”

“Well, three down, only one to go,” God said, swirling the wicked cocktail provided by his friend in a circular motion to mix it up, prompting me to grab mine, but I declined.

“No, thanks. Go ahead and have them both. You win—I’m done for the night!”

“Oh, come on, Buddy. You have to learn how to drink your way through your drunkenness—this next one will set you free—I promise!” God turned from the table and stood up.

“But I’m already free. How is one more glass of flavored paint thinner going to help?” I asked, preparing to get off my chair and leave the drink behind.

“Ahh, but you’re not really free, Buddy. At best, you might enjoy a degree of liberty, but you are not free! Big difference.”

“How so?”

“Another time. We need to drink up and then go out and roll the dice. You want to use the men’s room before we leave?”

“Are you kidding? I’d rather chance whipping it out in public than go back in there—it might be safer.”

“Okay! But let’s get these down where they belong,” God slid his glass across the table and bumped mine. I surprised God and beat him to the punch, yelling out, “Go Trump!” and then it was gone in two chugs.

God, in turn, shouted, “Lock her up!” and then sent it home.

With the strong vapor coming out from inside, I figured that I could have breathed fire, if I held a lighter to my mouth. I went to adjust my footing and ended up doing a full-on bobblehead before being able to get dialed in for the trip out the door. I felt a bit like Gumby for a moment there, and it reminded me of a few months earlier when I saw Hillary Clinton on TV as she was leaving the 9/11 Ground Zero ceremony in New York City. While propped against a metal traffic barrier near the curb, she seemed to be fighting against passing out while waiting for her security detail to pull up.

After arrival, she made her way to the Medi-Van with her aides holding both arms and then taking a few steps in

drunken sailor fashion. She stumbled a few times before eventually collapsing at the car's side door where they then dragged her inside. The news media reported that she was dehydrated, then that she was suffering from pneumonia. I didn't buy any of it! My faltering, on the other hand, was from having too much to drink. I was sure of it! And as for that freedom God promised that the last glass of booze would deliver, I wasn't feeling it. Not yet, anyway!

Standing at the table and holding onto the back of my chair, I was wondering how we were going to get over to God's place.

"You all right to drive, or should we call a cab?" I asked.

"I'm fine, Buddy."

"You sure?"

"Yeah! Do it all the time."

"Really?"

"Of course, all you have to remember is close one eye and keep her between the lines. Nothing to it!"

"I think we should take a cab. Seriously!"

"Have some faith in me, Buddy. We've been together what, two, three, four hours and I haven't killed you yet!"

Checking the electoral results one more time before we left, God looked up at the TV and was thrilled to see that Trump was in the lead and only needed about sixty more electoral votes to win.

"President Trump!" he screamed at the top of his lungs, and then came around the table placing an arm around my shoulder and pulling me in.

"Let's go, Buddy." We started for the door.

“We out of here?” I asked.

“You want one more?”

“Nah, but thanks.”

“You sure? The night’s still young!”

“Not for me. I’m about ready to black out!”

“You can rest in the car.” God pulled out his phone and tapped in a few numbers.

“Who are you calling at this hour?”

“Hold on.” God began speaking to someone on the other end.

“What’s my emergency? There’s some guy driving ahead of me right now, and he is all over the road! JESUS CHRIST, HE JUST MISSED THAT CAR! THE LIGHT WAS RED! OH, MY GOD, THAT WAS CLOSE! HE’S GONNA KILL SOMEBODY!” God smiled at me and then held the phone so I could listen in. The 911 dispatcher sounded panicked and asked God his location.

“I’m eastbound on New York Avenue and just crossed 13th Street NW. He’s in a black Tahoe, fancy wheels—I’m backing off from this idiot! He’s all yours. Please hurry!” God ended the call. “Whoa!” he yelled out.

“What the hell was that all about?”

“An old Indian trick.”

“Huh!”

“Just trying to keep us from spending the night in jail, Buddy!”

End of Chapters 1 and 2 Sample

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