

EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

By Homer Kizer

Chapter Sixteen

Les Jones, for the first time since he woke, sits in a chair.

Sitting increases Jones' wooziness; sitting causes his thoughts to tumble around, like socks in a clothes dryer, a few missing with each washing. But the wooziness is severe enough to make him want to either lie or sit another minute on the cot.

He's uncomfortable sitting. His back hurts, and his stiff ankles swell, and gas twists his bowels. Yet he feels he has no choice about sitting, about getting up, walking around. It's either sit or vegetate into nothing.

On his cot sit Don Harte, Clay Attla and Bill Swanson. Also in the cell-sized room are Lars, Jabe, Paul Williams, Moses Johns, Mike Ericsson, Bob Bell, and in the doorway, Floyd Cook, making the room hot, its air tainted with the smell of men and diesel, lime and gravel.

Except for him, each of the men wear heavy leather boots and either black or blue jeans, and wool shirts. Several of them wear down vests over doubled shirts and knit longjohns. They sweat while sitting or standing, their little movements producing disproportionate beads that cling together, then drip in rivulets down temples, disappearing into beards. Clay, Paul and Moses lack facial hair and sweat, their darker complexions seemingly able to better handle the heat or the cold or the tension.

Lars says, "The first order of business is a replacement for Hugh. Nominations?"

"Do we have to replace him today? Can't we wait till we see which way the wind's blowing?" Bob Bell asks.

"It ain't gonna blow from no different direction," says Moses. "As soon as this blizzard of paper money caused by the Pipeline subsides, the King'll lose interest in us. He's got bigger problems. This little revolution is all over the West, 'taint just here, we all know that. It has to do with how people conjure up the future. But for now, the wind ain't gonna change directions so we might as well deal with it."

"Moses is right. What we're doing is about regionalism. This country's gonna bust into sections. Has to. We can't be havin' courts in New York tell us when we can kill a wolf or that we can't piss in a creek or wipe our asses on moss." Mike then adds, "Besides, the Feds screw everything up. They don't follow through worth shit. If we just hang on, we can ride out this series of so-called accidents."

"Which one of us will be next? You, Moses? You, Mike? Me? You, Bob?" asks Clay. "I'm in this to the end so I think we need to adopt Les's plan to blow the shit outta Washington. I don't think we can let ourselves be picked off one at a time."

Lars says, "You're forgetting the little problem of we don't have the means."

"And that little problem of bringing on a nuclear winter. With global cooling happening, we really, this far north, can't afford much more of a temperature dip." Bob Bell looks from face to face. "The signs of a global cold front are widespread. Even the national media has picked up the story. Cooler weather is what brought on the '72 and the '75 crop failures in Russia. Growing pack ice here and around Iceland have played havoc with fishermen, you all know that. Shit, the Arctic ice cap grew twelve percent just in the '71-'72 winter, and England has lost nine growing days since the 1950s. So there's real trouble out there if anyone sets off a bomb."

"Maybe we can pollute more and warm everything back up," says Clay.

"Won't happen." Les listens in surprise to himself say, "Carbon dioxide and water vapor are Beer's law limited, meaning that their concentrations are already above where their graphs curve over. Even increasing concentrations won't trap in more heat. So that leaves methane and nitrous oxide as the only atmospheric gases able to trap in more heat. Methane could potentially help as its main source of production is anaerobic bacteria in waterlogged soils, but at some point not much above where we are now, those soils will either flood out or dry up. Either way, the production of methane decreases and aerobic bacteria will consume more methane than is produced, lowering atmospheric levels. And as for nitrous oxide, not much is known, but concentrations are so low that it can't help much."

The ten men all appear silently awed. Moments pass without anyone speaking, moments that become awkward.

"What's a matter?"

"What is beer law? besides something you drink?"

"All of you know Beer's law, don't you? Simply put, it states that absorption equals molar absorptivity times path length times concentration. Assuming path length and molar absorptivity are constant, then absorption is proportional to concentration. The problem is that it doesn't occur linearly. In actuality, absorption curves over. That means as concentration increases, a point is reached where absorption doesn't increase at all. The effect is known and doesn't need explained. And both carbon dioxide and water vapor concentrations are above that point which is easy to see when you graph this."

"When," Lars asks, "did you learn this much chemistry?"

He shrugs his shoulders. He has always known this, hasn't he? He can't remember not knowing this. "The media's obsession with a nuclear winter is a passing fancy. A generation from now, the same newsmen will be obsessed with the oceans heating up because they don't understand the curving over of Beer's law. They need to be worried about heavy mass particle decay, which produces the passage of time through the expansion of space. By using the energy released that now goes into the expansion of space, timelessness can be created, thereby allowing growing seasons to be extended indefinitely."

Again the awkward silence before Paul says, "Getting back to building a nuclear devise. What more do we need? We have pure uranium, nearly a ton of it that we could load on a truck tomorrow."

"You don't need just uranium for a bomb," says Lars. "It has to be refined and we would need a cyclotron to do that, then we would need the knowhow to prevent a chain reaction until time to set it off. We lack both, and I don't envision any of the nuclear powers offering to send help."

"We've had this discussion before." Don shifts positions on the cot. "I think we should use a shaft at Hatcher Pass and build a cyclotron. And making a bomb can't be that difficult. I suspect keeping its size down to deliverable portions would be the greater problem."

For some reason, Les again feels compelled to say, "You don't have to have a cyclotron to separate isotopes. Let me think a second." There's something at the edge of his memory that peeks over like the eyes of a periscope. It's not something he has thought before that he can recall, but something new that feels like old knowledge, like he has always known this but never thought it before. "If, say, you created a gas-metal compound, say reacted uranium with ferric chlorate, the chlorine atoms would pull the positive charge of the iron atom to one side, creating a weak negative charge on its other side, thereby letting the uranium to temporarily bond, then the iron atom could be pulled off with bromine, eventually leaving a U-chlorate. Then run that through an accelerator like a mass spectrometer. A magnetized field would deflect the energized compound. U-235 chlorate would be lighter and wouldn't travel as far as the U-238 chlorate. Both could be collected. Separate collectors. An organic solvent would then react off the chlorine, and you'd have nearly hundred percent U-235. Wouldn't take a lot of equipment or space or time. And you only need a few pounds, five or so, I'd have to run the numbers to know how much for sure, might not even be anywhere near that much, to get enough critical mass to produce a megaton blast. With a mass spec type unit the size of," he points to one of the bookcases, "you could produce an ounce or more of U-235 a day. There'd be some shielding problems. Sterility, probably, for whoever was emptying the collector. Cancer down the line."

Once again, all ten of the other Committee members stare at Les as if they can't believe what they just heard.

The silence extends for first fractions of a second, then a second, seconds, then a minute, two minutes, three.

"What's a matter? Did I not say that right? You'd use magnesium bromide to do the pulling— "

"Les, stop." Lars asks, "When did you learn anything about chemistry? This is twice, three times now that you've said things we know you didn't know before you went for a swim."

"I don't know. I can't remember not knowing this."

"Your daughter's right," says Bob Bell, who once taught Chemistry and Physics at Fairbanks' Sacred Heart Academy, "he has been touched by God. What he proposed is a type of gaseous separation that would be cheap and relatively easy."

Lars asks, "Do you understand what he said?"

"A little. He would make a gas compound of uranium, energize it, then run it through a magnetic field to deflect the molecules, with the lighter molecules retaining less energy so they wouldn't travel as far as the heavier molecules, the three neutron difference enough that there would be very little cross contamination. Theoretically, we achieve the pure isotope."

"Would it work? I guess what I'm asking is it doable?"

"I dunno. Should. Might. Very little work has been done on metal-gas compounds so there isn't much to go on."

Also indicating the bookcase, Lars asks, "This isn't something he read in a Chemistry book?"

"Classified maybe, but not one that the university's bookstore sells. I'd say that this is new knowledge."

Lars turns to Les, "I don't know what to say. Maybe Zoe is right. Maybe God has gifted you to supply what we need. You think?"

"I don't know about being gifted, but I can see the equations, the force vectors, the polarities in my mind. I know what the equipment looks like, how to modify what's on the market, but I don't see any good way to shield it so it's safe."

"Cancer might be the least of our concerns... you'd be the one who would have to build the bomb. Do you know how?"

He considers the question, then says, "A simple device would amount to nothing more than a female cone-shaped receptor of U-235, a rod extending out of the receptor, and a male cone-shaped head. An explosive charge. The charge would need to be large enough to drive the male into the female with sufficient force to excite the isotope and start a chain reaction... it'd be more a matter of doing it than knowing how. That's the easy part."

"What would you need in the way of equipment and time?"

"We'd need a machine shop, probably a megawatt generator, and privacy. Time, I don't know. Maybe a month."

"I'll see if I can get you that much time." Then turning to the rest of the Committee, Lars asks, "What about proceeding with actually building a bomb?"

"The King ain't gonna like it, but I'm in favor of it."

Clay says, "Moses, you'd be in favor of blowing up Anchorage."

"Los Anchorage, L.A. North, the Zoo," says Mike. "That might not be such a bad idea."

"Setting the joking aside, this is deadly serious business," says Lars. "A lot of lives are at stake."

"Ours or theirs?" asks Paul.

"Do you have anything to say, Jabe?" asks Lars.

Jabe shakes his head. He can't really believe he's party to this insanity. He can't imagine what Erika will say when he tells her about her father's plan to blow up the world. He will have to tell her. This, like the traincar loads of razorwire, isn't something he can keep to himself.

"If there are no objections, then we'll proceed. Bob, I want you to work with Les. Clay, can you put them and the ore together somewhere close to power?"

Clay nods. "There's a Bible college— you all know the one— that'll work. Nobody'd think much if they ordered in some additional teaching supplies, whatever we'd need."

"Then, Gentlemen, let's leave here and forget about this Gravel Creek claim. The Feds will send in tour buses as much traffic as there has been in & out of here. And let's not plan on meeting again till we can deliver an ultimatum to Washington."

Murmured agreement circling the room bumps against Les, almost knocks him out of his chair, then ricochets away. The murmuring continues in the open portion of the hangar, then outside where it spreads and divides, reforms, but divides again like a glacial stream, the calving ice above it cracking, banging, booming like mountain thunder, the melted ice rippling over mud and stone, depositing placer gold, flakes and nuggets that may someday gild a book about revolution.

After everyone except Lars has flown out, Lars returns to where Les still sits. "How do you feel?"

"Like there's something I'm not remembering."

"You didn't remember that Chemistry. That's new knowledge. So what do you think? Is God for us? Apparently He is."

"Why for us and not for Washington?"

"As you know, with Him covenant-breaking is a big deal— and the Feds have broken a covenant with us, with all of its citizens living in the West."

"Aren't we also breaking one?"

"If you don't want to do this, you don't have to."

"No, this has to be done."

"You used to be eager— "

"I remember that, but why me? Why should God give me this knowledge, not you?"

"Dunno— dunno what to say."

"This is obviously of God." Pointing with his open hand at the bookcase, he says, "I completed high school. I shouldn't know what I do. How do you explain that? except to give God the credit."

"If you were to preach and build a congregation of many thousand, a great cathedral, have a healing ministry, you wouldn't hesitate to give God the credit, would you? This is the same except in the political arena. He's in charge of the affairs of men, of where they spend eternity, or whether they are free or slave. You know that. So give thanks that we, you, have been given the tools necessary to ensure that we remain free."

"Right now, I don't know this God."

"That's what's troubling you, isn't it?"

"Except for Joshua and Caleb, none of the nation that left slavery entered God's rest. Unbelief killed them all, just as it killed Adam— just as it will kill us if we don't really believe in what we have set out to do. And right now, I don't know what to believe."

"Your faith has taken a broadside. But consider that this is a tremendous manifestation of the Holy Spirit, an anointing of the highest kind, so give thanks to Christ."

"Where is Christ in who has nuclear weapons, who doesn't?"

"He's in you. It's Christ who taught you that Chemistry while you slept."

He shakes his head: "How can you know? How can I know?"

"This is a sermon you've delivered many times— you have to learn to recognize the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This one would be recognized by all of Christendom, even the Pope."

"There still seems like I'm forgetting something."

"To give thanks for the anointing. What you said was truly anointed teaching."

"Ensured destruction? When we build this bomb, people will die. We'll have to use it."

"We're created for honor or for dishonor, for heaven or for hell. Who are we to question Christ about how He uses us?"

"Right now none of this makes sense... and we're created for righteousness. What does that mean, *righteousness*?"

"How else can you explain your knowledge of how to build a bomb?"

"I can't."

"Again, think of your anointed knowledge of nuclear bombs as directly analogous to knowing how to raise up and minister to a large congregation. Both are gifts from Christ. Just as is the gift of healing.... We have different gifts, but we're all part of the same body."

"One blown all to hell."

"Or to heaven. When Christ comes again, we'll be caught up in the clouds and will be with Him where He is. Heaven awaits those who believe Christ died for us, then confess the same with their mouth."

"But He's going to be here, where we just blew the world apart, when He returns. He isn't returning to heaven. He prepares the Earth for the new Jerusalem— for the Father, who can't abide sin, to come here."

"Yeah, but— "

"You see the problem. It isn't only Chemistry that I know. We don't ever go to heaven."

"That's a doctrine of demons— "

"Then who gave me the knowledge of how to build a bomb?"

Lars doesn't know how to answer; so he asks, "What about summer lasting forever? Crops growing yearround?"

"The conditions of a paradox— timelessness. What is must exist with what will be. What is growing continues to grow for it cannot die. Life and death cannot coexist. So crops grow and can be harvested indefinitely... why are we doing this other thing?"

Again Lars doesn't know how to answer, so instead of speaking, he listens to the drone of the generator, its aluminum hearts throbbing inside its cast iron chest, its hardened valves clattering softly as hydraulic lifters push in and out as if the two cylinder engine were having an affair with itself.

Finally, Lars says, "Rather than flying out, I thought we'd take the Nodwell, take you by the latest uranium blossom we found. They're pretty. An orange flower clicking away death. And to think that God created them just for us, or it seems so."

He has nothing to say. How is he to know the mind of God? when he has been given the means by God for destroying all life.

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