

# **Friday Night**

**By**

**D.S.Harford**

© Copyright 2003, Douglas S. Harford  
All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or  
Transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written  
permission from the author

Friday was finally here and he looked forward to another weekend of sitting around and doing exactly nothing. The last thing he had to accomplish was get home through all the damn traffic. All aircars had been grounded due to the heavy rains that started around 4:00, as they always seem to do in Central Florida. So here he sat with the rest of the peons waiting for the eternal light to change ahead, which would then lead him to the next eternal fucking light. Placing his aircar in traffic mode he sat back and closed his eyes, listening to the rain pound on its roof. Finally, it started to move forward staying the exact safe distance from the Var-car in front of him. Turning on the recorder, he drifted off listening to someone pound out on a piano, one of the Bach concerto's, pretending that he was the pianist. Sometimes he could actually see himself playing the complicated phrases that he loved so much. It was almost as if he was living another life from another time. Not that he believed in all the reincarnation nonsense that was going around. A current fad among the well-to-do, which included himself; the well-to-do part that is.

He sometimes thought that if he were to do it over again, he would have liked to pursue a career in music. At the same time he knew he was kidding himself, he was too lazy, more of a listener than a performer. Every time he tried to sit down and

play what little he knew on the piano he would soon become bored with it and then there was the money. Becoming rich playing the piano was a pipe dream at best. Becoming rich in the stock and commodities market was a fact of life, for them. A talent that he soon discovered after the accident. A talent that he himself didn't know how it exactly worked. It was more of a layering of intuition and feelings that gave him the insights, into what to buy or sell. It wasn't a magical or luck type of thing as many thought, for it took a lot of studying of the markets. He simply seemed to have a mind that could analyze a great deal of information and come up with the most likely answer.

Compuhead, was a nick name he had earned, although few if any used it while he was in earshot. He had numerous offers to write articles on investing and one to do a TRV show, all of which he turned down. Standing up and being on display wasn't part of his makeup and as far as writing about it, he couldn't think of a more boring task. Also performing in front of an audience was never a dream, to say the least. No, he thought, being rich and dreaming of playing Bach was just about perfect.

He was jarred out of his daydreaming when the aircar slammed to a halt, just missing some fool who had cut in front of him, obviously on manual. And now the arrogant imbecile was waving at him.

Edgewater Drive opened up into three lanes as he quickly threw it into manual and moved into the far left lane. Passing the imbecile, he glanced over and the driver turned and smiled at him. The driver being a pretty, short hair brunette, he smiled back. She probably felt guilty about it, he thought as he gunned his Rider.

Topping out a 70 mph he watched the gates of their Division come up on the left with the black letters 'Lockhart' on a white marble base. Slowing the aircar down, he turned into the gate coming to a stop at the guard house and hitting the button to drop the window.

"Evening Mr. Lampie," the guard said.

"Good-evening George. Is the Mrs. home yet?"

"No sir haven't seen her."

He pulled the aircar through the now open gates and proceeded down the tree lined road. A Division of 85 homes with the cheapest being worth around 2 million dollars. All surrounding a fairly large lake. A lake that had once been a sink-hole, which was then enlarged for the community, and appropriately called Lake Lockhart. Not a bad place to live he thought smiling to himself as he waved to old man Johnson who was taking his evening walk. Pushing a button on his dashboard a pair of gates swung open on his left. Turning the aircar through them and into their driveway, he slowed it down while

the garage doors automatically opened, sensing the vehicle. Pulling into the wide empty space, a garage big enough for three vehicles, he pressed another button that would bring the house to life. Reaching for his telebrief, he walked the short distance through the sliding door that led into their kitchen. The telecom light was blinking on the wall as usual. Laying his brief on the counter he pressed the light and decided to make himself a scotch, while listening to the messages.

*"Beep...just to remind you of a community meeting on Saturday, Jim," a female voice announced.*

*"Beep...Jim, couldn't catch you at the office. have concerns over the FHG buy, call me if you would . . . Paul."*

*"Dear I have to be in Pinehurst on Saturday, sorry, will return Sunday night, love you."*

**Why the hell didn't she call me on the telebrief he thought.**

*"Beep...Mr. Lampie, we appreciate your support in the past and again this year we are contacting . . . "*

**He cut short the message pressing the forward button.**

*"Beep...sorry about cutting you off," a soft female voice said.*

**"Now that's an original," he said aloud.**

**Picking up the drink he headed for their bedroom, noticing that the rain had stopped. A whole weekend to himself wasn't**

the worst of things. Norma only came during the week to clean the place, which left them to themselves on the weekends. Without Linda around he would be free to come and go as he pleased. Not that he didn't want her here, the weekends was the highlight of their lives, but being alone, he would have to give some thought to doing what otherwise he might not be able to do. There was work as always and it might be a good time to catch up on a special program he was writing for the computer on various shortcuts.

Stripping naked and throwing his clothes on to the bed he stepped through the glass doors that overlooked their pool. Standing outside he noted how private their place was. They had frequently swam and lounged in the nude beside the pool ever since the Carters had placed their home up for sale and left for South America. The Carter's house was the only invasion of their total privacy. An end of it appeared over their backyard wall with a window and could be seen from their pool area. The window being to a second floor bedroom. A window from which he was sure Bill watched them when Linda was out in a bikini, but what the hell, he would probably do the same thing if his neighbor looked like Linda.

Walking back into the kitchen, he fixed himself another drink. Returning to the deck he pulled up a chase and lied back looking up into the cloudy sky as it started to break up.

They had met, shortly after the accident, in a club called The Brush and Pallet. He remembered her being just about the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Sitting at a table by herself, he got up the courage, went over, and told her so. She laughed and invited him to sit down. It was one of those times, which happen seldom in ones life. They talked through the evening until a waiter asked them to leave. She became fascinated with his mind condition that had happened during the aircar wreck. The fact that he couldn't remember anything before the accident made her even more interested in him. He was told that eventually memories would begin to reappear, but except for some bad dreams he still had no recollection of himself or anything much else before the wreck. He did have some childhood flashes of what had to be his parents, but both being dead it seemed of little value. Six months later they were married. As it turned out not only was Linda beautiful, but rich as well and in the three years they had been married he had tripled their worth.

His goal, as he often told her, was to be a billionaire in five years. She would always smile and reply 'what ever you want you can have in this world.'

He awoke with a start, having fallen asleep on the chase, the scotch and the now gone warm sun, drifting him off. Swinging his legs off of the chase he sat there rubbing his

eyes, while trying to decide whether or not to hit the Grill tonight. Half of the complex would be there; a tradition of their rich neighbors on Friday night. Even if you were going somewhere else you just had to stop by the W&C Grill for a drink, if for no other reason than to find out what was going on in the neighborhood.

Something moved out of the corner of his eye. Looking up at the Carter place he could have sworn the drape moved in the window.

Great he thought, they sold the place and here I am laying around in the nude being seen by some new neighbors.

Staring at the window the drapes stayed perfectly still. The dusk light making it difficult to make out what was inside the glass and what was simply a reflection. Probably my imagination, I'll check out the place on my way to the Grill.

He had decided to make a quick stop at the Grill then take a tour of Church Street. An area of town that wasn't where a person of his stature and or wealth should be seen in. Nevertheless, it was one of his favorite areas. A place where Linda wouldn't be caught dead in. Or to put it another way a place where you could be caught dead in. He had no explanation for his fascination of the place, he just felt more at ease among the people that roamed the streets and clubs there than anywhere else. Possibly it had something to do with his past.

There was the normal records of employment and the like, but apparently he had been quite a loner most of his life.

It had gotten dark as he climbed into the aircar and backed it out into the driveway. Setting it for airborne, it raised slowly into the air. Turning it toward the Carter place, he flew over it, hovering over the large rectangular roof. Lowering the aircar to the second story level he circled around the complex looking for some kind of life, but the place appeared as before, deserted. Picking up the communicator, he called George.

"George, Lampie here."

*"Yes sir."*

"Did anyone come by to see the Carter place today?"

*"No sir, I understand that it has been sold."*

"Do you know who to?"

*"No sir."*

Turning the aircar around he climbed to 1000 feet and punched in the code that would take him to the Grill, thinking that if anyone was prowling around, the security systems that were installed in the community would take care of it.

The Grill was an old wood structure that had been built originally by a Bill Condon, a eccentric millionaire who wanted his privacy and loved the Florida woods. It sat in the middle of a dense growth of twenty acres, outside of Apopka, with a

narrow sand road as the only access. When he died it was purchased by two brothers, Wayne and Carl and turned into a exclusive restaurant and club for only the well to do. Only members were allowed into the place, being checked at the gate or in the parking lot if you came in by aircar. The aircar slowly descended on to the landing x in the lot as the guard waved at him. Parking the aircar in the space marked Lampie, he made his way across the lot into the club, noting that the place looked busy as ever on a Friday night.

"Evening Mr. Lampie," said Wayne at the front door.

"Good-evening, Wayne."

"Two for dinner as usual."

"Not tonight, Linda's out of town. I'll head for the bar."

"Yes sir."

Turning right he walked down the short hall and into a room that looked like something out of a hundred year old western movie. The place included a stand up bar and an assortment of old wooden tables and chairs scattered through out the room. At one end of the room a long table was full of his neighbors, all talking at once on as many subjects as there were people there.

Walking over he sat down at the end nodding to Lin, who always seemed stoned no matter what time they would get there.

"Did anyone see what that fucker did?"

"Who, the old pervert?"

"No, he's talking about Gary."

"What did Gary do now?" someone asked.

"He leveled his entire grounds."

"What do you mean...leveled."

"Cut everything to the ground."

"It's his yard, right len."

"Fukinay"

"Not when it's next to mine."

"Anyone coming to the meeting tomorrow."

"What meeting?"

"Homeowners dummy."

"Maybe we could shoot Gary there."

"Fukinay."

"It's his damn yard, he can do what ever he wants to it .  
. . like this is America, ya know."

"NO, this isn't Americayaknow . . . this is Lockhart. He  
can go out a live with the fuckin slobs in Heathrow."

"Maybe he's just going to redo it."

"Yea why don't you just ask him."

"Are you kidding those two haven't spoke to each other in  
years."

"There has got to be something in the covenants."

"What covenants?"

"There ain't no law about a man cutting down a few trees on HIS property."

"I'm telling you he didn't cut down a few trees, he leveled the fucking place . . . I mean like there ain't nothing there, but flat fucking gray sand."

"Well maybe he wants a beach look, right Len."

"Fukinay."

"I'm tired of talking about Gary," a female voice said, lets talk about the pervert."

"Or lets talk about grass."

"Forget the pervert," came an answer.

"And screw the . . . "

"I hear that he was caught looking in the Brewer's daughter's bedroom."

"Damn pervert."

"I don't know, have you seen her lately."

"ROBERT."

"Just kidding.... right Len."

"Fukinay"

"Gary's an asshole."

"Hey Jim I hear you got a new neighbor."

"That's news to me."

"Yea, Paul sold the place this week."

"Who to?"

"Some woman in England."

"He flew to England to sell it."

"Nah, he wished."

"No more naked hanky-panky in your back yard now," the female voice said.

"How would you know?" he asked.

"She's been hanging around with the pervert."

"Actually I was hoping you would invite me over."

"I'll bring it up with Linda."

"Oh, why drag her into it."

"What do you know about her?" he asked.

"Linda?"

"Very funny.... no the buyer."

"Beautiful, intelligent and filthy rich, my kind of woman."

"Personally I like em beautiful, rich and dumb, right Len."

"Fukinay."

"And then there's this goddamn air tax. How can they tax the goddamn air for Christ sakes."

"They aren't taxing the air Mike, they're taxing the time when your aircar is in the air."

"That's ridiculous, the goddamn air is free, next they will be counting the number of breaths you take and charging you accordingly."

"Gene could get a tax break."

"How else are we going to control the air traffic. Ten years ago when there was only a few around it didn't matter, now with everyone and their uncle being able to afford one; you got to admit it's getting a little CROWDED up there."

"Speaking of Gene, anyone heard about how he is doing."

"They had to remove part of his lung, other than that he's fine."

"I thought they were removing one of his. . . you know."

"Jesus, Kathy."

"Well I didn't know, that's what Hose said."

"How about the wall."

"What wall?"

"The one around our complex, what else. Last week two kids climbed it."

"So."

"Yea and the Security got them."

"Not before they were humping in the bushes."

"They catch them before, during or after."

"All three from what I heard."

"Humping . . . what a crude term," a woman said.

"Ok, so they were fucking in the bushes."

"MEN"

"So what about the damn wall?"

"What wall?"

"Pay attention Pete."

"It's too low, we need to rebuild it and make it higher or something."

"How's about putting 100,000 volt lines on the top."

"Now that would stop any teenager from fucking on our property."

"You want to know what . . . I don't give a shit about everyone that can afford one. They ought to raise the price so only we can afford one . . . right Len."

"Fukinay"

"You should run for office. . .'"

"Yea well the first thing I would do's . . . "

"I know get rid of the air tax."

"Where is Linda Jim?"

"Had to go to Pinehurst for the weekend."

"You sure you don't want some company honey?"

"You know what I'm going to say to that guy."

"Who?"

"GARY, for christ-sakes what the hell else are we talking about here?"

It went on that way as he sat and sipped a scotch that Kim who worked the bar had brought him, without him having to order it.

Standing up he started to leave. . .

"Where you headed Jim, asked a voice."

"Home"

"You need some company?" the female voice asked.

Smiling, he turned and headed out of the place waving to Kim who smiled back.

"Say hello to the misses for me," she said.

Getting airborne as quick as he could he punched into the control panel destination Church Street.

The golden glow of Orlando at night lay dead ahead as he waited for air clearance to Ring Three. Keeping his speed under a 100 mph he relaxed back and watched the city skyline come into view. The three South Bank buildings dominated the area standing 70,60 and 50 stories high. All done in a golden skin of glass and flooded with light. Church Street was on the other side of the towers and part of the Old Town as it was called. There wasn't a street called Church, although he understood that at one time there was. Rather the area surrounded an old run down high-rise, that was supposed to be even older than the old court house building. Called the Sun Building, it was one that should be torn down, but the conservationist wouldn't hear

of it. Every time someone would propose an improvement, mobs would gather on Orange Street, holding up traffic and creating as much trouble as they could for the city. The last he had heard was that some foreign country was buying it from the county.

Clearance came on the dash for Ring Three. That would put him in walking distance of the Street. Unless he wanted to drive into the area; a thought that only crossed his mind briefly. Better to park at the city landing lot and use the people mover than risk a drive in that area.

Someone rich, huh, he thought. That will keep everyone talking for a while in the neighborhood.

He dropped the aircar down to 100 feet as the gold towers approached. Swinging around them, he pointed it at the landing lot of Ring Three. To the left was the old deserted Street tower. At least it was supposed to be deserted, however there were rumors that a lot of strange things happened inside its old walls. Most of them he thought were nothing but ghost stories dreamed up for the tourist.

Turning the aircar's controls over to the landing lot, that would bring it in for him, he studied the lit up streets of the Church Street area as he passed over them. It was a place where every kind of restaurant, shop and entertainment that a person could dream up, could be found, also a place

where anything was for sale. The city had set the area up over twenty years ago, to rid the rest of the county of unsavory businesses and to control the spread of them.

As long as you were in Church Street anything went. Outside of the area, tolerance was at zero. At least that was the original concept. The idea cleaned up the rest of the county, but as far as controlling the Street, that soon became another story. After twenty years of existence, the area became a world of its own with the resources and political power to do pretty much what they wanted, but only as long as it remained in Church Street.

An almost anarchy society, governed by a Boss, that was supposed to have been chosen by the owners of the businesses. An area that you took the full responsibility of what happened to you when you entered it.

Reaching into the dash he pulled out the latest in self defense called a needle. It was eight inches long and fired a two inch dart that injected its victim with 10,000 volts of electricity. Holding five rounds and one reload, he placed it in his right pants pocket, which he had modified to hold the weapon.

Feeling a combination of nervousness as well as excitement he got out of the aircar and headed across the lot to the people mover. While in the lot he was still in Orlando proper

and relatively safe. Even being on the people mover, a moving sidewalk, he was under the protection of the City of Orlando, until it crossed into the Street.

The people mover was actually three walks at different speeds. Each one moving at a higher speed than the last. Quickly he stepped up the three, until he was at the maximum speed and was being whisked into the excitement of the streets ahead. Alone at first, gradually as he moved into the street area the mover started to fill up with a variety of people. Staying on, until he reached the base of the old tower, which was the center of the Street, he moved down the walks. Waiting until a club, called NoEvil, that he had been to once before, came into view, the large statue of a gorilla with its hands over its eyes sat over the front entrance.

Stepping quickly down the walks he got off the mover and went down a few steps into the street below. A street full of people the likes of which you didn't see anywhere else. In Church Street, there simply were no rules covering how or what you wore, or even if you wanted to wear anything. Weaving his way through the crowd toward the club a half-naked woman grabbed his arm, "Hi honey you want a good time?"

"Thanks, but no thanks."

"Jerk," she replied.

The club entrance was a small alcove of solid mirror. Stepping into it a light came on over his head and a voice asked, "*name?*"

"J.A.Lampie."

"*Goodevening Mr Lampie . . . you are welcomed to enter, but not with the weapon.*"

"500 dollars say's I am."

"One moment please."

The mirror in front of him slid open, revealing a women dressed in a tight red gown.

"Good evening Mr. Lampie, it's nice to see you again. My name is Gloria and I'll be your attendant for the evening."

"Thank you," he said as he entered a small entrance room that was the same color as the dress with a red couch at the far end.

"If you are expecting a companion you may wait here."

The expected companion was one that they would supply for you as long as you spent your money here.

"No I'm alone this evening and just looking for a drink and a show."

"Very well, if you would follow me."

He followed her as they magically passed through the wall onto a balcony that overlooked a large dance floor below.

"Would you like a table?"

"Yes please."

The balcony surrounded the dance floor with tables that enabled you to sit and watch the dancers. Four glass elevators took you down to the floor below, where soft music was playing for the latest dance craze called the Grind, which was more or less exactly what the couples were doing against each other on the dance floor. Suspended out over the floor and at eye level with the balcony were three clear globes. Inside the globes were as you would expect couples doing pretty much what the dancers were doing below, with one exception. The couples in the globes were naked; all in all not the kind of place for the likes of a Linda.

Reaching the table, "Are you familiar with the Meether?" she asked.

"Yes thank you."

The Meether was a monitor on all of the tables that enabled you to talk and meet anyone in the place that was at a table. Each table had a pole with a number at the top, which enabled you to contact and identify the other tables.

"And your 500 dollar drink?" she asked smiling.

"Scotch," he replied as he handed her the 500.

Sitting back, he watched the mass of dancers below their movements creating a slow weave over the dance floor.

"Your drink sir," the red dress said.

"Thank you."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like a companion?"

"Yes I'm sure."

"Very well, but if you change your mind, call me on channel 666."

Sipping the scotch, he turned his attention back to floor below. Most of the dancers were obviously young, especially the couples performing in the globes. A small red light came on the monitor on his table, which meant that someone was viewing him. Reaching over he turned off the self-viewing mode and started flipping through the channels viewing the other patrons sitting around the balcony.

A wide assortment of women and men came up on the monitor as he quickly turned the dial. Many he knew worked for the place and their interest was strictly the dollars.

A familiar face flashed on the screen for a moment as he dialed through it; clicking back, there was a beautiful woman with short black hair, with the prettiest blue eyes he had ever seen. Noting the table number, he glanced up from the screen to find number 44. Searching around the balcony, he spotted the number on the other side of the area. A woman in black sat there and appeared to be looking straight at him. Turning on the monitor to connect with her . . .

*"Good evening Mr. Lampie,"* the monitor said.

**"We've met before."**

*"This afternoon on the road and I do apologize."*

**"It happens . . . you work here?"**

*"Why do you ask that?"*

**"You know my name."**

*"Oh, I did a search on you."*

**"You always do searches on strangers?"**

*"No, only on ones that interest me."*

**"And how is it I interest you."**

*"You fit the profile that I was given."*

**"The rich and famous?"**

*"Something like that . . . would you care to grind?"*

**"I'm more of a watcher than a participant."**

*"How interesting, and what kind of man only wants to watch?"*

**"A happily married one."**

*"But you're alone and on Church Street."*

**"Only to watch."**

*"Buy me a drink and I'll watch with you."*

**"Ok, I'll be right over."**

**"No, you stay there and I'll come to you."**

He watched her as she got up from the table and walked around the perimeter toward him. She was wearing a long flowing black dress that touched the floor. It was skin tight with bare

shoulders and then flared out below the knees. She was a tall woman and most definitely beautiful, her walk giving evidence to a confidence that usually comes from position and wealth.

"And who do I owe the pleasure to," he said while standing and extending his hand to her.

"I'm usually called Nata, by my friends."

He couldn't help notice how warm her hand was, as she placed it palm down in his.

"Won't you please sit down?" he asked, pulling a chair from the edge of the table.

"Thank you. What were you watching?" she asked smiling.

"Oh nothing in particular, until you appeared. Do you live in Orlando?"

"Yes, for some time now."

"I don't ever remember seeing you. I usually have a perfect memory when it comes to beautiful women."

"You're being very flattering, for someone who is happily married."

"Old habits and saying the truth when I see it."

She smiled again, "And thank you again."

"What is it you do." he asked.

"Other than spend money, I'm an alien escort from another solar system and I've been sent here to study the human being."

"And whose money do you spend?"

"My own of course . . . do you believe me?"

"The money or the alien part?"

"Both."

"How much money do you have?"

"3.5 billion, more or less."

"Ok, and what solar system are you from?"

"You people call it Regulus."

"What do you call it?"

"Its name wouldn't make any sense to you."

"Try me."

"It's Umhertyu."

"I owe you a drink," he said as he punched in 666 on the monitor."

"I knew you wouldn't believe me," she laughed.

"The alien part I believe, it's the money part I don't."

"At least you have a sense of humor," she said laughing again.

"May I help you," said the red dress. And Good evening Nata."

"I see that you two have met," she remarked. "Your usual Nata?"

"Yes please."

"And you Mr. Lampie another scotch?"

"Yes that would be fine."

"Have you noticed that the two there in that globe are both women?" Nata asked.

"Yes I noticed and have you noticed that the two in that globe are two men."

"No as a matter of fact I didn't," she replied.

"You should pay more attention to your studies."

"Touché Mr. Lampie, but even us Norn's need a break."

"Norn's?"

"Yes loosely translated, it's what we call ourselves."

"So you are a Norn from Regulus?"

"Umm ....actually Umhertyu."

"Here we are," said the red dress, setting their drinks down onto the table. "Now you kids have fun," she said as she walked away.

"Tell me more about Regu...Umhertyu."

"I'm sorry, but it isn't permitted."

"Now lets see, you claim to be an alien from an unpronounceable solar system that you are not allowed to talk about."

"Don't believe me, do you?"

"Sure like I said before it's the money thing that I don't believe. Like why tell me in the first place?"

"I'm required by OSSG rules to inform all intelligent life as to what I am," she said, while sipping her drink.

"Ahh, so us humans are intelligent life."

"Yes...only on a third level, though."

"And you are here to study us."

"Sort of."

"Why?"

"It's what I do."

Laughing at her, "Are all the women from Um..her..tyu as beautiful as you?"

"Yes of course."

He sat looking at her wondering what kind of kook he had found. She definitely wasn't what you would call an average woman. Her striking blue eyes bothered him the most and the way she kept smiling. A slight smile that suggested that she was playing with him. Her bare shoulders and the slight mounds of her breast showed a skin that appeared to be flawless. As a matter of fact he thought, her entire appearance was flawless.

"Listen," she said. "I know of this place called The Illusions. Would you like to go?"

"What kind of place is it."

"It's sort of a place where your dreams can come true."

"Alright . . . sounds like fun."

"Oh, it is definitely that," she said as she stood up from the table.

"Are you leaving us so soon?" said the red dress.

"Yes what do I owe you?" he asked.

"Not a thing, good looking, you just be careful out there."

They moved down the street with her hanging on to his arm. Then dodging through the milling people they crossed over to the moving sidewalk, following her, as she gracefully moved up to the fast walk.

"How far away is this place?" he asked.

"Not too far. We need to transfer, to go right up hear, then it's only minutes away, I promise."

Her promise was kept as the Illusions came into view at the end of a street. Getting off the moving walk, they walked arm in arm down a narrow street with the club at its end.

The building was a large white ball that seemed to be floating in the air. The entire white surface glowed a soft white adding a strong contrast to its name, which was large black letters that also seemed to float in the air about three feet from its surface.

They approached it, at its base, the sphere being a good 12 feet above the ground.

"Isn't this the back of the old Sun building?" he asked.

"Why yes I guess it is. I never really noticed before," she answered.

Walking directly under, "How does it float like that?" he asked.

"It doesn't silly, it's an illusion, get it."

"Ok, so how do we get in?"

"Come over here and stand real still."

Standing next to her, he felt her, as she pressed herself against him. A hand slowly rubbed its way down his back,

"Pulling my leg aren't you?"

Laughing, she took his hand, pulling him under the sphere until they were directly under its center. "Count to five," she said smiling.

One moment he was looking up the street and the next they were in a small glass round room.

"Hold on," she said, as the floor started to raise them upward into the dome, through some type of tube. Coming to a stop they stepped forward into a larger room that was luxuriously furnished looking more like an expensive hotel lobby.

"We will have to sign in at the desk," she said.

"Is there anyone else here?"

"Of course you just can't see them."

Walking up to the counter, she pushed a button on its surface.

*"Yes may I help you?"* a female voice asked.

"Yes", she answered. "We would like a room for the night."

"Whoa, wait a minute", he responded. "I was under the impression that this was an entertainment place."

"Welllll," she said.

"Fun is fun, but that doesn't mean I'm going to pound the pillows with you."

Pouting at him, she turned back to the counter. "Ok, nevermind . . . I guess we would like to go to the Corridor then. I knew you wouldn't, but I wanted to be sure, besides I can't anyway, it's too dangerous."

"How's that?"

"I would probably end up killing you."

"Now, how would you do that?" he asked. "The kiss of death?"

"Yes as a matter of fact. The spread of viruses is a real danger here. It is one of the subjects that I'm well versed in. Our contact with your species can only be on certain levels. Even kissing you might infect you with a virus that your system might not be able to adapt to, not to mention the diseases you are probably infected with."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize, it's my fault, I keep forgetting about the hang-ups of you humans. How about a walk on the beach?"

"Beach?"

"Sure follow me."

He followed her across the room and through an archway. Passing through the arch, they entered a long corridor with doors on both sides, again as if they were in a hotel. Walking down the Corridor she stopped at a door marked appropriately, 'Beach'

"Is this for real," he asked.

"Sure every door, is a different place. This one is a beach on an island in the Caribbean. That one over there is to the city of Rome in the year around 300 A.D. and that down there I think is to the old Disney Junction. Further down the Corridor it gets even more exciting."

"Like what?"

"Oh, . . just about every battle your species has had, you can join it. Although personally I find your obsession with self destruction a little ridiculous."

"Enter please," she said toward the door.

Opening, they passed through it to a small foyer as the door closed behind them. The wall on the other side of the door then slid open revealing a night scene of a large moon lit beach.

"Come on," she said. "Let's go for a swim."

Stepping out on to the sand, she kicked off her heels and in one swift motion her black gown followed, leaving her totally naked.

He watched her as she ran down to the waters edge and then dove into the oncoming waves.

"Come on," she yelled. It's wonderful."

Walking across the sand, he stripped down to his shorts. Stopping he waited while a wave threw its leading edge over his feet. It was real, the smell in the warm air was that of the ocean and the wave was real water. Over head the night sky was full of stars, only in the way you can see them when you're away from city lights. Looking up the beach, he could see a fire burning with people around it. He wondered if they were part of the illusion or here like himself.

She came toward him, stepping through a wave.

"Fraid of the water?" she asked.

"I can't believe what I'm seeing."

"Believe it, believe it," she said, taking his hand and pulling him out into the water. "And take off your shorts, you're making me feel self-conscience."

They lay on their backs naked on a large towel that had magically appeared while they were in the water. She still was holding his hand, but that was as far as it was going to go, as far as he was concerned. Music and peoples voices were coming

from the fire that he had noticed earlier as a warm breeze blew in off the Ocean, making the illusion complete.

"What did you mean earlier about our obsession with self destruction?" he asked.

"Just that dearest. Your species is one of those kind that lack certain qualities."

"And what qualities are those?"

"It's difficult to explain. A lot is lost in the translation."

"Try me."

"Lets see. . . you humans seem to not have any qualms about killing each other. Your history is full of massive destructions. It is almost like a need on your part to, once in a while, to begin a form of self destruction, that we find puzzling."

"It's not that simple." he remarked.

"No it never is. Don't misunderstand me you are not alone. A lot of species that reach a certain intellectual level conduct themselves this way."

"You said a lot of species?"

"Oh yes...in this particular galaxy we have discovered over 1200 civilizations in various forms of development."

"Uh huh."

"It's not important that you believe me, but since you asked I'm required to answer you."

"You seem to be required to do a lot of things."

"In dealing with the truth there are no compromises. You are familiar with your Ciros project?"

"Sure who isn't, the first attempt to travel to another star."

"The first attempt of your species to escape from its birthplace," she responded.

"It's something that man has always dreamed about," he said.

"It will always be only a dream. Your species will never be allowed outside of this solar system, unless escorted."

"And why is that?"

"It just seems that some life was created for Galaxy existence while others weren't. We don't know why some seem more adaptive while others are total destructive, but experience has taught us what to look for and make the required judgements."

"Judgement for whom?" he asked.

"Why dear, for the survival of all life, of course."

"And you think that the human is a destructive species."

"We know that the human is a destructive species. In fact, it is a common opinion amongst some, that you will eventually

destroy yourselves. All of which isn't entirely irrelevant to the rest of us.

"What is a beautiful woman's role in all of this."

"I'm part of a team, that was sent here, to try and understand the human more thoroughly."

"For what purpose, to maybe let us into the Galaxy some day."

"No, that decision is final. I see you don't quite understand. It is more than just whether or not you will be allowed into the family of Galaxy civilizations, it has more to do with. . . . what we are going to do with you."

"Do with us?"

"Please it isn't anything personnel, but as long as you are left alone to pursue your interest and desires unchecked, you will be viewed as a threat."

"To the rest of these Galaxy civilizations," he said, smiling.

"Yes. Would you mind turning over."

"Why?"

"I have my reasons, please."

"Ok, he said smiling, as he rolled over on to his stomach. "Tell me more about what you are going to do with us."

"Basically it will be in one of two areas. The one is that we will ignore your solar system and only interfere here when

you attempt to leave. Never letting you know what is outside your solar system."

"In other words like now, no contact with you," he said.

"Yes exactly."

"And the other."

"We would cultivate this solar system as a source of protein."

"PROTEIN?"

"Well..sort of...you see it's really a matter of economics. Having only one planet in a solar system is usually not worth the costs. However, you do have two other planets that could be modified to support life. With a solar system of three protein producing systems then it more than likely would be worth while."

"Protein for what?"

"Consumption, of course."

"Wait a minute...you are going to eat us."

"You find that idea unpleasant?"

"Unpleasant...it's barbaric."

"Why do you say that, you consume life for survival."

"They are animals not intelligent beings."

"Oh pooh, intelligence is relative, how do you think your cows feel about being eaten by you?"

"Well in the first place I don't think they even know."

"Which is very clever of you. It's easier to control ignorance than wisdom."

"This is ridiculous the human race would never allow itself to be some farm animal."

"Dear, they would never know and besides I don't even know whether you have passed the protein concentration test. In addition, we would cultivate all life here. A protein molecule is a protein molecule you know."

"Your that advanced, that you can change a planets environment?"

"Yes of course ...with in certain limits though. However I read a report and it is definitely possible here. For that matter I wouldn't be here if it wasn't an option."

"This ah, Galaxy of civilizations . . . has been around for a long time?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And when did you find us..this planet?"

"Oh we have been watching you since you first appeared during the mammal period."

"Mammal period?"

"I'm sorry...during your dinosaur periods."

"Human weren't around that long ago."

"Oh, a form of you was."

"And you have been watching us ever since."

"On an occasional visit basis, yes," she answered.

"So all those flying UFO stories over the centuries are true."

"No, don't be silly. We wouldn't let you know about anything we didn't want you to know."

"And now?"

"And now it's time for a run on the beach."

Jumping up and kicking sand at him, "Catch me if you can," she yelled.

Dashing down to the water's edge, she turned. "Last one to the club house is a rotten egg."

Getting up he ran toward her as she took off heading down the water's edge toward the fire and noises that he had noticed earlier. He watched her ahead of him totally naked and running with an effortless grace. Digging in he accelerated after her, closing the distance between them. Almost reaching her from behind he reached out, she laughed as she swerved and ran away from him. Flying down the beach, he gave it all he could, but she always stayed an arm length away. Looking past her, he noticed that the fire hadn't gotten that much closer. Odd he thought we should have reached it by now.

Running as fast as he could, twice he almost caught her, but at the last moment, she would pull away. He started to feel the shortness of breath and the pounding in his chest as the

fire and a group of people around it now approached quickly. Giving it one last all out effort, he charged for her. She swerved this time right into his path as they ran into each other, her warm softness slamming into him as they both fell into the wet sand, her arms tightly holding him.

Applause and hollers went up from the group around the fire.

"Oh just ignore them," she said, as her lips moved to his.

"I don't think so," he said. Besides, you said you couldn't and we are rolling around out here naked in front of a bunch of people."

"So are they dear, clothes aren't allowed here."

Getting up and taking him by the hand, "Come on I'll introduce you to everyone."

"Is this really necessary," he asked.

"Oh, stop being such a prude."

Walking together, they approached the group, which he noted were all naked.

"Let's see," she started, "Everyone, I would like you to meet James Lampie. This is Jerome," she continued, as he stepped forward to shake hands with a black man.

"And this is Lee and White Cloud."

Everyone politely exchanged the usual greetings. The three naked men, all extremely well developed and good looking. He

was then introduced to the only woman.

"And this is my assistant, Atan."

"How do you do," he said, taking her hand in his.

"Anyway I can," she answered, as everyone laughed.

He stared at her seeing a blonde Nata. They were identical in every way.

"Excuse my staring," he said.

"That's alright, you get used to it when you're identical twins. Although my hair color is real."

"Now deary," interrupted Nata. "You behave."

"I think our guest needs to see the Game Room," said Atan.

"Yea it's great, you'll love it," said one of the men.

"I thought some of it was scary," said another.

"I was there to protect you," said the black man, amidst a few chuckles from the rest.

"Want to try it?" asked Nata.

"Sure, sounds like fun," he answered.

"Oh it's fun alright," came a voice from the group.

"Follow me," said Nata.

He followed her toward the woods at the back of the beach, the light from the fire reflecting off her back, revealing the smooth skin and firm leg muscles that had beaten him moments before. Starting to feel aroused, he quickly dismissed it from

his mind, while thinking of his beloved Linda. They pushed into the dense foliage and the darkness of the brush.

"Watch your step," she said as she reached back and took him by the hand again.

As if on signal, small white lights came on lighting a path that wound through the brush. Moments later, he found himself standing in front of a low bright red building. The walls of the building glowing red throwing a red light onto the shrubbery that seemed to surround it.

"Well here we are," she said. "You go in through there."

Approaching the single door in the wall, it slid open.

"I'll see you at the other end, have fun." she continued.

He stepped through the door into a small room, the walls glowing the same red as the outside.

"*Your name please,*" a voice asked.

"It's Lampie."

"*Full name without the it's, if you wouldn't mind.*"

"James Avon Lampie."

"*Welcome to the Game, Mr. Lampie.*"

"And what kind of game are we playing," he asked.

"*It is a game of hunting or be hunted. On the other side of this wall is an assortment of weapons and tools, of which you may chose from. Once your choice is made, you will be*

*required to find your way out of the Game. You will be challenged by numerous enemies and helped by a few friends."*

*"How will I determine who is the enemy?"*

*"That is part of the Game. During your adventure, it will seem completely real, however I can assure you that it is strictly an illusion. Once the Game begins you can not quit, except if your killed."*

**"KILLED?"**

*"As in illusion. Remember to win you need to find your way out and there are many paths of escape."*

The walls disappeared and he found himself standing in the middle of a large field. Turning around, there stood a black horse amongst a large assortment of what appeared as old fashion swords, axes and shields. Walking over to the horse, he reached out and rubbed its nose. It seems tame enough he thought. Then reaching down he picked up a large sword, swinging it around and feeling the balance, noticing that for an illusion it was extremely sharp.

Before he had a chance to search through the rest of the equipment, the sound of hooves spun him around. Coming straight for him were three men on horseback dressed in wild looking furs and all waving weapons. Quickly he grabbed up the sword, and a bow with a quiver of arrows. Heading for the horse, he stopped in mid stride and for some reason, something told him

that to run wasn't the best course. Dropping the sword he picked up the bow and placing an arrow into it fired blindly at the closing horsemen. As if by magic the wildly shot arrow corrected its flight and struck the lead horseman, knocking him off the horse. He repeated the shot, this time actually taking aim and again the arrow found its mark, hitting the second man. The third rider reigned in his mount while throwing a javelin at him that passed close over his head. Pulling back the string on the bow for a third shot, the last horseman sat there with out moving, staring at him. Dropping the aim of the bow, he waited to see what the man would do. Instead of charging him, the horseman laughed, turned away and galloped his horse of into the nearby woods.

The bow was one hell of a weapon he thought, checking the quiver and counting only four more arrows. Both of the men he had shot had disappeared, which made retrieving the shot arrows a little difficult.

Picking up the sword, he placed it in a sheath on the saddle. Searching through the rest of the equipment, he wished they had provided him with a pair of pants. He wasn't a stranger to horses or riding them, although this would be the first time he rode one in the nude. Finding a dagger and a javelin, he tied the bow to the back of the saddle. The dagger came with a sheath and a string to tie it around his waist.

Holding onto the javelin, he mounted the stallion. To carry any more would be cumbersome, he thought as he reigned the horse toward the open field. The horse seemed to have other ideas as it turned toward the woods.

"Whoa boy, your going the wrong way," as he pulled back on the reigns. Again, he urged the horse into the open field and again the horse refused.

"Ok, we are going to make a big assumption here, that you are a friend," giving the horse its head. Crossing the field, the horse plunged into the woods following a well worn path. Slowing its gait, he noticed ahead were a couple of men and a woman, walking along the path toward them dressed in rags. Reigning up the horse in front of them, the woman giggled.

"Aye say, what do we have here, a pervert on a horse?" one of the men said, as he pulled out a sword.

Lowering the javelin, he pointed it at the man. The other man moved sideways also dragging a sword out from out of his clothing.

"Are you challenging me?" he asked.

"The pervert wants to know if he's being challenged," the other man said.

The woman stepping forward and removing her hood, "I'm sorry dear," said Nata. "But there has been a change in plans."

They stood on the beach holding hands while an imaginary breeze blew in off a pretend ocean under a perfect night sky.

"I'm so sorry" she said but we have to return immediately."

"Back to Umretyu," he said smiling.

"Yes I'm afraid so. Apparently a decision has been made."

"Regarding?"

"What they are going to do with you. I'm going to miss you, you are a very nice life."

"Will I ever see you again?"

"No," she said, moisture swelling up in her eyes.

She placed her arms around his neck, pushing her nakedness in to his, their lips touching for a brief moment.

He stared up at the starlit sky. Reaching over for her, he felt the hard concrete patio. He wasn't lying in the sand but was on a chase next to his pool. Startled he looked around and realized where he was. It had gotten dark and a light was coming from their Living Room. One he couldn't remember turning on.

Getting up he walked into the house.

"Don't you look cute," she said.

"Linda, what are you doing here. I thought you were off to Pinehurst for the weekend."

"It was canceled like everything else, haven't you heard the news."

"No I guess not, I fell asleep out at the pool and had the damndest dream.

"Well turn on the TV, that's all that everyone is talking about."

"What is everyone talking about?" he asked as he walked over and turned on the TV.

"The alien ships."

"The what?"

"Listen," she said.

*"Just moments before the firing of the atomic engines on Ciros; three gigantic egg shaped objects appeared outside of the orbit of the planet Neptune. An immediate halt to the firing was ordered. The three objects are definitely ships of some sort whose source is unknown at this time, however it is thought that they must be from another star. Massive amounts of information is coming from these ships as they move toward earth."*

"Isn't it exciting," Linda said. "Just think of what is going to happen to us. Finally, contact with another civilization and one that will have so much to give us. Their technology has to be way ahead of ours. They will have the answers to so much . . . dear?"

"Oh yes, of course . . . sorry I was daydreaming. Excuse me for a minute, would you, while I go and put a pair of pants on."

The End