

**the  
anatomy  
of the  
halfway  
realm**

*A Spirit Guardians' Students' Handbook*

by George Mathieu Barnard

## Celestial Foreword

As do the many interested humans, we, the Urantia Midwayers, look forward to the publication of spiritual books, especially writings about us, the 1,111. I am here now to provide an introduction to *The Anatomy of the Halfway Realm*, for I was appointed to assist this human co-worker some sixty years ago. I know him well, and love him more.

It was for the larger part of these sixty years that he felt we were fully employed by him. Much later, he considered us to be his employers. More recently did he gather that—together with the Angels of Progress, the Primary Midwayers, yes indeed, Machiventa Melchizedek, our Planetary Prince, and countless others—all of us are employed by Michael, and through Michael by the ever-loving Creator Father of All.

Our association with this human writer and receiver of celestial messages can be seen as us ‘having thrown him off a cliff into the ocean,’ where he could either swim or drown. He swam, and I am pleased to be able to report that on most occasions he ‘took our prompts,’ and went about our combined interest with gusto, whilst on some rare occasions he stubbornly did just precisely what he wanted to do, and this has indeed made our lives more interesting for us.

I am Sharmon, a celestial messenger, delivering hundreds of messages each day.

Secondary Midwayer, Sharmon, known also by the code, MNO-6, or the name, Simone, was for a long time unknown to the writer. She was there, in the background, mostly providing subliminal messages (see “The Search for 11:11.” – Chapter 1, “Simone Says . . .”). Not until 1972, after the George celebrated his 33rd birthday, and after an amazing spiritual enlightenment experience, did he get to see the tall, lightning-fast messenger in her electric blue body suit.

Sharmon was dubbed ‘the clown of the midway realm’ after she turned up in a party dress and did a little dance for him when tough times got him the blues.

As with all Secondary Midwayers, Sharmon’s great love for her human charges defies description, and her messages, whenever possible, are delivered with humorous expressions, at times claims of having the largest wardrobe in the midway realm, or the latest hair style. Life would be dull without Sharmon ‘come visit’ on occasions.

## Author's Preface

Is she Sharmon, or Simone? She will likely leave me guessing for many more years, because that's her mysterious way. She did touch on my not always having followed orders in the past, and the existence of this writing, in my view, is what she may have been referring to in her off-the-cuff, three minute foreword.

At the start of my writing, way back in the 1990's, I got a little help. After making myself comfortable on the swimming pool patio for the purpose of recording just one important psychic experience, I lost all track of time. Some six hours later, I was shaken out of my, let's call it a stupor, by my family returning from a day at the beach.

My first-up-for-the-morning cup of black coffee was icy cold, within reach, and left untouched, as were my cigarettes and matches. My prepared cut lunch was still in the refrigerator. And there, right in front of me, was my notepad with pages and pages of writing—the titles for more than one hundred chapters, and a short summary of each of the events.

It was a summary of my life in the service of the Eleven-Eleven Spirit Guardians, as I knew them at that time. It would also be, forever in this life, the longest session of automatic writing I'd been involved in. Even to my mind it was almost unbelievable, except . . . I now remembered the events that had previously slipped well and truly over the horizon of my forgetfulness.

There was no such forgetfulness on the part of my family. My children snatched the writing from the table, whilst I was still sitting there with furrowed brow, pondering what had happened to me during those hours. The youngsters remembered most of the events if these had been discussed over breakfast, or during evening meals, or if they had actually been present while these events occurred. Although for them to know of some early experiences would have been a miracle, as some of the happenings predated their births, or they had been still too young at the time.

I took the problem of 'the inexplicable memory gaps' to Midwayer Chief, Bzutu, and he told me, "You came to learn many things very fast. You experienced the full gamut of what is possible for a human." He further explained that, as they can subliminally put information into the human brain/mind, they can also with consummate ease temporarily 'misplace' memories, and there were good reasons for this.

Much of the work we did together was considered to be 'uncharted territory' and no one had been able to predict if 'that George Barnard fellow' would possibly lose the storyline of everyday living with his brain and mind full of past psychic happenings. It was a risk the Midwayers were not prepared to take, even with a lifetime student of psychology, and one who had shown courage in some tricky, even dangerous situations.

That they had messed with my memory was obvious. They had systematically 'deleted' the memories throughout all those years, and now they were put back. Whenever 'psychic stuff' had happened in the past, and someone would remark about 'my information having come out of the blue,' I would agree by telling them, "Yes! Show me a pregnant woman, and I'll tell you if she'll have a boy or a girl." I had an enviable record, having missed the mark just once out of scores of predictions, but major psychic happenings of the past would simply not come to mind at those times.

It would become a major task to record more than one hundred happenings in detail, an even bigger task to put these chapters together in a way they would make sense to the reader, whilst hiding the location of certain places, and more importantly, changing the names of luckless patients, as well as those of a few thoughtless muggers.

By the time three manuscripts were put together, I was given orders to be on my way, to travel overseas to teach certain meditation techniques, but I refused. There were too many experiences still to be recorded. They are here in this book, and this is, what I presume, our beloved Sharmon was hinting at.

Enjoy “The Anatomy of the Halfway Realm.”

Perhaps you will join a Celestial-Mortal Alliance for the benefit of all, and this writing will then greatly assist you, for truly, no one should ever again be so ‘thrown off the deep end’ and waste so much of the 1,111 Spirit Guardians’ valuable time in learning about the Anatomy of the Halfway Realm as did their rookie student, George Barnard.

# Chapter 1

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## **Pushed For Time** **The Consecutive Theories**

In his moderate size home, and with six boisterous siblings, it was important for George Mathieu to be mindful of his position in the pecking order. Being the middle child, he needed to be on the ball with the bigger children. They could easily knock him about. He needed to be watchful, too, with the younger ones, who could tattletale on him. Above all, he had to learn to skillfully mediate when it was occasionally needed. He mostly went virtually unnoticed. He lived in a world of his own, and was commonly referred to as ‘The Dreamer,’ an absent-minded professor, or ‘Joseph the Egyptian slave and dream interpreter.’ The appropriate term, psychic, was never used, if understood. His lengthy mental absences were often noted. His frequent, casually mentioned ‘psychic hits’ were mostly shrugged off, or inexplicably frowned upon, whilst his mother was doing the very same thing almost every day.

There were two psychics in the Barnard family of nine, and quite a few more of them in their extended family.

George’s mother believed Saint Christopher told her things of the future. She and the overworked Saint got along really well. To her that explained everything—the grocery bill, the world, the universe, and God. To George it clarified nothing.

The Barnards were not the only tribe that lived in their small village home. There were quite a few others, although no other member of the Barnard family ever seemed to notice them, or talk with them. One notably well-dressed gentleman would later be vaguely recognized as Doctor Mendoza, Emenohwate the Healer, or simply MNO-8.

The Spirit Guardian was George’s all-knowing Teacher. To the boy he was ‘the man who knew everything, and ate no dinners.’ The Spirit Guardian just looked on, and did not complain about not having a place set for him at the table. Seemingly, the slim man in the brown suit had always been in their home, and he was never hungry, but presumably he had a home of his own, and went there to eat when the boy slept. It seemed not to matter where the Spirit Guardian went, or where his home might be.

The structure of time, not the frequent presence of the ‘Spirit People,’ was what intrigued George Mathieu. His constant psychic experiences demanded he would find an explanation for his knowing what tomorrow would bring, as well as his perceiving events of a distant past, and in far-away places. These ‘psychic hits’ served as constant reminders that the product called time was not ‘linear.’

An event, so it appeared, began to happen slowly, faintly. Then, suddenly, it did actually happen. After that, it was really still happening, but fading ever so gently. Time was an unhurried North Sea wave, rising, forming a crest in its own good time—the actual event—and then it receded at a leisurely pace. However, maybe time only had those properties if you were a dreamer like George Mathieu. If you were not a dreamer, the wave of time would simply slam onto the ‘beach of realization,’ and the event would only exist in that very moment, and perhaps in lingering memory.

Then, as an inconsequential déjà vu rather puzzled him, and a major event occurred without warning, the boy’s time-wave theory fell apart. He felt he should long

ago have foreseen the much bigger event. The rise of that ‘event-wave’ should have been noticeable for days, weeks even.

Perhaps all things that happened in the past, those things that were happening in ‘now time,’ and those that were to happen in the future, were like countless colored beads on a string that stretched into infinity. The people that were dreamers could watch ‘event-beads’ of the future slide into view, experience the event as it came fully into focus in ‘now time,’ but still watch it until it slid out of sight, and into the distant past. Perhaps even the dreamers could be careless and miss a major event. He determined he must not become a careless dreamer.

Maybe the dreamers of this world were watching a multitude of strings with identical compositions of event-beads on each of those strings, but arriving at the focal point in different timeslots. That would certainly explain the momentary flash of awareness of a future event. They were exceedingly rapid, ‘blink, and you miss it,’ psychic hits he experienced. The questions that needed to be asked were seemingly endless. The answers took their time in coming.

Was the reality of time—the very existence of time—dependent on someone, anyone, watching the time-event? Did time stand still in the forest at night, if there was no one in the forest? Were the ‘shadows’ of future events more noticeable if the events were to cause strong emotional upsets, to either the dreamer, or someone close to him? It seemed they tended to do just that. And why were his hits virtually all coming through in the morning hours? Was his soul-self responsible for, and the only one capable of, looking at the future and the past? His soul-self, it seemed, was unstoppable, darting all over the place like a bird on the wing, and night after night. It swooped down low and skimmed over rivers and lakes. It soared high like the mighty eagle.

### **The Gift of the Golden Spring**

His mind was closing in on the concept, but he never realized how close he was. There was ever a need for something tangible, and durable, to exist in his mind for him to be able to approach the concept of time. It arrived in a vision; a giant coiled spring of pure gold. It came from infinity, from below, and from the left. It looped around and around in never-ending loops. It also reached into infinity, to the right and above. All events of the past were engraved in the golden loops below. All events of the future were clearly visible in the loops above. So big was the golden spring, it required an unending universe of its own in which to exist.

So big were the loops of the spring, he could stand on them in the present, and read the events of the present as if they were chalked on the pavement of his village streets. There was no need to walk whilst looking down to see happenings of the past, for the giant golden spring expanded and contracted of its own volition, and as it did, the events of the past moved into view. The loop above, likewise, portrayed the events of the future. He needed but to look up and see the next day, the next week, the next year as the giant coils contracted or expanded.

Basic time was a ‘static’ product that engulfed the entire universe. But time was dependent on motion for it to be ‘spread out’ into seconds, minutes, hours, and into

countless millennia. Should the universe stop spinning, if even for a moment, the ‘raw material’ that was time would still be there, but it would be unusable, wasted time, and everyone and everything would spend that moment in a state of being, not progression.

It mattered not a bit if basic static time impinged on the spring as the spring coiled up, or uncoiled. As long as there was motion, time was useful in both the expanding phase and the contracting phase.

He knew the golden spring, together with the time-through-motion concept, to be a gift. It was hardly the result of his endless pondering of the subject, for George Mathieu was still a schoolboy with a promising future, hardly a genius. For many years that golden spring was an excellent place to visit for a briefing on the future, or an even better, clearer look at the distant past. Right up until his college days, that golden spring was a handy tool to have. But he knew it was only relatively accurate in its representation of time—a comparative truth for a mere self-conscious mortal.

Then, as a psychic hit about an event of long ago, and its repercussions in the distant future arrived in his mind, and in one swift, simultaneous flash, his golden spring blew to pieces. He watched the untold tons of precious scrap metal whirl off into deep space. It had only been a steppingstone after all. But the next step was too big for him. The ‘anatomy of time’ was consigned to the too-hard basket.

His college life had become hectic, and he was constantly pushed for time.

### **The Too-Hard Basket**

Countless experiences that proved the apparent ‘instability’ of so-called linear time confronted George Mathieu. When just a seven-year-old, and on one of his regular astral travels, he came across a well. The well had suddenly materialized in his school’s playground. He could touch the concrete well head, and feel its rough texture, but he could also put his foot through it. However, the well had long ago ceased to exist. It had been destroyed, and neatly paved over, many years before the boy was born.

Views of the past tended to be in full color, views of the future were always much more difficult to discern. Mostly, information of the future was restricted to simple knowledge of an upcoming event. But the sheer weight of astral and time-related experiences caused him to spend much of his waking hours in contemplation of the reality, or anatomy of time. He could turn to recorded history to learn about events in time, and except for books on Greek mythology, the Good Book was the oldest record available to him. Without clearly realizing what he was doing, he was also questioning the basic reality of reality as a mere mortal perceives it.

Severely critical of Christian doctrine that was almost daily being shoved down his throat, the youngster was rebelling. Secretly, he saw himself as a heathen in the making. Little of what he was being taught quite added up. And Genesis of the Old Testament became the worst of the big fat jokes to him. At times, George Mathieu’s restless mind also became the worst of his teachers’ nightmares.

Unafraid of the rebuffs he was getting in response, the youngster kept asking his searching questions. George Mathieu was not popular for pressing hard for these questions to be answered.

“If Adam was the first man, Cain his eldest son, and guilty of killing his younger brother, Abel, for which Cain was then sent on his merry way, who did Cain marry? A monkey? A dromedary? Or was she a pig?”

Questions and suppositions of this kind provided welcome entertainment to some of his bored classmates. They raised the eyebrows of the true believers. They were rarely judged to be deserving of a straight answer by his teachers. They inevitably earned George Mathieu lots of after-hours’ detention, countless tirades from the well-meaning schoolmasters, and the occasional sentence of corporal punishment. The five blackboards could contain one hundred lines, ‘I must not be disrespectful in class.’ Those lines took well over an hour to chalk up, and although it greatly improved his running writing, it did nothing else for the boy.

The identity of Cain’s wife remained a mystery.

Jewish scribes, the boy was convinced, were scoundrels. They would not recognize the truth if the Creator Himself gave them their history in writing. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, too, were likely to be figments of their sick collective imagination. The scribes, he felt were likely to be no saner than a poor old guy who occasionally wandered around their village streets.

This sadly deluded man ordered his troops to advance and attack, for he was Napoleon Bonaparte. All one had to do was ask him, and he would soon enough insist he was the old emperor come back to life. He waved his wooden sword around and warned the children to stand aside as his battles raged on. That was his reality, but who was to say that what one man sees as green, is not really red, just green to his mind?

In George Mathieu’s black-and-white world of discernment and rebellious scrutiny, only Joshua Ben Joseph remained a certainty. Jesus, too, had been a rebel. He had overturned the tables of the traders and moneychangers, it was said. Good one! He dusted off his shoes and took back his greetings when confronted by unkindly folk, so it was reported. Served them all right! Jesus voiced His opinion no matter what anyone else believed. Unlike the boy’s teachers, He answered questions and spared the rod. The Nazarene Miracle Maker even loved children. That was much in His favor, and made Him a Champion, a Hero. The boy’s belief in the life, and continued existence of the Great Master, never wavered. Joshua Ben Joseph was as large as life.

The reality of reality, however, added up to little more than space and all it contained, but also time. It was time that was constantly under scrutiny. Time was the wildcard. It was flexible, fuzzy, undefined. If time were ‘linear,’ as everyone professed it to be, there would be no room for prophesy. There would be no chance to grasp things of the future, or of the past.

But George Mathieu grasped things of the future almost daily. Linear time, in which every second ticks away and adds itself to history, became a bigger, fatter joke than Cain’s wife, even if she had been a four hundred pound pig.

Again and again, George Mathieu altered his theories of the anatomy of time. Time after time, he created new hypotheses to deal with the day-to-day conundrums of knowing or seeing the future and the past, and anywhere at all. It became almost an obsession to design the perfect ‘anatomical structure’ that allowed him to explain why tomorrow’s events were yesterday’s certainties, and déjà vu.

An unconquerable army of widely varied phenomena continued to confront his poorly constructed wooden sword of conceptual poverty. The young man declared



himself to be utterly defeated. Mental peace now reigned, he felt. The anatomy of time was filed away where it belonged in the too-hard basket. In reality it was only a temporary truce, for his psychic education continued without let-up.

## Chapter 2

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### **Dieter Schumacher**

#### **Only Relatively Correct**

Five teenage friends, four of them college pals, were having a discussion on a sun-drenched beach. Jan Vorst was the eldest. He was relatively ancient at almost twenty years of age. When Jan spoke, people took notice. He demanded great respect, for he always made perfect sense. Jan was commonly referred to as, ‘The Brains.’

Even the unstoppable Dieter Schumacher managed to sit still and listen to Jan Vorst’s deliberations about how George needed to ‘investigate’ the anatomy of time. Not once did the hyperactive young man interrupt, not even when Jan paused to take a breath. That was somewhat of an accomplishment for Dieter on that warm afternoon—any afternoon—a cold afternoon.

Dieter’s German cousin, unable to understand some of what Jan was saying, still listened with open mouth, showing goose bumps all over his body. This young man sensed something was going on; something out of the ordinary; something he had never experienced before.

Rowena’s feelings were hard to assess. The young woman had fallen head over heels in love with her ‘man of the future;’ the enigmatic Vorst. His possible suggestion of a cool drink from the corner store might have sounded like a revelation of great significance to Rowena. And if she could stop blinking while she stared at him, she would do it, too, and not miss those split-second interruptions of her view of Jan’s handsome, but kind-of-deadpan looks.

Barnard sensed Jan Vorst’s talk had been inspired. There was no feeling of regret associated with his having months ago dropped his unusual, outside-the-box theories of time in space. There was now also no doubt he needed to pick up from where he had left off. The theories needed to be retrieved from the too-hard basket.

They were still only relatively correct.

### **The Daredevil**

Amongst sixteen-year-old Barnard’s college friends was a likable, somewhat short and rotund daredevil of a young man called, Dieter Schumacher.

Dieter claimed to have at least eight lives in reserve—as many as, or even more than a cat—and Dieter set out to almost daily prove the point. He would smilingly cross the road in the midst of fast-moving peak-hour traffic, when a ‘sane’ person would

patiently wait twenty measly seconds for the traffic lights to change.

He had been seen driving his powerful motorcycle around the college square, whilst facing backwards in the saddle, although not ever in Barnard's presence. George Mathieu would soon have confiscated Dieter's ignition keys.

Dieter would also frequently sneak onto the middle of the big steel railway bridge, and jump the more than twenty meters into the fast-flowing river, to finally make it to the bank well over a mile downstream from that bridge. Chilled and numb, blue with the cold, the Economics student would be grinning from ear to ear, talking about greater heights, and even faster flowing rivers.

Schumacher did not know the meaning of the word fear, cold, or pain. Onlookers, and college pals alike, knew what it felt like for their hearts to regularly skip a beat.

Already eighteen years of age, Dieter Schumacher was the only child of a wonderful, and most caring couple already well into their fifties. These doting parents were counting on Dieter to take over their sizeable commercial interests once his studies had been completed, but with Schumacher Junior behaving as if his parents owned a dozen kids just like him to replace their only son, few of Dieter's college friends believed he would ever finish his studies.

Schumacher was someone to be remembered in everyone's urgent and insistent evening prayers, and on each night without fail.

### **The Next Stunt**

The long summer break would provide George Barnard with an opportunity to catch up on a large, weed-infested vegetable garden. There was also a well-paid casual job waiting for him in the local bakery, and on top of all that, he was planning to visit his holidaying school friends in a small seaside town far to the south.

Many precious weeks of freedom from daily travel to his college would probably fly by in no time.

Schumacher was going to spend most of his holidays in the-then-enclave of West Berlin. The Schumachers had a number of close relatives in that town. West Berlin was a city where Dieter could play up, and then some, he said. He was planning a visit to the Berlin Zoo. He called the place Tiergarten.

Less than two weeks into the holidays, and after spending six hours each day in a very hot bakery, Barnard was looking forward to a few days of relaxation on that beach. It was located less than a few hours travel to the south.

Early the following morning, he would make that train ride on a route he had not been on before, and to a seaside resort he had only heard of. It was an ancient little fishing town, quite picturesque, it was said.

Strangely, with each load of piping-hot loaves of bread to be tipped from their even hotter metal bread pans, Barnard's mind was with the fun-loving Dieter Schumacher, and the secret, dangerous stunts the young man said he had planned.

In that Berlin Zoo he might do anything. Would he? Oh, yes! Oh, God!

In that Berlin Zoo he *would* do just about anything. Dieter, please grow up.

In that Berlin Tiergarten, Schumacher would most likely climb in with the apes,

and teach them a thing or two no ape had ever thought of.

Dieter Schumacher was a menace, a worry, and a caring person's constant nightmare.

### **The Lion's Share**

It had been a restless night for George Mathieu. Three times, perhaps four times, he had seen Dieter in a strange, full-color reoccurring dream. His college pal's mouth had been wide open but his screams had been inaudible. Behind Dieter Schumacher loomed the shape of a larger-than-life lion, saliva gushing from its mouth.

That morning, still fatigued, George Mathieu swung his legs over the edge of his bed. He had felt more rested and energetic during that previous evening when he crashed into his cot. For a moment he just sat there, deciding if he should go to the train station to meet up with Jan Vorst and Rowena Versteeg, or simply stay at home. Suddenly, surprisingly, the dream 're-played itself' in full color, in full detail, and with all George's jam-packed emotion and fear for the life of his reckless college pal.

Unwilling to watch any more, he shook off the vision, stumbled into the shower, and finally decided he would board that train.

Schumacher was in Berlin, but no one knew precisely where he was, and besides, Dieter would only laugh if George should warn him. Dieter always did, and always went right ahead and managed to do whatever popped into his capricious mind.



Less than a dozen passengers alighted from the train, even fewer boarded the sixty-five, and all the carriages were almost empty.

There was no one to talk with in Barnard's compartment and for the greater part of the trip the landscape was familiar—a five-days-a-week, twice-each-day kind of familiar. It was flat, rural, typically Northern Holland—that giant, ancient Rhine River delta, nourished and grown, inch by inch, from German weathered rock, or wrested from the sea by the skilled architects of the many polders.

The train was speeding through a dark tunnel now, and in a flash it happened again; right in front of his eyes, projected onto the darkened glass of the carriage, was Barnard's all-too-familiar, full-color dream.

There again was Dieter Schumacher in his gray-blue corduroy trousers, and his 'trademark' bright blue windcheater. His face was now only a few feet away, and he was screaming at Barnard, but without making a sound. His mouth was open wide, and so were his eyes. Directly behind Schumacher stood the slobbering lion, making ready to pounce on the unsuspecting college student.

The next moment, the train exited the tunnel, and Barnard's vision 'exploded' onto a void of pastures and plowed fields.

**“Sorry, Jan.”**

Jan Vorst and Rowena Versteeg were at the railway station waiting for their classmate.

Both could see something was very wrong with George Mathieu, as he jumped from his train, threw his bag onto a nearby bench, and flopped down beside it. He was strangely out of breath.

“George, you’re as white as a sheet!” Rowena remarked. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“I hope not,” Barnard told them, “for if I did, it was that crazy Dieter Schumacher’s ghost.” He needed to calm himself, take a few deep breaths. “There’s Schumacher,” Barnard explained, “in his treasured blue sailing jacket, screaming his head off. And I can’t hear a thing! And right behind him is a dirty great slobbering lion, about to make a meal of him. Hell’s bells! He was planning to perform some stupid stunts in the Berlin Zoo!

“But you guys haven’t heard the most important part. I got that full-color dream three or four times during last night. It came again while I was half awake, sitting on the edge of my bed, mind you. Just this morning. And then it was there again as we went through the Rhine tunnel just now. A dream! Whilst I was wide awake!”

The descendant of a long line of barristers, lawyers and traders, the highly intelligent Jan Vorst, had not uttered a word so far. He seated himself next to Barnard and quietly observed his troubled college friend.

“Bloody Dieter,” Barnard grunted. “That fool told me he was going to mess up in the Tiergarten. But what can I do? Way out here? Anywhere? With that uncontrollable piece of walking grief?”

“Both time and space,” Jan Vorst remarked most solemnly, leaving both George and Rowena guessing. That’s what the girl loved about Jan—his mysterious ways. She would marry the guy the very next day. He would let her wait ten years, and then another ten years and six more days. And twenty years, or forever, Rowena would wait.

“Time and space, George,” Jan repeated, but for the moment he would say no more.

They were on their way to a large old boarding house where George would stay for two nights. Rowena was chatting a mile a minute, like she always did, walking sideways and keeping up with Jan and George.

Suddenly, Jan Vorst stopped, stood there, and said, “Rowena!”

“Sorry, Jan,” she mumbled. She was really good at mumbling ‘sorry’ when he had had enough of her chatter. Two more unlikely soul mates one could never ever find. George already knew she would eventually snare her great love, but he never told her.

“George, you must contemplate both time and space,” Jan Vorst remarked.

“I used to do a lot of that, Jan,” Barnard answered, but he didn’t say he whizzed through time in space whenever he felt like it. They were just the complexities of time he could not yet fathom. Not then, and Barnard had about given up on that pursuit.

They walked on. It would take Rowena just thirty seconds to forget she was sorry. Yes! And there she was again, rattling away, walking sideways to be able to keep an eye on them both as she talked.

Rowena was vibrant, alive, one big bundle of vivacity. Rowena Versteeg was born with a smile on her face, it was said. She would, most likely, also die with a smile on her face, but not for a long, long time. She would have many more birthdays; all of them on April Fools Day.

Everyone loved Rowena. She represented free entertainment. Vorst seemingly

only barely tolerated that fun-loving chatterbox.

But Rowena loved Jan Vorst, and with all her heart, and all her soul.

### **Mortal Danger**

With the sky clouded over, and intermittent drizzle that morning, but clear, warm weather forecast for the afternoon, the three college friends would visit the town during that morning. They planned to body surf a few waves, and laze about on the beach in the afternoon.

They were walking through one of the old town's very narrow and wet cobblestone streets, taking their time and looking into every shop window. The ever-bubbling Rowena was walking backwards now, talking away and gesturing. She had her companions' full attention.

Rowena was hardly a scatterbrain. She was very intelligent, and also very lively, open, almost jubilant in the way she communicated. She was good to be with—a laugh a minute—and Barnard enjoyed her company as much as he enjoyed being with the quiet, deep-thinking Jan Vorst.

Between keeping an eye on the effervescent girl, listening to her endless chatter, and looking into the shops at the things she wanted them to admire, Barnard had noticed little else of the town.

Without his realizing, they had come to the end of the street. The threesome had actually walked right into the town's ancient little market square. They were all three just standing there now, looking into another shop window at yet another thing Rowena 'would treasure so dearly for all of her life, if she could only afford to buy it,' when a voice they all knew made them turn around.

"Eh! There's George Barnard!" It was loud, that voice. And Barnard spun on his heels to once again see the very image of his nightmares and daytime visions.

There stood Dieter Schumacher in his loved-to-death, bright-blue sailing jacket, and his gray-blue corduroy trousers, shouting at them. Directly behind him was that threatening lion, ready to pounce on Dieter. A stream of water was coming from its mouth. Schumacher stood almost directly in front of the town's fountain, of which the bronze and lifelike water-gushing lion was a part.

There was a millisecond's realization that the daredevil Schumacher was in grave danger. All of George Barnard's conjecture about what Dieter might be up to in the Berlin Zoo, surfaced in a swift flush of adrenalin-stoked fear, and it was enough to deeply trouble Barnard once again.

Almost instantly after this moment, he realized he had simply been given a series of views of the future, and a meticulous view it had been.

Jan Vorst was watching Barnard closely. "George," he remarked, "that . . . just now . . . again drained your face of all color."

### **The Inspired Left-Brainer**

There were five of them on the beach that afternoon. Dieter had actually traveled to Berlin, to almost immediately return to the Netherlands with his cousin, and his cousin's family. The family had chosen the quaint little Dutch township for their long-overdue holidays, and Schumacher had tagged along with them.

Here on the beach, with the four male college students, the normally talkative Rowena had little to say. She never uttered one word in lecture halls, and this patch of beach would soon become a lecture hall. She could either sense it, or might have been told to for once put a lid on it.

With great interest they listened to Barnard's recounting of the life-like dreams, and the even more remarkable daytime visions of the very same kind. Schumacher seemed to enjoy having turned up in Barnard's home, even in the train tunnel, and on the other side of the darkened glass. Hanging on the outside of a speeding train by his fingernails might become an excellent next-up stunt. Dieter was also softly translating Barnard's account for his Berliner cousin.

Jan Vorst was not yet uttering a word, but with a deep furrow in his forehead, and his eyes half closed, that brilliantly-minded young man had moved his cerebral endowment into a powerful forward gear. Finally, he spoke, and for many long minutes, Jan Vorst was the only one in the group who spoke.

"George, you may well have been given good advice, a warning even, that you will solve, must solve, or are meant to solve, the conundrum of the anatomy of time. Forget what I told you before," he added, "about time and space. And you, understandably under the circumstances, and knowing what Dieter is all about, translated your visions into something about him being in danger."

With a frowning, rather condescending look at the fun-loving Schumacher, he remarked, "We all know how Dieter keeps testing fate, and maybe something in that zoo should eat him up one day, but the real message is that time can somehow be transcended, and you did it. George, I would like to solve the puzzle, but I know I never will. Nothing would please me more than to be able to go beyond, and undo our shackles to so-called linear time, like you have done. And that is precisely what you have done."

Jan Vorst next turned to Schumacher and his cousin. "Rowena and I met up with George at the railway station early this morning, fellows," he explained. "George was in a right old state when he came off that train, worried sick about you, Dieter. He gave us an account of his dreams and visions. And between then . . . and just now . . . nothing has changed in his precise detailing of that enigmatic occurrence. George described, very accurately, what he, Rowena, and I saw in town; you and your lion."

He turned back to Barnard. "My brain and mind are not built to the required specifications. I know where I'm coming from, George. A left-brainer I am. Hardly stupid, but I can't draw a straight line, or even take a decent photograph. Zero creativity, my friend."

"Jan, I remember where I filed my incomplete theories of time, and shortly after my studies began in earnest," Barnard admitted. "I put them in the too-hard basket, with my anti-gravity device, my perpetual motion machine, and my water-driven motorcar. I'll dig them all up again."

"Yes. You must," Jan answered. "You, George, are a dreamer of a kid, and a dreamer of a kid you will still be, twenty years from now . . . forty . . . sixty years from

now. The dreamers of this world solve the enigmas. People like me only make excellent use of their discoveries.”

Jan Vorst’s words sounded almost prophetic. Cross-legged, directly across from Jan, his charming future bride was ‘gobbling up’ his every sentence, and tasting every syllable, it seemed. How she loved that young man who scarcely seemed to notice her.

Vorst had spoken, and likely for much longer than she, or anyone else, had ever heard him speak, but all present had noted what Jan had said. All had understood that there were questions to be asked about the anatomy of time, answers to be found.

Everyone in that little party, on that sunny beach, and on that day, comprehended that the ‘dreamer of a kid, Barnard,’ had been handed a near-impossible task.

But what Celestial Personality had handed him that task?

It would take George Mathieu many years to discover that his very own Spirit Self and his Destiny Guardians had set him up with the Schumacher conundrum.

## Chapter 3

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### **“She’s Tall and Blonde.”**

#### **“Not Half As Stupid.”**

“We’ve got enough money to pay thirty percent of the deposit,” Lucie announced. “I mean, three times the needed deposit. All they want is ten percent, but Dennis . . .”

“Do it Lucie,” Barnard advised his secretary. “The sooner you two buy that flat, the sooner you will own it.”

“You know what Dennis is like,” she answered.

Barnard nodded. He knew what Dennis was like—still young, but careful, hesitant, heavily insured. In normal psychology terms he was somewhat of a depressive, and the ideal partner for the Barnards’ company secretary. Lucie tended to constantly be in top forward gear. Dennis, on occasions, applied the brakes.

“The real estate market has been level for some time,” Barnard suggested. “And in some suburbs prices have marginally slumped. But the housing shortage is rising fast. Now is the time to buy, and it’s not really a flat, Lucie. It’s a semi-detached, a duplex. I saw it being constructed. Great layout!”

“They’re both still for sale,” she answered.

“Buy them both,” Barnard suggested. “Rent one out, live in the other, but do . . . Lucie . . . do get married sometime.” He smiled at her raised eyebrows.

“Buy them both?” she shouted. “Dennis will have a fit!”

“Ring our accountant, give him all the figures, and tell him you want to form a company and negative-gear the whole thing. Just do it. You will realize how much less it will cost you in repayments. Dennis will like that just fine.”

She tap-tap-tapped out of his workroom with a doubtful look on her face. She high-heeled it back within the hour, glowing with excitement.

“The accountant did the sums for us, and he also telephoned our bank and got a provisional okay. Dennis said it’s fine with him, and I got in touch with the agent and

told him we want a twenty-four-hour option on both places, and . . . we've got it!" She added, "George, it will save us a great heap of money!"

He looked at her poker-faced. "So, when is the wedding, and may I be one of your bridesmaids?"

She laughed at him, but she didn't answer his dumb question. She seated herself at his desk. "George, a most profound thought struck me just now, and I want to share this thought with you."

He rested his inking pen in the tray, and turned to face her. "This has gotta be good," he predicted. "What is your insightful consideration?"

She grinned at him, daringly, and then she said, "You're not half as stupid as you look, George."

"Git out of here," he told her, but she didn't move. She was laughing at him, jubilant about most likely acquiring the entire building, and she was also paying him back.

Barnard liked this secretary. She was efficient—a 'no, never you mind, I'll stay back and finish it' worker—and he had also played quite a number of tricks on her. She was young, shy and immature when she first started at her job, but not any more. She had wizened up very quickly.

"That ended all chances of a future meaningful friendship," he promised her poker faced, "that glib remark of yours."

"I was only fooling," she told him, not quite certain of his being offended.

"I've only recently discovered, Lucie," he lied, "we are all about ten times denser than we were supposed to turn out. This planet is a first of its kind—a sort of experimental outpost in the universe. But things went horribly wrong with the evolutionary process, and we are known all over the galaxy as the slow-learner planet." He waited, and then he added, "That makes me only five times as dense as I'm supposed to be. Great! Thank you for the compliment."

She visibly relaxed. She knew she might have gone too far with the man twice her age. But Barnard could take it, as well as dish it out. He had also seen his entire family having dinner with Lucie and Dennis in their new home. It had been there in a flash, the very moment she spoke of having as much as three times the required deposit.

The entire picture had arrived together with a loud voice suggesting the negative gearing. Lucie never heard the voice, but remarkably, Barnard did not even understand all the ins and outs of negative gearing. To that day, there had never been a need for him to investigate that aspect of financial management.

In the privacy of his workroom once again, he decided to investigate the negative gearing principles. They could be handy to know. But he never did find the time. Life was hectic.

Many weeks after both the shelf company and the building were purchased, Barnard questioned Bzutu. "How dense are we as a group, Bzutu, in your view?"

The Warrior would not be drawn on that question.

"To our potential," Barnard rephrased, "how are we faring?" And since there was still no reply, he added, "Not within a stone's throw of our . . ."

". . . potential," the Warrior finished the sentence.

"How many worlds fare better?" Barnard framed his thoughts.

"Many," came the immediate reply.



“The majority of them,” Barnard guessed, knowing there would be no contradictions.

“It is so,” came the confirmation.

“An experimental animal farm we are,” the rookie grunted in jest.

“We tell you,” came the reply.

For many years, Barnard had been joking about the planet being the rubbish bin of the local universe, and whenever something went wrong, or astray. Earth was a one-off experimental zoo. It had long ago gone wrong, and was still giving the Creators countless sleepless nights, heartburn, upset stomachs and stress-induced migraines. All Deities, he advocated, should regularly be calling in at the Mountain Road clinic for some relaxation therapy. But getting the advertising leaflets dropped off at the right counter was the sticking point. Getting paid for his services might be an even bigger challenge.

The Warrior had just confirmed it was indeed an experimental outpost, but he had also claimed the idea had never come from the rookie’s mind. It was implanted knowledge, and Barnard’s glib jokes had their foundation in fact.

However, for all his biting criticism, there was an aspect of mammalian life that truly impressed the Guardians’ rookie. Whatever else had gone wrong in evolution, the human liver was the nearest thing to a miracle. Its many-sided functions, and incredible recuperative powers, just had to make it somewhat unique in the galaxy.

“We told you,” came the answer to his very thoughts.

“Unique, and enviably so?” Barnard questioned.

“It is so.”

### **Alexander Godfrey**

Alexander Godfrey was an unusual man. He was rather intelligent, impatient, and somewhat blunt and unfeeling in his ways. At around forty-eight years of age, and married with two daughters, both of college age, the industrialist’s life underwent some drastic changes.

Alexander Godfrey was now also in more than a little bit of bother.

For many years, Godfrey and his brother-in-law owned and operated a knitting mill. It was an ever-more stormy relationship between the two men, and finally the partnership broke up. The mill was sold. With his share of the funds, Godfrey immediately purchased one of George Barnard’s main opposition companies. That took all of Alexander’s money, and with many of the steel presses needing urgent repairs and upgrading, it also provided Alexander with some ‘urgent’ headaches.

Barnard, Godfrey later admitted, knew how to laugh at a good joke, tended to clown around, and never took life very seriously. And Godfrey had translated the rookie’s behavior into ‘a life of luxury,’ and ‘easy money’ for George Mathieu.

But Barnard worked hard, and made long hours at his many tasks.

The two men had met up on several occasions at their service clubs. Barnard’s home club held daytime meetings that lasted too long, accomplished little, and ended up at the bar. It saved time to spend just an evening hour in Godfrey’s nearby club to make up for the meeting George had missed in his own club, join Godfrey for a quick drink of

fruit juice or mineral water, and make his way home in good time.



“I bought out Lansdowne Repetition,” Godfrey announced to Barnard in an early morning telephone call.

“You did what? Oh, Alex . . .”

“Bought it. The works! Lock, stock and barrel. Lansdowne, I own it outright. No more woolly cardigans for me.”

“You fool . . .” Barnard mumbled under his breath. “You crazy fool,” he whispered. He needed a few seconds to get used to the idea of seeing Alexander Godfrey in his new role. Godfrey had taken on one almighty complex task, and a firm twice the size of Barnard’s outfit.

“What about their key personnel?” Barnard questioned him. “They are staying, I hope, Alex?”

“Most of them are,” came the confident answer.

“You need all of them! Jeepers! A heap of cash, and a barge-load of good luck,” Barnard advised him.

“Don’t be jealous,” Godfrey told him. “Now I can finally make the kind of money you’ve always earned. More.”

“Earned is the word, Alex, and it was never easy. It isn’t easy now. Are you aware of the desperate state some of those heavy presses are in?” Barnard questioned.

“That’s what I’m ringing about,” Godfrey answered. “Two of them have stopped working. Can you come over and have a look at them for me?”

### **Thou Shalt Love Thy Competitors**

The Company V8 livened up and headed for Lansdowne Repetition’s old premises. There was little traffic to watch. It was an opportunity to converse with his Celestial Friends. “We are now opposition companies,” Barnard mumbled at them under his breath, “and that means we must now support each other, come what may.” He carried on with not a little bit of voiced sarcasm, “This *was* going to be a great day.”

Lansdowne Repetition had made a clever, but hardly moral, move. The partners, three brothers, had sold Godfrey all there was of the old firm. But, with his money they had moved to new premises, installed new equipment, and begun to service their old customers once again. They also began to siphon off many of Alexander Godfrey’s most skilled workers. And two of the three ‘Lansdowne’ brothers were also the most skilled engineers. The third brother was a capable salesman.

As the weeks went by, Barnard could more often be found in Godfrey’s premises, rather than in his own factory. Mostly George Mathieu would be repairing a machine—a task better handled by a qualified engineer—but Alexander Godfrey had spent all his money and simply could not afford the professionals.

The ‘new’ Lansdowne Repetition, now calling itself Lansdowne Engineering, was alive and well, and operating just two miles down the road from Alexander Godfrey’s place.

As Godfrey's money ran out, his skilled workers left him to return to their previous employer. Godfrey's recently acquired customers became somewhat disillusioned with the rather abrupt new owner of Lansdowne Repetition. Alex had never been in sales.

One-sided cooperation between Barnard and Godfrey would very soon come to an end. Whilst George Mathieu was often in the opposition's factory, attending to what was most urgent, Alexander Godfrey blatantly poached on Barnard's customers.

"How much is Barnard charging you for that?" he would ask. "I'll do it for ten percent less." Alexander did, in fact, score some jobs, at least for a time, but most times the customers would report to Barnard what Alexander Godfrey had been up to. Barnard was getting a bit annoyed with the man.

When Godfrey sneaked into the Barnard premises and 'borrowed' a most expensive, casehardened die to supply one of Barnard's regular customers from that day on, all hell broke loose. The Guardians' rookie lost his cool like he had never done before. The die was swiftly retrieved, and Godfrey was henceforth barred for good from the premises.

Alexander Godfrey was an unusual man. Some might even call him a thief.



Barnard's studies in industrial psychology had long ago made him aware of the difference between personality and identity. The ardent student of human nature clearly understood the difference.

However, the Alexander Godfrey experience showed him the extreme. Godfrey had personality—heaps of it. Some would call the short, stocky guy decisive, even abrupt, and unable to ever thank the other person for a good deed done. Yet he cared for his wife and daughters like few others did. They were, all three, high up on pedestals.

Inexplicably, however, Godfrey seemed to lack all aspects of an identity.

In the years that followed, Alexander lost much weight. He aged like never before, but he somehow survived in business by working between seventy and eighty hours per week.

Few in the trade respected him.

From time to time Barnard still visited Godfrey's service club to make up for missed daytime meetings in his own club, but there was never again an amicable discussion, or shared drink with Alexander Godfrey. Alex was now given a wide berth.

### **No Beer, No Skittles**

"That Alexander Godfrey fellow is at the door, George," his secretary told him. "Shall I tell him to go away? He says he understands he's barred from the place."

Barnard shrugged then shook his head. "His war is with his own Spirit Self, not with us," he told the young woman, leaving her to contemplate, as he answered the door.

He was shocked to see Godfrey. In the stark light of day, the man looked like he had aged untold years. He looked ill, gray, depleted of energy.

"Alex?"

“Hi, George. The Club’s directors have decided I haven’t held a position for too many years,” Godfrey declared. “They basically told me to take on a task this year, or my membership will be frowned upon.”

“Resign your membership,” Barnard suggested. “You’re battling, Alex. We know. Put your efforts into the business. Forget the Club. Rejoin the thing when you’re finally back up on your feet.”

“Almost half of what I make comes from other club members’ orders. I can’t afford to cancel my membership.”

“So?” Barnard asked.

“They put me in charge of procuring our guest speakers.”

“So?” Barnard repeated. He was still not catching on.

“I can’t get anyone at this late stage, George. Will you do it?”

“Ruddy hell,” Barnard swore. “Have you heard of beer and skittles, Alex? I haven’t tasted a beer in months, never even sighted a skittle in years. I work hard, too, Alex. A factory *and* a busy clinic, I’ve got.”

“It’s important to me, and I would be very grateful if you could . . .”

Barnard sighed, “When?”

“Tonight.”

“That far off? Why don’t you ask me next week, if it’s not until this eve?”

### **The Heckler**

There was something very psychic about Tamara Chelsey, his colleague. Just before Barnard was ready to hightail it to Godfrey’s service club, she telephoned about a hypnotherapy patient. Just before hanging up she said, “You’ll do very well tonight. Your Spirit Guides will be with you.” Tamara simply ‘knew’ things without being told.

It was good to hear his speech would go over well.

As a guest speaker, Barnard was a hard act to follow, but not in the sense that his speeches were extraordinary. Barnard moved around as he spoke.

There might be a few dozen words on his little notepad, but the notepad generally remained in his pocket, for the rookie knew his subjects. He was prepared, and just as well, for Godfrey had neglected to tell him this was their ladies’ night.

This was an old, well-established club, and the members’ ages probably averaged forty-five years or more.

But for one young recruit seated alone on the front row, their speaker for the evening was about the youngest there. Reason and Emotion—the Personality; Intuition and Tolerance—the Identity. These were the subjects of Barnard’s thirty-minute talk and untold years of contemplation.

The oldest member of the club introduced the speaker, returned to his seat, and promptly fell asleep in minutes.

In the back row, Alexander Godfrey yawned, chronically so. Most others, and especially the women, were truly spellbound as they took in Barnard’s speech and gestures, and as their eyes followed his stroll around the wide platform.

Annoyingly, the young man in the front row saw fit to frequently, loudly, and

needlessly, clear his throat.

Here, was a heckler. Here, was an inexperienced young businessman, who had not yet been advised that one never heckles a guest speaker, at least not in a service club.

No one could look back at the young man to silence him, for he was sitting in the front row. Here was what Barnard once classed as ‘a five-foot-six inch bantam rooster that flaps his coat about like a pair of busy wings, just to be noticed, for all the hens look right over his head.’

His thirty minutes had come to an end, and the Guardians’ rookie had also come to the end of his speech. There was some loud applause, especially from the ladies. It was time for some questions to be answered.

The young man in the front row quickly put up his hand. He was the first, and he got Barnard’s attention. But the young man had no question.

“What a load of utter garbage,” he stated. “There is no such thing as intuition.” He added, “What a load of crap!”

There was a hush in that big meeting place. Mostly, it seemed, the women were responding, but almost silently, to the heckler’s harsh and unkind words.

Some of the men looked quite angry about the outburst. On the back row Alexander Godfrey was looking away, but Barnard wasn’t fooled. The subjects of Barnard’s speech embarrassed Godfrey. The behavior of the heckler, seemingly, did not.

“A load of garbage,” Barnard repeated the young man’s insult. “Were you suggesting it was just the thing for your club’s ladies’ night?” He pinned down that young man with an arctic stare. “But you left your lady at home, though she was dressed and ready to go with you. I see her!”

Momentarily he looked away, casting a glance at all who were assembled there. Now the brutal gaze returned to size up its apprehensive quarry. “You came home from work in a bad, bad mood, young man, and although you knew she was so looking forward to her first-ever ladies’ night, you drove off without her.”

“I see her!” Barnard went on. “And that’s what is called intuition. She is tall. Taller than you are, and she is blonde. I see her! I see her in her white dress, a red band around her waist, her red, high-heeled shoes.”

There was a gasp coming from Barnard’s audience and again, it was mostly from the women. It was obvious that many of the men also knew the heckler’s wife.

“What could she do to be a little more perfect in her presentation of self?” Barnard asked, but he hardly waited for a response. “She could lose just a few pounds and be in a professional photo-shoot. And she might just be a little less generous with the lipstick.”

That had done the trick. The place was getting noisy now. All of the women were busily talking to each other. Virtually all of them knew the young woman, and knew her well. It had been a perfect description of her, for a perfect picture of the woman had been planted in the rookie’s mind.

It was obvious to all assembled there.

“Just a few pounds. A few pounds, is all, and a little less lipstick. Tell her I said so, for that will not offend her. She’s used to what you regularly throw at her. She can handle it.”

Again he paused, but there was more coming.

“My load of utter garbage intuition tells me that unless you change tack, young

man, you must get used to living your life without this wonderful and gentle, young woman by your side.”

All throughout that vicious response, the somewhat befuddled young man had remained silent. At first he had seemed to melt into his chair, then, later, he leaned forward, attentively listening to all that was being dished out to him.

There was not a sigh, not a word, not even a breath from the heckler, it seemed, yet neither was there a denial of these facts to be noted on his face.

Barnard knew wherefrom all this information had come. His ancient, learned Spirit Self had taken complete control. The rookie’s mind had once more been ‘sent fishing.’

There were questions for him to answer. There should have been many questions, and fifteen minutes had been allocated to answer any question at all on the subjects so well, and so often, contemplated.

The rookie smiled at his audience, confidently, casually, but there were no questions. All assembled seemed to fear the possibility of having their private lives turned into public property. That would never be the case, but their collective intuition would not inform them of that.

Alexander Godfrey had already left. He would have been, most likely, the one who had most to learn from Barnard’s half hour talk, but Godfrey was embarrassed by his guest speaker, and for his biting back, and chewing up the heckler.

Alexander Godfrey was an unusual man.

## **Great!**

Barnard made his way to the bar. It had been some months since he enjoyed a cold beer, but he felt he actually needed one now. He felt he surely deserved one, although he knew all the hard work had been done by his super-genius Partner in the business of living a mortal life; his ancient, learned Spirit Self.

He approached the bar alone. Alexander Godfrey had indeed cleared right out of the building, but before Barnard could order his drink, a hand was placed on his shoulder. It belonged to the young man; the heckler.

“I’m buying you that drink,” he insisted. “That was a great talk! That was bloody spot on, mate!” He waved about his one-hundred-dollar bill, and he soon got someone’s attention.

“Two beers,” he ordered, as if he owned the place, “and make it snappy, kid.” He turned back to the rookie, and said, “You’ve got to teach me how to do that!”

There was an instantaneous response to that demand, but it did not come from Barnard. It was loud, piped right into the rookie’s ear, though no one else heard the urgent words, “Don’t you dare!”



In all the years of Barnard’s membership of his Interspecies Alliance, this was probably the most abrupt, certainly the most ‘threatening’ command he was ever given. Always ready to comply, someone got in first, quickly, in case the rookie decided to grant

the request.

The heckler would be ruthless in the use of what he might learn from George Mathieu, and someone, somewhere, was in the possession of a brilliant psych profile on this young heckler. The summary of their analysis was not too crash hot.



He needed a walking stick to get around, and even then it looked to be a painful exercise for him. He made it all the way up to the bar.

“I’m old,” he explained. “I’m old and tired, eighty-seven last July, and I’m sorry I fell asleep. I’m truly sorry.”

The rookie smiled at the gentle old guy, who carried on. “They tell me that was the best-ever speech in the place. But I just get so tired at this time of night.”

“That’s okay, Pops,” Barnard told him. “You are forgiven.”

“Eighty-seven last July,” he repeated. “Can I buy you a beer?”

“Thanks, but no, thanks,” Barnard told him. “I’m having just the one, and I’ve got work to do, still. Only twenty-nine by next June, so there’s a long, long way to go.”

Other than the heckler, and what was surely the oldest member in the club, no one else approached Barnard.

They were spooked, but they had all learned a great deal.