

Jon Hersey – Family Man

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Preface

A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles

Christopher Reeve

It all started - 1993

Two men were charged with the task of developing new methods for use in clandestine operations. These new methods were to provide the skills to accomplish assignments without anyone knowing an agent was there - like ghosts. Their research included movies, books, college thesis, field agent interviews, situation reports, retired agent interviews, and comic books. Their two year project report was submitted to their risk-adverse section chief who was under intense scrutiny for two failed field operations within the past year. Their 47 page report was strategically mis-filed in an archived, retired agent's personnel file and the document scrubbed from the computer system.

The two report authors, believed to have been idling for the project's duration, were reduced in grade and transferred to basement jobs. Their careers were poisoned by a section chief who is the illustration next to the definition of the Peter Principle.

Daryl Alexander and Peter Stone left the CIA after 12 years of service, two of which were lost (much like their 47 page report). Daryl went to work for an uncle as an insurance agent. Peter used an inheritance from a favorite aunt to buy the first of seventeen businesses over the next six years.

It was 2005, over dinner with a close friend, Undersecretary of State Albert Hollier, when Peter learned that a surprising 1.3% of small businesses supplying the government, are suspected of illegal sales or service to "the enemy". The GSA, short on resources, has enough staff to inspect only the big businesses.

In 2006 Peter founded Zeta Consulting Group. Daryl was Zeta's first employee. Daryl arrived at Peter's home with their 47 page report.

Peter's 17 small businesses, ranging from \$12M to \$142M annually, provide the funding for the private clandestine operation that is known only to its employees. The nine employees of Peter, Daryl, Anna, three investigators, and three "disrupters" make up the Zeta family.

Initially Peter did investigating to find the criminal companies. Daryl accepted and excelled at finding the specific individual(s) responsible for the anti-American activities then disrupting their lives without leaving a trace of their involvement. Daryl's communication, analytical, and people skills made him the logical choice for employee recruiting.

They quickly discover the need for a well educated specialist in computers, science, and all things forensic. Anna was found when she was the only applicant to respond to their classified ad:

Wanted, a computer know-it-all. On-call 24-7. Top 1% of class. Enjoys complex problem solving with critical time restrictions. Reports to demanding boss.

Anna's application contained an essay, with attachments, on how she hacked:

- the classified ads database to discover who placed and paid for the ad
- her college's computer to acquire copies of her transcripts
- the databases of all Peter's companies to determine how much he paid himself
- Peter's home computer just to show it could be done

She also sent a copy of her 207 page doctoral thesis "Artificial Intelligence - Green Thinking - Natural Living" which according to the synopsis is the " ... application of artificial intelligence and research to discover the natural plants and organisms which ease, reverse, or cure chronic diseases."

The last piece of her application was a photograph of Anna in a wheel chair labelled - "Paraplegic. Skiing accident 37 months ago." Taped on the back was the hometown newspaper article describing her courage to "move on" with a picture receiving her doctorate degrees in computer sciences, and organic chemistry.

As their skills at finding the target companies and executing disruptions improved, additional investigators and disrupters were hired.

One of Peter's companies, Arc Systems, having problems with fast growth, and wanting to provide assistance for a recently promoted President, hired a business analysis firm to help it through the difficult times. Biz Planners LLC sent their most capable Analyst / Consultant ... Jon Hersey. Jon's unique style, quick and clever adaptation to new data, accelerated the recovery. Peter was very pleased ... and impressed. Jon's name was forwarded to Daryl ...

Today

Four months after his resignation dinner with Paul, Jon is still on-the-job for Biz Planners - 32 days past their agreed resignation date. The physical drain of flying was complicated by fitting all the demanding schedules together of Zeta Consulting Group, Biz Planners LLC, and Cincinnati Studios Schooling.

Four Zeta disruptions in Philadelphia, Toledo, Oakland, and Seattle were spaced out to accommodate travel for Biz Planners. Peter Stone was now starting to hint it was time to move-on.

Paul Tyler, owner of Biz Planners LLC, was taking advantage of Jon's good nature and friendship. Paul was demanding Jon's attendance on visits to customers, and every interaction with Fly Fishing Wholesale Group. It appeared Paul was dragging his feet finding Jon's replacement. Jon, needing to help Michelle with Cincinnati Studios Schooling, gave Paul a new final last day - three Fridays out.

Michelle is doing her job well: - nine new students, - applying for accreditation, - finding a second location, - developing tutor interview and testing programs, - and finishing the student reward systems. However, the newness is wearing off the new job, and her time is totally consumed by the coffee cart, tutoring, night classes, growing CSS, office manager responsibilities, ... and sleeping 4 to 5 hours per day.

Each of Jon's "families" are struggling because of Jon's ultra busy schedule: - Biz Planner wants more time to ease the transition to the future analyst / consultant, - Zeta is scheduling some of Jon's disruptions with other disrupters, - and Michelle is unfairly being taxed by the added responsibility of a business growing faster than expected.

Jon growing weary from the physically demanding schedule, and the mental gymnastics of keeping Zeta discussions from Paul and Michelle, needs a weekend to re-charge. Jon contacts Peter and Daryl, then Paul asking for a no-calls-mini-vacation this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. They all agree and thank Jon for his efforts. Now Jon begins to worry about the next call ... to Michelle. He could hear the strain in her voice the past 10 days, and it made him feel guilty for not being there. He was about to call when her email message found its way to his computer...

Partners

In four months, give or take, the business relationship between Michelle, Cincinnati Scintillating Sinnamon owner, and Jon, Cincinnati Studios Schooling owner, has become one of trust, integrity, and friendship. Michelle has proven she can handle any obstacle and solve any problem, except the need for two more hours each day. Michelle's day starts at 7 AM selling "Everything Sinnamon", - then at 2 PM she begins her five hours of tutoring, accounting, projects, and so on as the Office Manager for "everything studios", then night school for 2 to 3 hours, then late dinner and study until after midnight.

For three months the challenge of it all was energizing. Michelle measured her accomplishments and deposited the extra pay check. Now she is starting to have doubts about the tutoring part of her life. Does she really need the extra money? She did ok before, and was not so tired. And, Jon has promised to be available full-time after his resignation, which was just re-scheduled again.

Then the Cincinnati newspaper article in the Sunday Money section wrote about her, Michelle Silasa. The article, page two, half a page, focused on the unique teaching methods and style, the impending accreditation, clever study / reward system, growth from Saturdays only to four nights per week, the average 3x improvement in student performance at school, the development of student good study habits, and Michelle's crazy schedule starting with the coffee cart and ending with college homework. The last line of the article came from the tip bucket at the cart - Please generously give to a poor college student that needs to buy books, pay tuition, and eat. Tutoring i\$ extra.

Jon proofread the article before publishing, insisted he not be mentioned, and advised the writer that Michelle's title was vice president of operations. The euphoria wore off a few weeks later, but her attachment to Cincinnati Studios Schooling was strong. *[Can not leave now. So how do I solve the time crunch]*. She had two days to think of a solution which she would propose to Jon at their random Saturday dinner meeting.

These dinner meetings were something to look forward to. Always at the best restaurants, Michelle and Jon dressed for business, and their "meeting" turned into good conversation, good food, and great company. On a couple occasions they walked out with the staff at closing time. Jon, always a gentleman, made sure Michelle was safe at home before returning to his hotel room.

Michelle's email message to Jon - "see you Saturday 7-ish PM. I have found a new restaurant which specializes in authentic Italian food, not the Americanized stuff. I need to discuss proposal for your consideration. My Best, Michelle."

Re: - "Michelle, I had planned to spend weekend in Empire, but am curious about your proposal and will rest in Cincinnati. Please arrange reservation at Riverside Business Apartments and Suites. Best regards, Jon."

Jon arrives in Cincinnati at 8:43 PM - drives to his reserved "business apartment" - walks over to White Castle for sliders - takes a hot shower, - and goes to sleep about midnight.

For the first time since Alissa's death, Jon has dreams of Alissa. Not just dreams ... Vivid dreams ... Dreams that startle the observer from a cold sweat and make them afraid to go back to sleep ... Alissa met Jon at "their" bluff - she was dressed in a white dress shirt and white jeans - perhaps an angel without wings - she glowed from some force behind her - Alissa whispered "it's time you take care of yourself" - the dream replayed over and over in his mind ... until the alarm went off. Jon's bed shirt was soaked.

Jon decided he should do different activities to get the rest he needed. He started the day with breakfast in the cafe across the parking lot, spent the morning enjoying two art museums, had lunch at a sports bar showing the local hockey team on the 21 televisions, and the afternoon was spent photographing interesting architecture in downtown Cincinnati.

Jon returned to the "apartment" to dress for his meeting with Michelle. He drove to Michelle's apartment, went to her door to escort her to the car, opened the car door on the passenger side, then drove to the authentic Italian restaurant.

The business discussions go well - everything is working out - Michelle is struggling with the time commitments - might need to hire another tutor and rent another space - cash flow is good - margins are better than expected ... The food is very good. Michelle continues to impress and entertain Jon with her grasp of the business. The business

portion of the evening ends and is replaced by tales of old boyfriends, old girl friends, life in high school, favorite professors, fly fishing ...

At 11:30, the restaurant owner delivers two coffees to their table and informs them the restaurant is closing, but he is happy to stay as long as they want. They casually finish the coffee, leave a large tip, and receive hugs from the owner Walking back to the car, Jon asks what was it Michelle wanted to talk about?

- "oh, I forgot. I was enjoying the evening so much ... I am thinking about selling the cart. My time is being consumed by the cart, tutoring, running CSS, and school. I've max'd out the carts potential and see a better future at Studious Schooling. I want to invest the money from the cart sale into Studious Schooling and be a partner."

- "interesting proposal. What do you think the market is for Sinnamon? We will have to establish a value for Studious."

- "Daryl was in again on Wednesday. Third time in four weeks. Stopped by to say hello. He commented on my tired appearance, and suggested I give up something. I am trying to get the best situation for me and Studious. Studious could use a full time manager, I can make more money expanding Studious, I will have less stress, and we could use the money to expand into another area ... I think I can sell the cart for \$27,000."

- "your time setting up the company and dealing with the growth has value also."

- "what are you saying?"

- "partner ... tell me what your cart plus labor equity is worth. Let's value Studious together."

Michelle had been prepared for a longer debate / spin / sales job. She was elated by Jon's quick favorable response. She hugged him ... And kissed him ... "thank you!" Jon caught off guard, had a sense of guilty pleasure - enjoyable, but wondered what Alissa would think?" Michelle caught up in the moment, grabs Jon's upper arm and holds on as they walk to the car.

After dropping Michelle at her apartment, Jon in an attempt to avoid another vivid dream, drove around Cincinnati for a while

Synthetic Plague

Closed chemical process plants are man's answer to controlling creation. Every, every, detail is scrutinized and crafted. The maze of pipes, valves, vessels, and motors are designed to turn natural gas into something else: - polyethylene, polypropylene, nylon, ... Qentex7. Redundant motors, long radius pipe bends to reduce back pressure and wear, special welding wire to match the composition of the pipe steel, every weld is x-rayed to insure it is free of voids, and every weld is honed to match the pipe's inside diameter. Oil field veterans tell of high pressure ... steel ... pipelines splitting open for miles from improperly welded joints. A well tuned system can account for every

milligram of material. It's a thing of beauty when it functions properly ... It's a cantankerous dragon when the parameters are upset.

Qentex7 is a new light-weight military grade explosive that is extremely stable. It will not explode when struck by bullets, cannon shells, tank weapons, or missiles. Special coiled caps attached to timers, or remote devices, are needed to set-it-off. A single ounce creates a crater twenty feet deep by forty feet in diameter. It makes a big boom when it is detonated. Qentex7 is the latest invention of Chem-Productx.

Military branches are purchasing Qentex7 in five pound cases of ten half pound cakes. Base warehousing is receiving the cases by count - 200 cases per pallet.

Chem-Productx employees are required to wear Tyvek jumpsuits, safety goggles, and respirators. Respirator cartridges are changed every-week. During processing, exposure to precursor chemicals can create a condition called "synthetic plague" where lungs are scarred. Three hours after exposure the patient needs oxygen. Four weeks after exposure, the patient is dead. There is no known cure, or antidote, for Synthetic Plague. Normal Qentex7 processing is within a safe closed system of pipes and vessels; however, without a respirator, the tiniest flange leak can lead to four weeks of hell.

Armed security walks the fenced plant location. Video surveillance covers every square inch of the facility, except the employee locker rooms.

Donald Seastrim, recently appointed company president, discovered the amount of material input into the system is more than the material shipped plus waste by just under 0.55%. Donald knows the criminal consequences of not accounting for every ounce of military explosive material. His first instinct is to call his former Arlington, Virginia neighbor ... Daryl Alexander.

- "Daryl, Donald Seastrim here."
- "Donald, how's the family?"
- "Don junior got a basketball scholarship to Xavier, and Amy graduated with a degree in architecture. Helen went back to work and is loving it."
- "its been too long. I miss our neighborhood bar-be-ques, and those chrome tipped boots of yours - you still an Aggie's fan?"
- "Maroon and white, all the way! ... Say, I have just been appointed president of Chem-Productx and I think I have discovered a problem that requires a professional investigator. I recall you were involved in law enforcement and hoped you could recommend someone."

... Daryl has been working this disruption in Columbus, Ohio the past six days. Daryl's disruption objective is to uncover how the thief is stealing one tenth ounce per cake on average ... And where it is going.

Daryl, Chem-Productx' new Director of Quality Assurance and Compliance, spent his first day filling out paperwork and attending safety classes. Day two was job training, some in-plant safety exercises, and schematics of the quality system measurement devices. Day three, he started earning his pay. Left to himself to monitor the monitoring system. Daryl, looking official with the clipboard and safety uniform, begins planning which cameras he will tap and when is the best time to install the coil transmitters. On the outside, the transmitters are marked as "Video Noise Reduction Transformer", but on the inside they are state-of-the-art electronic wonders - low power, twenty day, high output, induction bugging devices that filter out noise then transmit it's collected data to a receiver up to 0.9 mile.

From his after hours tours of the area, Daryl has determined he will need to plant a signal booster / repeater. The nearest available living space is 2.2 miles from the dragon's location. The boosted signal can now be received at his new un-humble abode at 43761 Hope Lane. His temporary home has a room without windows where he sets-up the three large monitors that will each display up to six camera feeds, and the large storage server to hold the camera feeds for viewing later. ... The coil transmitters will be installed tomorrow.

When Daryl enters the control room, both operators point to the door that is access to the "stove pipe" - the narrow area without air-conditioning behind the control room where all the wires, hoses, tubes, circuit boards, RF receivers, and video cables are pinched together and producing heat. Daryl is happy the wire, tubes, and cables are well marked. Installing the transmitters takes eight minutes. As he leaves the stove-pipe, one operators says, "you lasted longer in there then the last guy. Welcome to Chem-Productx."

Daryl's evenings and nights are take-home food and fast forwarding through the footage of eighteen cameras looking for the slightest deviation from procedure. Two nights of nothing so far. The weekend starts tomorrow.

At 3:12 PM, the motor service technician arrives at the entrance gate for weekly maintenance. After the security check, he parks in the space provided for vendors, lifts his large metal tool box out of the back of the van, presses the intercom button, then enters the building before the buzzer stops. Daryl watches the whole gate-to-buzzer episode go from camera to camera - because quite frankly - it's more entertaining than the other stuff. Daryl quickly realizes that the receiving area has no video surveillance.

The properly dressed technician shows up on mini-screen marked 12A six minutes later. Something is different, but Daryl can not quite resolve his concern. The tech pulls a gas sensor out of the plastic toolbox, waives the sensor near the motor flanges. He completes the maintenance procedure on the idle motor, flips the start button on the redundant motor, then presses the red stop button so he can service the other motor. It is during the maintenance on motor set #2 that Daryl realizes the tool box is different.

Daryl gathers his employee badge and keys as he leaves the monitors to get a closer look at this technician. The drive, security check, and safety clothing takes 22 minutes. With the clipboard prop, Daryl estimates the technician is on motor set #4. He turns right when exiting the locker room and nearly runs into the technician getting a drink of water. Daryl spends twenty minutes "doing his Chem-Productx job" before determining the tech's position. Again, he almost collides into the technician working on the separator vessel motors. *[could I have worse luck!!!]*. Daryl moves ahead to motor set #7 to watch the technician from behind the the pipe rack. Nothing worthwhile appears to be happening. Daryl decides to check motor sets #6 and #5 on his way back to the locker room. At motor set #6, there is a surging noise and the temperature readout on the precursor tower is 12 degrees higher than normal. As taught in the safety class, Daryl jiggles his respirator to insure it is tight around his nose, chin, and cheeks. Looking down at the motor's discharge flange, Daryl can see a misty stream of precursor exiting the flange gasket. Within seconds he notices a sweet paint thinner aroma has filled his respirator. Recalling his safety training ... THIS IS BAD!!!! ... He pulls the alarm then races to the safety showers. After ten minutes in the neutralizing solution, Daryl inspects his respirator to find a faux cartridge made from a home heater filter.

Per company policy, everyone exposed to chemicals at the plant must spend 24 hours under a doctor's care. Three hours after his room assignment his labored breathing is noticed by the nurse. After placing the breathing tube, the nurse leaves to find the doctor. Daryl calls Peter Stone ...

Family

Jon's schedule is starting to slow down. He arranges an over-night layover in Cincinnati to surprise Michelle. At 6:30 AM, he leaves the hotel to walk over for a large-Sinamon-Italian-mocha-coffee. As he enters the lobby, he meets Mark Dayton.

- "Jon how is the tutoring business? Nice article in the paper about three weeks ago."
- "what a surprise! Best marketing money we never spent. How's the family?"
- "kids can bounce back from nearly anything. We took them to a specialist who said it would take a year to ease their minds. Three weeks later they were playing little league, chasing girls, and back at school. Karen got involved with the ladies at church and is quilting her way to healing. The person I am concerned about is Sally Walters. She has taken this pretty hard. I hired an extra person so she is not alone in the store. She is refusing help from a specialist."
- "hope Sally can move-on soon. Good to hear everyone else is ok."
- "say, I have two tickets to the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Fundraising Extravaganza. We can not go. It is fun, good food, a nice evening, it's this Saturday night, and for you - it's free. Take Michelle, she needs a break from that schedule."
- "good idea. Glad I ran into you."

As he approaches the cart he can see Michelle's engaging smile and his usual coffee drink.

- "what a surprise!! I am happy to see you. Why didn't you call?"
- "I found a couple spare moments in my schedule and thought I would stop by to see if I can help."
- "oh, when are you leaving?"
- "tonight at 7:43. But... I'll be back on Saturday. How about something different this Saturday?"
- "what did you have in mind?"
- "I have two tickets to the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Extravaganza. It's a black tie fundraiser event. I hear it's the place to be this Saturday."
- "I feel like Cinderella - dinner, dancing, formals, handsome escort - I'm in. Oh ... and it's my birthday."

Jon spends his morning going over the books to develop a fair method for valuing the company. After a long lunch, the afternoon is spent with Michelle going over projects and where Jon can help out. The clock chimes four times, Jon has to catch his flight for a one day training class with two new business analysts at Biz Planners, ... and Michelle has a student.

Saturday mid-morning - Michelle has tried on two business suits and three dresses. She is still wrestling with what she wants to say with her clothes - is she a successful business woman, or is she going to impress with her fashion sense? What she really wants is the black pant-dress with the flowing legs and waist length jacket that is wonderfully displayed on the mannequin. After 10 minutes of bartering to remove the clothes from the mannequin, Michelle will be the successful business woman with fashion sense.

Jon arrives at Michelle's apartment, dressed in full black tie tuxedo with two exceptions: - the lapels of the jacket are an explosion of tropical flowers, - and Alissa's Angel pin on the right lapel. Michelle opens the door in her new black pant-dress, jacket, and Angel pin on the left lapel. As Jon extends his elbow, "you look wonderful!". As Michelle places her arm through the elbow, "you look pretty good too!"

They checkout the silent auction items for some office decor. Place a few bids, then monitor the bid sheets. Michelle manages to take another trip by the jewelry table to admire a necklace made by a local glass artist. The heart shaped piece purposely contained bubbles which reflect light like a prism. The outer edge was a thin pure crimson color, the rest of the piece was clear with the exception of the small crimson heart just slightly off-center. There are five names on the bid sheet: - Michelle Silasa at minimum bid of \$250, - Erin Blackman at \$275, - Margie Colman at \$315, - Erin Blackman at \$335, - Hon Jersey at \$500. *[Hon must really want this to jump the bid that far. Oh well.]*

The silent auction closes with three high bids out of the six items. They find their seats with time to meet their table mates before dinner is served. After desert, the dance floor is cleared. Jon and Michelle continue talking at the table.

- "it must be nice to receive a birthday card from your mom."

- "it is. She has had a hard life, but she never burdens anyone with it. She just plugs along singing-a-happy-tune. She was a mom: - dedicated her life to raising me and an older brother, - school lunches, - helping us with homework and study habits, - making costumes for school plays, - fundraiser cookies, - kept us quiet in church, ... Made my 'father's' lunch each day, did his wash, ironed his clothes, put him through college with odd jobs, and he left her ... the day I left home for college. Now she struggles to make a living. No college ... She was busy being mom. Now she has nothing to fall back on. Mom is still madly in love with my 'father'; and, I think she is waiting for him to change."

- "do you have any contact with your father?"

- "if you don't count the one time he helped with my chemistry homework ... Eight years. My 'father' is an ok guy who is an ultra-focused, brilliant bio-chemist, searching for the formula that will add his name to the history books. Any deviation from him thinking about his work turns him into a raging madman whose tongue can cut a child deeply. His temper and focus make him a horrible people person. He can not keep staff. Consequently, he has to do his own books and reports. He is always out of money and late on his reports ... Whoa, enough about my parents, tell me about yours..."

- "they were soul-mates. Always winking to each other, holding hands, talking late at night on how to raise two sons, never a raised voice between them. My brother and I did manage to alter their volume occasionally. On weekends we did everything together: - swimming, yard work, camping, high school ball games, wash cars, skiing, indoor games on snow days. We planned and voted on summer vacation ... They struggled adjusting to the life without Matthew, after he was killed by a hit-and-run driver - but their love helped them deal with the loss. Then three years later they died in a tour bus with bad brakes."

- that's so sad. I am sorry."

-"thank you.... How did you get interested in business?"

- "my senior year I worked for Gorge Recreational Products in Lebanon, Ohio. Don was like a second father: - including me in his family's activities, giving me dating advise, paid for my senior ball gown. I was fascinated by their enthusiasm for quality and clever solutions to manufacturing problems. It was fun!"

- "Still see your brother?"

- "he was shot in an undercover investigation of a car theft ring. He died on the way to the hospital. He was my protector. He "interviewed" and threatened my dates. ... Is it ok to talk about Alissa?"

- "we met in high school. Fell in love in college. Married our junior year. We "click": - we can finish each other's sentences, - we have similar interests, - we are "orphans" in that we only have each other. She gave me the Angel pin when we learned her cancer had won." (Michelle notices Jon talks of Alissa as if she were alive).

- "mom gave me my Angel pin last Christmas. It came with an embossed card - I will always watch over you. My life changed when I pinned the Angel on my collar: - I

bought the cart, started tutoring, met a nice guy named Jon, and soon I'll to be a business partner."

- "dance?" ...

The announcement to pick-up the silent auction items is given by the dance band. Jon pays for the three items bid on by Michelle and the glass necklace bid on by Hon Jersey. He hands the black velvet lined box to Michelle - "Happy Birthday!". She slowly opens the box, as if in a dream. She enjoys the moment, then kisses Jon on the cheek - "thank you, it's beautiful!!" Jon takes the necklace out of the velvet box and places it around Michelle's neck. Even the guys are enjoying this

Jon drives Michelle home. At her door she grasps both Jon's hands, then kisses him - "I had a wonderful time, best birthday so far. Thank you! You are a good man, Jon."

- "I had a great time. Good night!"

Michelle understood ... there **IS** a third person to consider

Jon is filled with a smorgasbord of emotions. He is happy but feels guilty as if breaking his marriage vows. He wants to spend more time in Cincinnati, but his home is in Colorado.

At his room, he falls asleep quickly. His dreams are of Alissa, at their bluff, in the same white dress shirt and white jeans. She is wearing a clear heart necklace with a crimson outer edge. There are flickers of light coming from the clear portion. She softly says, "Jon ... set your heart free." the dream repeats, and repeats, and repeats, and ... Jon's bed shirt was again ... soaking wet

A Good Friend

- "hello Peter."

- "Daryl, unusual time for you to call."

- "there is a high probability that I have synthetic plague. My respirator was tampered with. They, whoever 'they' are, knew I was there. Somehow the motor maintenance man, and his toolbox, is involved. Get Jon to finish this disruption. He should be able to finish after I give Anna my report, hopefully before that nurse gets back."

- "you are in the hospital?!!"

- "with under four weeks before I die. Two weeks before I won't be able to talk. Peter, my friend, you promise me that you will insure I will not live my last two weeks as a cucumber. Peter, you know I would honor your last wish!"

- "Daryl, I will take care of it."

- "I have left a complete log of my activities and findings so far, in my computer bag hidden in a hallway closet. Before I forget tell Jon, there is no video surveillance in Receiving. When I get done here, I will call Anna and give her a situation report."

- "I will get security for your room, in-case they attempt to hurt you more."

- "the doctor is coming back, I'll call you later with details."

Bio-chemist

- "hello Anna."
- "hi Peter, what can I do for you on a Saturday night?"
- "Daryl may have synthetic plague!" (the line is silent for about 20 seconds) "Anna get security for Daryl."
- "synthetic plague is so rare no one is willing to spend time or money on something that happens once in two years. It's a slow death that is more agonizing because of the long time the patient has to think about dying. The precursor does not exactly scar the lungs. It makes the lung's air sacks brittle and they break like a wine glass. Only the air sacks, nothing else in the body is affected. There is a theory if a neutralizer existed, the precursor's progression could be stopped. Any air sacks that have not shattered would become useful after a period of time. I can get a list of bio-chemist together that have skills and education to help. You can do your magic to acquire their cooperation. I need about 45 minutes ..."
- "thanks Anna."

Thirty seven minutes later, Anna emails the bio-chemist list to Peter and calls him on is cell.

- "Peter, are you near your computer? I sent a list of bio-chemist to you seconds ago. Number one is in the Russian interior. Number two is very interesting - it's Dr Philip Silasa, Michelle's father - Jon's Michelle. Dr Silasa is a brilliant mad-man who thinks way outside the box. Number three, Dr Paul Thomas Norton, is with the Department of Defense and with your contacts, maybe you can free up his time. The next two are in Japan."
- "I will go to work on Dr Norton. You find out what you can about Dr Silasa."

- "State Department, how may I help you?"
- "Peter Stone for Undersecretary Albert Hollier."
- "Peter ..."
- "Al ... I need a favor. Daryl is in critical condition from exposure to Qentex7 precursor. We are attempting to develop a neutralizer and need a dedicated bio-chemist yesterday. Dr Paul Thomas Norton is working at the D.O.D. And we would like to "borrow" him ASAP. Do you still have cards you can play at Defense?"
- "Willy still owes us for that drug cartel / tire problem we fixed. I will call you back in a few ..."

The clock reads 00:08 on Peter desk when his phone rings.

- "Peter. Willy has contacted Dr Norton. He is on a C-130 from Honolulu. He was on vacation in Hawaii. Should be here in eight hours. We equipped him with a laptop and a satellite link. He's on the job as we speak."
- "thanks Al. I owe you dinner."

Anna is researching Dr Philip Silasa. Her findings are pretty grim. Four blogs are dedicated to his impossible people skills from those who know him first hand. Yet, at the same time they compliment his brilliant mind. Several of his published papers are on the Internet, others were hacked. She contacts her old organic chemistry professor - "tread lightly, he goes mad at the slightest interruption. It is all about him trying to save the world through chemistry. He is the kind of nut that works from 9 PM to 11 AM"

Anna has what she hopes is enough information to risk a call to Dr Philip Silasa.

- "Dr Philip Silasa. I am Anna Smithson. I would like to hire your services to develop a neutralizer for Qentex7 precursor. Our colleague has been exposed and we are trying to save him."

- "I can not help you. I am in the middle of a contract with another customer. I can help you when I get done with the contract, in about five weeks."

- "Dr Silasa, I would be happy to pay for any resources you need to meet your contract date if you can help me now. Plus double your normal fee."

- "which part of 'when I finish my contract' don't you understand."

- "doctor..., sir..., this is a life and death situation."

- "**call me in four weeks! GOOD BYE**" (the line goes dead).

[maybe I will start a fifth blog!]

Anna calls Peter to update him on Dr Philip Silasa: - it is all about him, - won't even consider it until contract is done, - can you imagine - he has a contract, - what a Peter will "call him later." "we have Dr Norton in transit."

Peter's desk top clock reads 02:37. He decides it's time to call Jon

Jon is asleep and dreaming of Alissa and Michelle. They are at their bluff, Alissa in the white dress shirt with white jeans, and Michelle in her new black pant-dress suit. Alissa hands the clear heart necklace to Michelle. She then turns to Jon to say "time to move on..." Jon's phone wakes him, it's Peter

- "Peter, what's up?"

- "Daryl is in serious condition. He was exposed to some chemicals, and may have less than four weeks to live." (Jon is fully awake)!!

Peter continues: - disruption at chemical plant, - cover blown, - cameras, booster, split screen monitor, - motor maintenance man, - no Receiving area surveillance, - notebook hidden in closet, - tool box, - temporary house, - Anna has more from Daryl, - can not risk another under cover job, - have to find a better way, - bio-chemist in route, - create neutralizer.... "Jon, we need you to takeover Daryl's disruption."

Jon decided he could risk being seen in Daryl's hospital room - whoever did this would not watch the room of a man with no hope of recovery. He would tell Michelle about Daryl's on-the-job accident and hospitalization. Daryl and Michelle had become good

friends - she will want to visit him. *[She can keep me updated on his condition]*.... He schedules a flight to Cincinnati and will drive to Columbus.

On his way to the airport he calls Anna.

- "Anna, Peter says Daryl gave you some info on his disruption."
- "I will send it through the Scrambler."
- "I am going to need you frequently over next couple days. How is your schedule?"
- "one day I will send you the help wanted ad I answered to get this job... I can free up my time to help you."
- "not too many chemistry classes required for a biz degree, what's your assessment of Daryl's chances?"
- "we have the nation's top bio-chemist working on a neutralizer formula. I estimate a 30% chance of success. I know it's not your kind of "certainty" comfort, but that's high for chemistry."
- "I am just leaving Empire. This early morning flight to Cincinnati is usually short of full seating. Can you manipulate the seating so I can have a row to myself?"
- "no problem, my cousin works for flight reservation services ..."

Jon, has a row of seats to himself - and the row behind him is empty. He uses the plane's WiFi to log into the Scrambler. He reads the information twice. Daryl had emphasized: - no cameras in Receiving area, - they knew he was there, - the maintenance technician changed tool boxes, - 'old' friend and neighbor, Donald Seastrom, may be involved. Between Peter and Anna they had given him all the information compiled in the report. Also, sent was a 47 page CIA report titled Operation: Ghost.

If Jon pushed it he could talk to ~~Alissa~~ a..., Michelle before she left on her Sunday morning run. He pulls into the visitor parking space, then walks over to Michelle's apartment. She looks through the peep hole and is shocked *[Jon ... Here on a Sunday ... Very serious looking ... At my apartment without calling ... ???]*. She opens the door as Jon wipes a tear from his eye - "Michelle - Daryl has had an accident at work, and maybe dying."

- "where is he? What happened? How can I help? ... Come-in."
- "I am on my way to Columbus to see what I can do to help."
- "you look like you could use some coffee. Come into the kitchen... I can close the cart tomorrow and we have no students on Monday's. I want to go with you to see him. I can take the bus back if you need to stay."
- "Daryl is a new, but close friend. He is a rare man. I need to find out ...what happened."
- "I can be ready in about half an hour. Make yourself at home."

An antsy Jon, looks at the framed photos, the CD titles, souvenirs, cherished keepsakes, magazines, then sits on the sofa. About fifteen minutes later, Michelle is shaking his shoulder - "maybe I should drive!"

The drive to Columbus is quiet. Michelle drives, Jon sleeps. When they arrive, Jon puts on a cap and sunglasses. They are directed to the fourth floor intensive care quarantine area. Daryl is sleeping and his breathing can be heard through the intercom. Jon recognizes the instruments from his dad's short one day after the bus crash. All his vital signs are normal, except his oxygen is low. "Can you stay here. It would be good for him to see your smiling face. He is quite fond of you. I want to go to his house and see if everything is ok." - "yes, go ... "

Michelle began thinking about Daryl's visits to the office. He was such a natural conversationalist. Talking to him was enjoyable, and always a pleasure. Jon and Daryl had a special bond ... like a father and son. Michelle knew what it was like to be without a father. A father so focused on his bio-chemistry career and getting his name in the history books. A father so focused ..."

Michelle takes a cab from the hospital to the Dr M.A. Bernelie Chemistry for Life Center. The M was for Margret and the A for Anne. Margret Anne was the single heir of the wealthy Bernelie family. The family responsible for importing 80% of the medicinal teas sold in Europe and America. Margret graduated from college with a degree in chemistry and a love for the business of healing teas.

Out back was the secluded lab of one Dr Philip Silasa ... Michelle's father. Margret tolerated Dr Silasa because he could formulate new teas and synthetic healing solutions in days. She would wait up to three or four weeks to get the same results from her other bio-chemists. One of Dr Silasa's conditions was freedom to work on "his" research.

It's Sunday morning and 'father' is still working ... Alone. Michelle enters the double outside doors into a vestibule which contains a chair, small table, and an intercom. She presses the intercom - "hello"

- "go away. Come back during office hours tomorrow."
- "father, it's Michelle." (There is a silence for ... Forever!) "Hello ..." (Michelle is startled by the buzz. She enters the lab of her 'father').
- "**what - do - you - want?**"
- "I need your help desperately."
- "I have no money to give you."
- "I don't want any money. I need you to be you - a brilliant bio-chemist."
- "I am in the middle of a contract, and I may have another job in four weeks - a couple wants me to find a neutralizer for a sick friend exposed to an explosives precursor."
- (confused) "who called?"
- "some woman - Anna was her name? And, some man - his name was Peter. I remember him - he threatened me. **Who does he think he is?**"
- (Peter?, maybe coincidence?) "Father, my friend, Daryl, needs your brilliant mind to do its magic so he can live."
- "funny ... Their friend was named Daryl."

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