

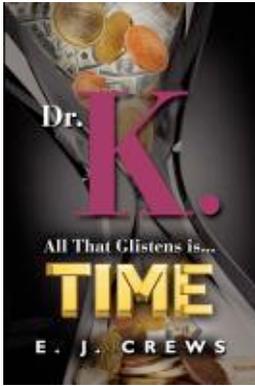
Dr.

K .

All That Glistens is...

TIME

E . J . CREWS



Inspired by his students, Dr. K. rejoins the battle of ideas, after many years of self-imposed professional exile. They take action after hearing his revolutionary theory of a digital substitute for currency. If universally adopted, Work Units, (WU) could replace all of the world's failing currencies. Dr. K.'s new-found popularity elicits the unwanted attention of the global elite's minions: the Department of Defense, the U.S. Senate and the multi-national media empire Omni Orion Group.

All That Glitters is... TIME

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First Edition

Chapter 1

You Never Give Me Your Money: 1-3 Lennon & McCartney

Julie bounded up the steps to the third floor, two at a time. Her long strides powered by legs trained these past few years by a grueling schedule of track and field. Her five foot ten inch height also made her a natural for basketball, but she had to drop all of that once her studies became too demanding. She glanced up at the clock at the head of the stairs—eight twenty-nine—she had one minute to make it.

She sprinted down the hall, dodging other students. Her long ponytail swung back and forth as she zigzagged her way around them. She kept repeating a string of, “Sorry, sorry”, “excuse me”, “behind you”, as a kind of verbal siren. But her closing speed was so great that most felt the slap of her ponytail, as she passed, before they realized what she was saying. She kept up that pace the length of the Max Plank economics building, getting to the doors of the lecture hall just as they were closing.

“Don't, DON'T!” she shouted as she pulled up to the door.

The door stopped short of closing and opened enough for a student to look out. He raised his index finger to his lips, “Shh.”

“Oh Frankie, you're the *best!*” she whispered to him, as she slipped past.

“Another late night Julie?” he asked, as he quickly closed the door.

“They changed halls on me! I had to come all the way from the other side of the building.”

“Professor Watson told everyone last week he was combining three classes for a special speaker today. And that we should get here *early* because seating would be tight.”

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"Some of us have a life outside of economics Frankie. We're not all assistants to the professor," she said, then flashed her widest grin. "Well how about it, where can I find a seat?"

"Well now the only thing left is down front."

"I don't want to be down front. I had three hours sleep last night, no breakfast this morning, I ran across campus to get here—I need a place to rest up. C'mon there must be something up here in the back rows."

"Nope", he said to her, barring his teeth in a grotesquely broad grin.

She headed down front quickly, so as not to be out of her seat as Professor Watson began, she had no intention of repeating 'that' horrid experience. On the first class of the semester, he had used her tardiness to make a point to the whole class. 'Being late shows a disregard for others.' he had said and that if students wanted him to regard them as serious they would be punctual. Even though this course was only an elective for Julie, her athletic scholarship could not survive another poor grade.

The lecture hall was semi-circular with tiers of seats that faced the raised platform. Behind that, a white board ran the length of the two story wall. About half way up the wall hung a large LCD display. There were no desks, only a lectern in the center of the platform.

Julie made her way down the steps to find that Frank had been right. The only empty seat was smack in the middle of the first row, directly opposite the lectern. She walked over and sat down, breathing a sigh of relief that the professor was nowhere to be seen. Then Frankie and another student moved the lectern off to the right. "Great!" she thought, "*maybe they're going to show something on the big screen. I may get a bit of a rest after all.*" She rested her head on her books and closed her eyes in anticipation of the lights going down. "*All I need is a few minutes...*" she thought.

###

"How about you there, down in front, come on up."

Julie lifted her head as she heard laughter fill the hall. She was confused as to who had spoken. She could not place the voice, as her classmates laughter trailed off she heard the voice again.

"Over here, I want you to come over here and help out with this little 'eco-drama'."

This time her eyes focused on the thin man with gray hair, standing on the platform, not more than ten feet from her seat. His right hand was beckoning her to come forward. His bright blue eyes and sly smile worked to soften her shock and reverse her initial reaction to his request. She got up and climbed the two steps up to the platform. She took his outstretched hand as she reached the top. As he led her to the center of the platform he whispered, "I figured I'd better get you up here before you started snoring"

"Oh my god, I'm really sorry...Mr..." she said, looking away from him for a moment, searching for a name on the whiteboard.

"Doctor, I'm Dr. Kantos. You snoozed right through your professor's intro, as did much of the top three rows," he whispered.

Holding both her hands now, he turned her around to face him, while he kept his back to the rest of the class.

"I've never done anything like this before..." she said.

"Neither have I..." The blood ran out of Julie's face and she felt her stomach twist tighter. "Kidding, just kidding... you look like you're going to be executed," he said with a smile. "Come on, this can be fun. Trust me."

"What do I have to do?" she asked.

"Just be you. No special knowledge required. I'll supply that and any comic relief needed to keep your fellow somnambulists awake."

She laughed.

"That's better, now you are..?"

"Julie"

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"... and you're a...?"

"Freshman."

He turned to the class and said, "Okay I need one more volunteer to come down here with Julie and myself."

"Come on, I'd prefer someone from the senior class, but anyone will do."

The rising din in the hall was cut by howls of laughter from the upper tier seats. Dr. Kantos looked up to see a young man picking himself up off the aisle steps. "Well it looks like a small, but loud, faction has just tossed us our second volunteer. Come on down and let's get things moving along. We only have an hour today; let's make the most of it."

Julie watched as the student bounded down the remaining steps. She had not seen him before and thought he must be from the senior economics class. As he stepped onto the platform, Julie got a better look. He had a high forehead and wide set brown eyes with a slight cleft in his chin. He was taller than her and gave her a smile as Dr. Kantos shook his hand.

"And you are?" asked Dr. Kantos.

"Jonathan," he answered while still keeping an eye on Julie.

"And are you a senior classman?" asked Dr. Kantos.

"Yes I am. It's great to meet you Dr. Kantos. When I read your paper 'An Oil-Free Economy', I learned just how much economics can do for people. I mean what it has done to so many, instead of for them."

"Thanks. It's nice to know they still use my work in this course."

"Oh, it wasn't part of this course. I read it on my own. It was source material I found on the Internet."

"Yes, well... either way. Now that you're here let's get things rolling, shall we? If you would stand here a moment, I'm going to get Julie acquainted with her part. Then I'll fill you in on yours." He then

turned to Julie and walked her a few steps out of earshot from Jonathan. He then whispered, "Now, you will be a penniless mother, come for a loaf of bread from the grocer – Jonathan. Do you have any cash in your pockets?" She reached into her right pants pocket and pulled out a few bills and her campus card.

"What's that?" he asked her, pointing to the plastic card.

"That's how I pay for things on campus. It's not a credit card."

"Well give it to me as well," he said. Then he took all but one dollar from her.

"So I have to get bread from him for a buck? What am I supposed to do, steal it?"

"Convince him, cajole him – enter into a kind of debate with him to win over the group," he whispered.

"Oh, I get it. I win, if he coughs up a loaf," she said with a grin.

"That's not quite how I would have put it. But if that works for you, use it. Now stay right here until I call you over," he said.

She nodded and watched as he walked over to Jonathan. He spoke to him a bit. At one point Jonathan laughed. She wondered what could be so funny about being a grocer. Then Dr. Kantos turned to the group and spoke.

"Now that our players are prepared, you here in this hall need to know your part. First you will be the arbiters here today. Secondly you will provide input, should I ask you for it; not before. Now I will perform the introductions. Over here is Jonathan the proprietor of 'Johnnies Superette' – a food store. And over here is Julie – a customer come to shop." He motioned to Julie to approach as he backed away from the two of them. "Let the fun begin..." he said.

Julie took a few steps and mimed opening a door as she came closer to Jonathan. The group laughed. "Didn't see the 'No Mimes Allowed' sign, huh?" said Jonathan. The group laughed even more.

"I need a loaf of bread. Do you have some?"

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"A talking mime!" said Jonathan to the group. This time Dr. Kantos interrupted the laughter.

"Okay, I know I said 'let the fun begin' but I didn't mean it so literally. Now that you two have broken the ice, let's move on with a bit more comedic restraint, from both of you. Go ahead Jonathan, you have a bread buyer."

"Sure I have bread. In fact I only have one loaf left. I'll let you have it for fifty dollars."

"Fifty!" she looked at Dr. Kantos. He stood with his arms folded across his chest and offered her a blank look.

"My store, my price," said Jonathan.

She turned away from Dr. Kantos and looked at Jonathan. He had a sly smile that was magnified by the glint in his eyes, as if he was desperately trying to keep himself from laughing out loud. "*Oh, so that's the game we're playing*", she thought. "But this is my last dollar and my children need bread," she said.

"I have mouths to feed too. If you don't have the fifty, I'll sell it to the next customer who does."

"My children are hungry."

"Not my problem lady. My problem is to sell my bread inventory before it spoils and take the money home to my family."

"How about a loan?"

"Sign says 'Superette' not 'bank' out front," he shot back.

"Please, please sir," said Julie grabbing Jonathan's shirt collar in her hands, "I need that bread, I'll do anything ..."

"Anything?" he chuckled.

"Yes, yes!" replied Julie over the chorus of "Woo" coming from the upper tier.

"OK, okay, hold it right there." Dr. Kantos said waving his arms. Julie broke the grip on Jonathan's shirt and the two stood side by side giggling.

"This isn't going quite how I had planned. Let's see if we can salvage something from it anyway." Dr. Kantos walked over to the two of them and said in a loud voice, "What I neglected to mention earlier, to both of you, is that Professor Watson has agreed to give the victor in our exercise, extra credit." He stood still and watched as his statement rinsed Julie's smile away. Jonathan's forehead became furrowed as he too stopped giggling. "Good," said Dr. Kantos in a soft voice meant just for the two of them. He then turned and approached the group. "Now Julie, why couldn't you get your loaf of bread?"

"Because I didn't have enough money to pay for it."

"But you were willing to do almost anything to get that bread, right?"

"I had a family to feed, of course."

"So you begged and tried to borrow."

"Right! And if he wasn't such a stingy grocer, he would have offered me day old bread or something," she said pointing a finger at Jonathan.

"Hey, I have a right to my price. I have to keep my business going so my kids don't go hungry," Jonathan snapped back.

Dr. Kantos looks to Julie, "Well?"

"But how can he just let us go hungry?" she looks to Jonathan. "How about a little charity? It's what you do for others who can't do for themselves"

"Why should I carry your family's needs, on top of my own family's?"

"'Cause you own a food store."

"Yeah and I didn't get it by giving stuff away for free," he said pointing a finger at Julie.

"Now, now, let's keep this friendly," said Dr. Kantos. "I appreciate your getting into the spirit of the thing and all, so take this

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spat off-line for now," he said with a wink to them. Then he turned back to address the group, "Alright, if we look at this through the lens of economics and really focus in, what do we have here?"

Various answers came shouting down to him, "high unemployment", "what about food-stamps?" "commodity shortages", "shrinkage 'cause she'll just come back and steal it!" "faulty marketing".

Dr. Kantos looked up in the direction of the last comment. "What do you mean by that last one?"

"Like he said, 'this ain't a bank'. If she wanted a loan, she should have gone to a bank."

"Why?"

"Because that's where the money is."

Dr. Kantos chuckled, "Now we're quoting Willy Sutton. This thing has really gotten away from me today. I must be losing my touch."

"Who's Willy Sutton?" someone called out.

"An infamous bank robber from the thirties, but let's not digress. Now, once again, why did she need money?"

Again answers were called out to him, "To pay for the bread," "So she could feed her kids."

"Okay, that last one", Dr. Kantos pointed out the student who spoke last, "Feeding her kids was her objective. Money was just the means to that end, correct?" He got a round of affirming nods and utterances agreeing to his point.

"So what is this?" he asked holding Julie's campus card up, "Is this money?"

"Yes", "No", "It gives you money," they called out.

"Yes, but it is not itself money – it is not 'legal tender' as it says on these," he said holding up one of the dollar bills he had taken from Julie.

“So when someone said earlier 'faulty marketing' – think about that a minute. The mass media told her over and over where she needed to go, to get food, right. In times past, she would have gone out to a field, or a grove, or a rice patty to get food for her family. She wouldn't need to bring money along. But in these times, most of us go to the grocery store with some of these”, he said holding up the bill, “or a card like this. Now how can we help Julie here get food for her family?”

“Give her some money”, “Buy a lotto ticket with that dollar”, “Get a job”, was called down.

“Julie, how about that last one?” Dr. Kantos asked.

“Well sure, but if he's selling bread at fifty bucks a loaf, it'll have to pay real well,” she said glaring at Jonathan.

“I set the price, that wasn't Jonathan's idea,” he said to Julie. “But what is wrong with that? 'Free markets', right? Isn't that what you all are learning? In a free market economy the price is whatever the market will bear.” He said as he waved his right hand, index finger extended, in one sweeping arc. They collectively felt the sting of his accusing finger and erupted into loud objections.

“It's too high,” “How can people feed their families at that price?” “He's right, he can set his price to anything the market will bear,” “But that is way too much,” “Then she should go to another store.”

Dr. Kantos broke in, “Alright, but what if Jonathan's store is the only one?”

“That's a monopoly, you can't have that!” said Julie.

“You are first year. I don't want to steal your professor's thunder, but if you continue on in economics Julie, you'll learn that most industries mature into monopolies, or cartels. So the idea that Jonathan's store is the only place to buy food, thereby allowing him to set any price, is a realistic possibility. But that is not what I am after in today's discussion,” he said as he slowly paced about on the platform.

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He looked down and rubbed his chin with his right hand, as he paced. Julie took a closer look at him. Dr. Kantos was "*easily in his sixties*", she thought. But, even with his white hair, his face seemed much younger. Maybe it was the shine of his pale-blue eyes and though very tanned the lack of deep lines around his eyes. He was shorter than her, maybe five foot eight, but not from a stoop, his posture and quick steps made her think that he must be very active. Not at all what she felt the norm was, for men his age.

He raised his head up and looked at Julie. "You're not going to convince the grocer to lower his price anytime soon, right."

"I guess not," she answered.

"So what if you offered him something more valuable than the fifty dollars he is asking?"

She drew her chin in and lifted her hands, as if she was carrying something on them. "Huh? I thought you said that was all I had?"

"True, it is. But don't think in terms of dollars. What is the one thing that you have, that everyone has, which can't be bought for any amount of money?" He began to pace again, looking up to the audience. "Oh come on, what is the one thing that can't be bought, at any price?"

There was blank looks and silence, as Dr. Kantos searched their faces. He roamed the platform in front of Julie and Jonathan as they too considered the riddle. Then it came to Julie. "Time!" she blurted out as quickly as she could.

"No amount of money can buy you an extra minute of life. Once a minute is past, it's gone for good. You can't get a 'do-over' no matter how much money you have," she added with a smile.

Dr. Kantos turned to her, as she spoke, and caught the look of triumph on her face. She looked back at him with wide eyes awaiting his call on her answer. "Precisely, I could not have said it better." She raised her clenched fist, close to her shoulder and jerked it down and up three times saying, "YES" each time. The audience broke their silence with laughter.

"OK, okay, Julie. There is more to come, so don't count out Jonathan, here, just yet. Right?" he said patting Jonathan on the shoulder as he passed by, heading toward Julie.

"So tell us, Julie, how will you use time to get the loaf of bread?"

She looked over at Jonathan as she thought for a second. His smile was gone. He set his jaw tightly closed. He just wanted an opening to rebut what she said. "*Whatever she says,*" he thought.

"Hey mister grocer, what if you gave me that loaf of bread now and tomorrow morning I show up here and shag shopping carts from the parking lot all morning?"

"I already have a boy that does that. And I can't afford to hire on anyone else," he snapped back.

"But I didn't ask you for a 'job'. I don't want to take money from you. I just want to give you enough of my time, helping out, to pay you back for the loaf of bread," she was now very serious. She really felt like she was that mother, bargaining for bread, for her children. Julie held Jonathan's glance long after she spoke.

He did not respond immediately. He needed the extra credit too, but he began to realize that this was not a debate, where points would only go to one of them. He only needed to show the professor that he 'got it'. He began to think to himself as the grocer might, not as Jonathan. "So I will determine how much of your time it takes to pay off the bread?" he said finally.

"Sure, ah well, within reason of course."

"Okay, I think I could accept that."

At this Dr. Kantos clapped and walked over to the two of them. "Thank you, both." the audience followed his lead and began to also clap. He motioned the two 'players' to return to their seats.

Julie and Jonathan, both relieved to be leaving the platform, smiled and waved to their classmates.

"Now let's go over this last bit as a group."

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He waited until things settled down and Julie and Jonathan were seated once again. Then he stood in the center of the platform and waited until all eyes were on him.

“Time, that is what we should remember, trumps money. Our modern economy has clouded that truth. We have it upside down. Most people in the industrialized world see money, not time, as the most valuable. But the very point we should bear in mind, is that we are *human* and not the machines of industry. We are not a component of industry that you can weigh and put a price on.” He waited as he looked at their faces for an indication that they had digested his opening remarks. Once he felt they had, and were looking for more, he continued.

“As we saw, in our little eco-drama, when money is the basis of our economic system, shortages can occur. We know them as recessions or depressions or bouts of rampant inflation or spiraling deflation. This occurs as the money in circulation, in the economy, sloshes around from person to person. Sticking to some better than others.” There was a brief ripple of soft laughter though the group.

“This built-in inequality, forms rich and poor classes of people in most societies and as the spread between these two widens, it contributes to an increase in crime, and even wars. Yes economic envy has pushed some political leaders to raid their neighbors in order to appropriate some of their wealth. You are all familiar with that old expression, '*To the victor belong the spoils*', right?”

“But an economy based on time, levels the field for all. There is only twenty-four hours in a day. Everyone has *exactly* the same time given to them. No one can earn more time, no one. Now think of the way an economy would look if everyone had an equal share in the daily 'wealth'. Let's call them Work Units.” He began to pace across the platform, looking down as he did.

“With the technology of today one can keep record of these units earned by every working person. Julie could work collecting carts for the grocer. Jonathan could stock the shelves of his store. A surgeon could perform a life sustaining operation. A pilot could fly passengers

across an ocean. All of it in a day, they each would be credited with a day's worth, the same for all."

"No one would go to med-school anymore!" someone heckled from the back row. It was followed by muffled giggling.

"Not true. In fact, you'd find only those who had an aptitude and truly had a passion for medicine and the healing arts, would still go into the field. You would remove the motive of those who choose it to make more money than their peers. You see, no one could ever 'make more' than anyone else."

"Isn't that communism? Like the economic model that failed in the Soviet Union?" came another objection for the back row.

"No, it's not like that at all. They did not permit private property. I am just talking about replacing units of money with time credits. Everything else remains the same. If you spend more time credits, than you earned, you'd go broke. If you spent far less, you'd build a surplus, so you could buy things or not work as many hours in the future. If you chose to go off and become a hermit, well you wouldn't get any credits, but you'd be free to be left alone, no forced labor camps—no gulags. After all, money is just an arbitrary method of exchange, for something else. It has always been just a 'go between'."

"In the earliest times, money itself was something of value. Precious stones or rare metals *were* money. Then much later, paper currency was used to represent something of value, gold or silver. But now..." he held up a dollar bill, "this is a note. It marks a *debt* incurred by the country that has gotten it from a central bank. In this country the Federal Reserve created this piece of paper and stamped it as having a value of one dollar. On another piece of paper, same size and weight, a little different art work, it says one hundred dollars. But is it really one hundred times more valuable? Or is it just another piece of paper?"

"The banks think it's worth more," came down from the back rows.

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“That is because they own it. We are just passing it around in the madness we call a monetary based economy. To me a roll of one hundred ones, is just as fat as a roll of one hundred dollar bills, in my pocket. Same number of paper bills, that's all. But this...” he raised Julie's campus card above his head.

“This could be credited and debited with my time credits, without my country borrowing from a central bank.” He walked over to Julie and returned it to her. She was, like many others, sitting on the edge of her seat, entranced by what Dr. Kantos was saying. So much so, that she spoke out, as he handed that card to her, without thinking.

“No more BANKS!” she said.

“Exactly!” he winked at her and turned back to step up on the platform. “Julie is right. In a time based economy, there would be no such thing as a bank or any such distribution institution. That is, after all, what a bank really is—a distributor. They, not the government, take the paper bills and issue them to the public. Ever wonder why you don't go to a government building to get your money? Why aren't there U.S. Treasury ATM's on every corner, instead of 'The First National Bank of Bayonne'? The reason is the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. It gave the distribution rights to the banks, exclusively, through the newly created Federal Reserve Board. But that was 1913! Long before computers, the Internet, cell phones, wireless networks and everything else that we have today. The Fed now stands in the way of us realizing the full potential of our technologies. Now that we have a simple and secure technology to store and circulate time credits, why do we need paper and an arcane system that supports it? Think about it.”

“How can it work without cash?” someone asked.

“Think people, think... you have your smart card, like you use now on campus. You go to work and your employer credits the hours you labored directly onto your card. Your employer keeps accounts of all your work time, same as they do today. When you buy something you use your smart card and the credits go from your card over to the

store. They in turn, use those credits to buy products to stock their shelves from manufacturers. Much of our transactions today are cashless already. They are just so many bits and bytes of computer data moved back and forth. There is no need to retain paper or coin, for our current economy to function. It could all be done with plastic, right?"

"But how does anyone make a profit?"

"Fair question. The difference between the amount of time credits that are paid in to a company, for its goods and services and the amount they pay out to employees and suppliers is their gain or profit, same as now, except without the bank as a middleman. The 'transaction', if you will, of your labor given over to your employer, creates the value in the system, not the printing press of a central bank."

"What about school teachers? They don't work for a company that makes a profit," asked one of the students in the front row.

"Right, but as I said, people still own property in this time based economy. So they would pay property taxes as they do today, which would allow local communities to pay their teachers, just as they do today. But, unlike today, the value of a teacher's compensation would be equal to that of the most highly skilled neurologist." The room erupted with applause.

"Money, long ago created for the convenience of mankind, and its sidekick debt, has evolved into a means of restraint, as strong as any chains that shackle a slave. Removing money and its debt creation would be the greatest liberating act to happen since abolition. And today, with the technology available to us, it is no longer just a dream; it can be made a reality. It only needs to be put to the test, to be tried and refined. It needs people and business to make use of it, on a small scale, for any kinks to be worked out. Then let the results speak for themselves. Let people choose between the money and debt system of the past, or a universal Time Banking system."

The assembled group broke into applause. Dr. Kantos motioned with his hands to quiet them down. When they did he continued. "I

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do these lectures now because I feel that for the first time, since the idea of Time Banking was originally put forth, the world may be ready to embrace it. One hundred years ago, the idea of using a plastic card to buy something, would have been thought crazy. Five hundred years ago the idea of buying goods with a piece of colored paper, would have been a crazy idea. And thousands of years before that, people were carrying shells or pearls around to buy goods. It is again time to change the medium we base our economy on. This time we have the chance to really get it right, for everyone."

Again the students clapped their approval. They rose to their feet and continued the applause as Dr. Kantos walked to the left of the platform and stopped next to the door. He faced the group and leaned back against the wall. Professor Watson, who was standing by the door, came forward to address the group. Thanking Dr. Kantos he expressed his hope that some of the 'bright young minds' in the room would take up his challenge and make Time Banking a reality in the not too distant future. To that end, he said he was distributing project outlines for them to take, as they left the hall. Any students would be given extra credits for their participation in any of the Time Banking related projects contained in the handout.

Chapter 2

Watching the Wheels: 9-12 John Lennon

Julie got up from her seat and followed the others up the aisle. As she passed through the doors she saw Frank handing out paper to students. A number were lined up in front of him, waiting for their copy. Julie stood off a moment and thought about taking a copy. She could use all the help she could get, to raise her average. But she wasn't sure she would have her efforts rewarded. The thought that she might sink hours and hours into some project, only to not complete it on time, (time management was not her strong suit), or otherwise fail to obtain the credits, would be too much.

"He who hesitates is lost."

She turned around to see Jonathan standing, just behind her. "In this course I'm already lost."

"You did alright in there."

"That's because I had to remember zero, about what the professor has been going on about. I should just drop this course now, while I have the chance. I can transfer to another course and keep my grade point from dropping through the floor."

"Nah, you don't want to do that. It never looks good hopping around from course to course. The extra credit from one of these projects would help, wouldn't it?"

"Sure, but I don't think I could do it."

"How can you say that when you're standing over here and haven't even looked at the list?"

"I don't have to look. I wouldn't get through any of them."

"Some of them are for groups."

"Groups?"

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"Yeah."

"Let me see that." She took the copy from his hands and flipped the pages.

"See the last three projects listed are intended for up to six students. I was looking at the middle one."

She scanned down the page to find it, she said, "Trans-actional Proto-type?" stretching out each word.

"Yeah, basically you put together a demonstration of how the Work Units might be captured and then used. The groups doing this project will be judged against one another, to determine the best prototype. It's the project that offers the most credit, of all."

"That is a lot of work. I mean you'll have to get people to really use the thing, right? I mean they'll have to get paid and everything."

"Right. That's where you come in. I know a few others that have the computer skills and can work out any technical issue we might have, but none of us could sell the idea. We're gonna need to get people, outside the group, to help us. Business people who will actually allow us to try the system out with their employees. That is gonna take a lot of 'salesmanship' and from what I saw today, I know you could do it."

She looked at him a moment, then glanced down at the project list in her hand. She was intrigued by the idea. She had definitely been inspired by Dr. Kantos. What Jonathan was offering was a way she could do something, without having to carry all the burden herself. It seemed like a great opportunity, but she still had a nagging doubt. She looked back up at Jonathan. He was smiling back at her. Before she could speak, he offered up an incentive.

"Ah, come on, give it a try. Who knows, maybe we'll have some fun too."

Julie broke the stern expression on her face with a slight smile. "Well okay, but I'm not going to be the only one making the sales pitch. You're pretty good at selling air-conditioners to Eskimos, yourself. If I sign on, you're going to come along too."

"Okay, Putyuk, you've got a deal."

"Yeah, right," she let it pass, because she wasn't sure if the name really was Eskimo or something he just made up. "So how do you intend to get this thing going?"

"Well I was going to round up the others for a session to plan something out."

"You think you have enough from just this one lecture, to make a plan?"

"Well it would be nice to get more info, I guess. But where can you get anything on Time Banking? No one is doing it."

"I'm not too sure about that. I heard of something like it being used in upstate New York."

"No, I heard of that too, but that was more a barter thing. What Dr. Kantos was talking about was more than that."

"So we need to get more info from him."

"Yeah, I'm sure he'll just hang out here for a few more days, just to talk with our team. Think again. I'm sure he's headed back home tonight. "

"Where does he live?"

"I heard Frank saying he picked him up from T.F. Green this morning. I think he was up from Baltimore or Washington. So forget that idea."

"Why don't you go have your techie meeting and I'll take care of putting together a way to get some help from Dr. Kantos. I'll call you later. Maybe we can meet up, after I have something ready"

"Sure, be my guest."

Julie headed back through the crowd that was slowly leaving the hall. Frank was still by the doors, handing out project lists. She figured he would probably be the one to give Dr. Kantos a ride back to the airport. So if he was around, Dr. K. must be too. If she moved quickly, she could catch him and make her plea for help.

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###

The sunrise had not been as bright as it could have been. The low hanging clouds over Narragansett Bay had caught the sun too soon. Still it had been worth the trip. It served its purpose, once again, for Lou. Rising before dawn and pedaling his old war-horse of a bike, the four miles to the shore, was done for the promise of a great solar display. Some mornings the slow unveiling, from deep shades of pink into the rosy orange disk of the sun, went on for hours, it seemed. Other days the sun burst through the distant rim of water as if it had been a rocket launch. But each time it was different. That was one of the things that kept him coming back, over and over. The variety was proof, Lou felt, that each day given was unique. He needed to be reminded of that. So he had begun this morning ritual, to witness it, as often as he could each workday.

The show over, he pushed off from the curb and began pedaling his way back home. Ahead of him, on the bike path, the tree tops joined across to each other, forming a lush tunnel. The sound of the water slapping on the rocks faded behind him as he entered the green tube. He shifted into top gear and rose off the saddle to power through the opening. The bike was over fifteen years old, but Lou's meticulous upkeep made these sprints still possible. He quickly glanced down at the trip computer readout: 27MPH. He smiled and sat back on the saddle. Having made such speed on the flat run from the beach, he knew the rest of the uphill run would be comfortably quick.

Even though it was Saturday and he didn't have work, he needed to get back to the house before too long. His daughter Julie was down from school. These visits of hers were becoming less frequent, in recent months and he wanted to make the most of them, when they happened. Her schedule had become as hectic as his, another thing that reminded him that she was growing into a carbon copy of him. Something he wished she could avoid. The price of such a high velocity life was far too much, he had learned. He thought that each

time they got together now, that he should work to dissuade Julie from following too closely, the path he had taken.

After all, that's what fathers are for, he felt. Mothers show their love through all, but a father shows his love by instruction, by pointing to the pitfalls and hidden traps of life and saying in a loud and clear voice 'Don't go there'. The problem is that Julie, like most children, learned more by watching than by listening, especially when the voice became too loud and too often began with a 'Don't'.

Ahead he could see the end of the East Bay Bike path coming. Cars were passing across the opening of the tunnel. He applied some brake and lifted his head up. Then he sat full upright and moved his hands to the top of the handlebars and lightly squeezed the long brake levers. He gave a quick glance left and right, to gauge the speed of the oncoming cars and pick a spot to cross. He lucked out; the traffic from the street light had cleared. Even this early in the morning, the streets at the center of Bristol could be dicey. That was why he stayed to the bike route for the most part. It was not being out-weighted by the vehicles around him, which concerned him, it was the unpredictability of their drivers. Rhode Island produced some of the worst drivers he had ever seen.

He continued through the neighborhood streets toward home. The new row of townhouses, set back from the street and behind a stone wall, looked out of place. The pale gray line of two story units contrasted with the neighboring row of neat little Capes and split level homes. But this was all Lou could manage, after the divorce. At least it was by the shore, which was worth its weight in gold to him. And, unlike his neighbors, he didn't have to spend his weekends working around the yard.

He brought the bike to a balanced dead stop in front of the steps to his unit, number four. The bike remained still, his feet held in to the toe-clips of the pedals. Then he slipped his left foot out and leaned slightly to that side and touched the ground with his toes. He pulled the right foot out and placed just the toes to the ground, leaning back upright as he did. Holding his wrist he took his pulse, as sweat

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started to roll down his forehead. By his watch, he counted off thirteen pumps in fifteen seconds. "52 pulse, not too bad for a forty-five year old heart patient!" he said under his breath.

###

"Ooh, is that French Toast I smell?" said Julie. She shuffled into the kitchen, her morning hair higher on the right side of her part than the left, long pajama pants dragging along, cleaning up behind her slippers as she slid them along.

"Yes, yes and I even have..." he turned from the stove and paused as he spotted her, "... some cinnamon... What happened to you?"

"What, *what?*"

"Hell you look like something the cat..."

"What – dragged in?"

"No, puked up!"

"Oh gee thanks Dad! Nice to see you too!"

"Well I went to bed last night, after finally giving up on the idea that you were coming. Then I saw your car, when I went out on my ride."

"Oh good, your still doing the ride, all the way to Pig Island."

"*Hog* Island, and I don't bike to the island – it's an island – I can see it from where I go."

"Oh yeah, right," she responded with indifference in her voice. She pulled up a stool to the counter beside the stove and sat down. She raised her arms out to him and pursed her lips, "Come on... kiss, kiss."

He looked at her contorting face. She continued moving her mouth like a Striper chasing a hook. He couldn't take it any longer and laughed. She bounced up off the stool and swung her arms around him and kissed him on the cheek.

"That's it you old grouch. I was out too late again, I know. I'm sorry you stayed up. I should have called... did I leave anything out?"

"You parked in the handicap spot, again."

"Oops! Well I can't tell where it is when it's dark."

"It is in the same place it is during the day!"

"OK, okay I'll move it...later. Right now, I'm starving."

"Gee, I wonder what could have given you such an appetite?"

She dropped her arms to her side and went past him to the cabinet. Taking down two dishes she went to the kitchen table and plopped them down. As she turned to go back to retrieve forks, he was staring at her, holding the spatula in his right hand. "Well..."

"Yes, a little of that and a little of this and..."

"Julie!"

"Well what do you want me to say? I'm telling you, okay. I don't keep it from you."

"You couldn't keep it from, me. You know you couldn't. I'm not the soft touch of a parent your friends have, am I?"

"That's for damn sure."

He continued the stare. She looked at him and made a face. "That's it, nothing else to confess, really. So turn off the 'look', already".

He turned back to the pan of egg soaked bread. "*Still works*", he thought to himself. Ever since she was a toddler, he could always get her to spill the beans on herself, by just giving that 'look'. He wondered though, for how much longer? Would he be able to keep using it through her remaining years at university? He made a silent prayer that it would be so.

"So anyway, I'm very glad to see you're still riding that bike," she said pulling open the drawer of cutlery. "Keep at it and don't let work get to you. You know what the doctor said about stress."

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"Work isn't the only stress in my life."

"I said I was sorry. Come on!"

He smiled to himself. He was trying out a new tool—guilt. Maybe he could use her traumatic memory, of his recent hospitalization, as leverage. "*All's fair in love and war*", he thought. And, over the years, that was pretty much what being a parent had shown itself to be, a battle of sorts.

"Here it comes," he said taking the pan off the stove. He served up their breakfast, which always signaled a truce. And so they ate in silence, until Julie began her pitch.

"I got asked to join a project in my economics course."

"Really, I thought that was just a filler course to you? As I remember it, you chose it because it was the nearest thing to the dart."

"Dad! That's not true, come on. This is a big deal. I could get some heavy duty good-will from my professor if I do well with this."

"Is that the one you pissed off on day one?"

"That's the one. So you know how much I need to improve things with this course, right?"

"Right..." he knew more was coming so he decided to let her drive the conversation.

"Any-who, we got to hear from this really famous doctor of economics. I checked him out, on the Internet, after the class, 'cause I hadn't heard of him, myself. But it's true; he really is a *big* deal. And he has this unbelievable idea to get rid of all the paper money and the banks of the world."

Lou paused, his fork just shy of his mouth. Instead of taking a bite, he asked, "What? Did you say '*get rid*' of banks?"

Julie looked up from her plate at him. "Yeah, cool huh?"

"Julie, are you sure that was what he was saying?"

"Absolutely! I *know*, it was really incredible the way he explained it to us. Anyway afterwards they had a list of extra credit projects that

you could do about Time Banking. That's what he called it. And I knew I wouldn't be able to do any of them, *myself*, even though I could really use the extra points and all. But I got asked to join a bunch of senior guys on their project."

"Guys?"

"Yeah, guys—male students—yes," she said as he once again used the 'look' on her. "I don't have their techie skills, so I'm like the marketing part of the project. I'll get local business people to sign on to help test the prototype and collect input and feedback from them."

"Marketing? You?"

"Yeah, *me*. Didn't I get more sponsors for the sports programs at high school than anyone?"

"Sweetheart, you were a champion long distance runner. Of course they would help out a proven commodity and a bit of a local hero."

"*Really?* Hero?" she smiled at him.

"Well, maybe I exaggerate. But my point is why would anyone help out on a project... to?"

"Replace paper money with work credits, that you carry around on a smart-card."

"...yeah, that?"

"'Cause it's new and smart businessmen always go for the new stuff. And 'cause that way they stay ahead of their competitors."

"*Maybe she is actually paying attention, in this course*", he thought and then said, "Well the idea of a cashless society is not new. In fact, I did a paper on it myself, when I was about your age."

"For journalism?"

"Yeah, I wasn't majoring in economics either, but that's what journalism is all about. Researching and then reporting on a subject, from any field. In a way that someone, outside of that field, can read and understand."

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"Like me?"

"I don't mean to..."

"Talk down to me? But you *are!* Look I know I've been kind of sliding through some courses, but I can do the work, once I get into something."

"Sweetheart, I know you can. That has never been a problem for you. But economics—hell—math, is not your strong suit, let's be honest, here."

"But that's why this project is such a great deal! I don't have to do all that —I'll do the marketing! And instead of maybe failing or dropping this course, I'll get a good grade. Now that's a great deal, right?"

"Sure sounds good, but you're not there yet. First you have to actually do the work on this project, right?"

"Yes, I know. Which is what I want to talk to you about."

"*Here it comes*", he thought. He lifted a fork-full of food to his mouth trying to act nonchalant as he waited for it.

"See, I figure it would be a lot easier for me to get some business people to help with our project, if they already knew something about the whole Time Banking thing."

He chewed the food a bit and thought about what she said. Then after swallowing the sweet mixture, he looked up at her. "So you want me to write something about it?" She nodded her head quickly. "Sweetheart I'm a reporter, I write about things happening now. Like I said, that whole cashless society thing is old news. It was tried—in fact I think somewhere in upstate New York they were doing it, in some little town."

"See, I knew it! You already know about this stuff. It would be nothing for you to bang out a story about it and mention Dr. Kantos, maybe do an interview with him. That way these business types will all be ready for my pitch next week."

"Next week?"

"Yeah, I told the team already. I gotta get moving on my part, so the rest of the team will have people they can talk to, about how they'll do their parts. They told me that right now, I'm 'critical-path' for the whole project."

"But Julie, I can't just write a story about anything I want and get it in the paper, for Gods' sake. That is ridiculous, just ridiculous."

"Dad they are counting on me. I told them I would get them some employers to work with, by next week."

"Well then, go ahead—do it. I still don't see why you're making me part of all this."

"Dad, didn't you say you would help me anytime I needed it, to get through my courses?"

"Sure I did, but..."

Looking down, she started cutting another piece of French Toast, "Nope, there was no 'but' connected to what you said, no 'buts'..."

BANG!

She stopped cutting the food on her plate and looked up at him. He was sitting motionless, the fork upright in his tightly clenched right fist as it rested on the table.

"Gee, did that hurt?"

"Do I have your attention, now?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Then don't interrupt me this time," he leaned in across the table towards her. "Now what I was trying to say, before I was so rudely cut off was that I am usually *assigned* my stories. My boss tells me what to write about. You don't have much experience with bosses in your life—yet. But believe me, you will. Well my boss is a very driven man, who *drives* all of us who work for him, very hard. He is not the type of guy who will be convinced that I should do this story, for my daughter 'cause it will help in her school work."

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"Well I don't expect he would either..." she stopped as he gave her another of his 'looks', the 'absurdly raised right eyebrow' look.

"May I continue?" he asked. She just nodded back. "My point is that for me to have any hope, of getting him to assign me such a story, I will have to have a very good reason for him to do it, preferably a reason that he can call 'his own', if you know what I mean."

She shook her head, "Not really."

"He won't go for it, unless he sees something in it for him..." he paused as the words came out and an idea came to mind. As he let the thought run, it gathered steam and he began to see it might work. "... or something may happen to him... if he doesn't do it!"

"What, what... you've thought of something, right? I can see it. You've got that look you get just before you beat me in chess."

He sat back in his chair and a sly grin came to his lips, "Oh ya... this could be fun."

"See, I knew you would. You always come up with a way, always." The buzz from the intercom stopped her from going on. Julie turned her head and looked up at the kitchen clock. "Oh shit! Dad will you let him in? I gotta go and get dressed."

"Him who?" he called after her as she sprang from her chair and ran down the hall.

"Jonathan!" she hollered back to him.

Lou went to the intercom and pressed the talk button. "Yes?"

"Yeah, I'm here to pickup Julie."

Lou buzzed him in and went over to the head of the stairs, off the living room. He watched as Jonathan entered the foyer and looked around. "Up here," he said.

"Hi, I'm Jonathan, am I too early?"

"Probably not, Julie tends to lose track of time. She's gone to get herself ready. I'm her dad, Lou. Why don't you come up here to the kitchen?"

Lou leaned against the counter and poured a cup of coffee from the simmering pot, "Want a cup?"

"Sure!"

Lou handed him the cup he just poured. "Have a seat, she maybe some time." He got another cup down from the cupboard. "So Julie tells me you heard quite a speech from one of those ivory tower types."

"Oh, no way! That's not Dr. Kantos at all. He's a real-world scholar. He's a bit of a recluse, but very well known in his field. In recent years he's been showing up at more public forums than he used to. In fact he has been going around to third world countries, helping set up community banks. To help people in small villages raise money, to farm and start their own shops and stuff. He left a cushy job with a think-tank to do it. No, he's the real deal."

"Did you get all this from his talk?"

"No, I've been interested in him for years. He's the reason I chose to major in economics. Dr. Kantos thinks that nonprofit organizations and non-governmental organizations are where the real need is, in the twenty-first century. That they will replace the old governmental and banking systems of our past."

Lou pulled up a chair and sat across from Jonathan. "And why is that?"

"Population!"

"Really?"

"Yeah, he says that the growth rate will outstrip government's ability to finance all the programs they do. They just can't keep on borrowing now and piling on debt to the next generation. He says that by setting up alternative structures, to help the population, the government and banks will be able to unwind their debt obligations."

"So people will just what? Stop paying taxes and not go to the government for anything?"

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"Well he has written a lot on the subject and I'm not saying I understand all of it yet..."

"Sure..."

"But he says that if nothing changes, that by the time I'm your age, two-thirds of my earnings will go to support other people. Think of it, that's so ridiculous!" Jonathan took another hit of coffee. "Hey this is good stuff."

Lou nodded and took a sip too. He looked at Jonathan a bit closer as he did. Not the usual scruffy kid Julie had brought home in the past. This fellow had a bit more on the ball it seemed. Perhaps she was actually moving forward with her life, instead of continually wallowing in the now, never giving any thought to what might come next in her life. This was what Lou had been constantly after her to do. *'Think ahead a little more'*, he would often tell her. As he looked at Jonathan, he considered that he might be a very good influence on her, in this regard.

"So, Julie tells me you're a senior?"

"Yup, just another six months to go and I can split for Europe."

"EUROpe?" Lou said a little too loudly at first. He tried to settle his voice before continuing, "Why Europe? You have job prospects there?"

Jonathan looked startled by Lou's question. "Job, prospects? No, no, not right after finishing. Hell I'm gonna hit the road and the water. Maybe see the Greek islands, Spain, Italy. You know the warmer places."

"Yeah I know what you mean. Nice work if you can get it."

"Oh, I've got it. I've been stashing away most of what I made interning summers," he looked at Lou with a serious, almost deadpan, look on his face.

Lou smiled in relief, that he was not mistaken in his initial impressions, of Jonathan. "Sound like a plan ..."

"What plan?" Julie said as she came into the kitchen. Her hair was tied back and she had a hooded pullover on, with jeans that, after time in the shower, had taken up most of her time getting into. But she saw the effort was well worth it, as she stole a look at Jonathan as she passed by. He had paused, cup just below his mouth. His eyes followed her into the room. She brushed past Lou and went to the counter where she reached up to get a cup down from the cupboard. She then lifted the pot and poured herself half a cup. Leaning against the counter with her right hip, right leg slightly bent at the knee, she rested the ball of the bare foot atop her left one. She then looked over at Jonathan and took a sip.

Lou noticed that he had lost Jonathan's attention and turned to see what was going on behind him. But Julie was too quick and broke off her pose. She headed to the table, taking up the chair between the two of them. Lou waited for her to get seated and Jonathan to put down his cup and get out a quick 'Hi there' to her. "I was just saying that it sounds like Jonathan has a good plan in mind for himself. After graduation he intends to travel around Europe."

"Hey that does sound great. I've always wanted to do that too."

"He saved up for it," Lou said looking at Julie.

"Okay, maybe I could save up too."

"Save up what? You don't have a job?" he said out of the corner of his mouth. He took a mouthful of coffee in to punctuate his statement.

"Well, I'll have to get one, won't I!" she didn't look at Lou. "So did you tell him all about Dr. Kantos?"

"A bit, but not everything."

Lou put his cup down. "What do you mean *everything*?" he looked to Jonathan then to Julie.

"Well Jonathan told you he's a very interesting man, right?"

"Yes, I guess he is that."

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"So you could write a story on him that would be really interesting, right."

"Well, yes, but I would need to do a lot of research before I could have a story ready for print. And from what you said it wouldn't be in time for your project anyway."

"But if you could get all your research done real quick, it wouldn't take long to do the story right."

"Yes, but as Jonathan just said, the man has written an awful lot on the subject..."

"So do an interview with him," Julie got up from the table and took Jonathan's cup from his hand. She went over and put both cups in the sink. "Right?" she asked over her shoulder to Lou.

"Oh sure I'll get right on it. I can see it now – 'Dr. Kantos a reporter, (not even a financial reporter) from Providence, would like to interview you', I can imagine his response."

Julie went to her father, still sitting at the table, and put her hands on his shoulders and leaned her head down and kissed him on his right cheek. Then she moved her lips up to his ear. "He said okay..." She then quickly withdrew and headed out of the kitchen. "Come on Jonathan we gotta go. I'll get some shoes and meet you at your car."

Lou and Jonathan sat for a moment looking at each other. "Come on, let's go!" she hollered back, as she trotted away down the carpeted hall.

"Nice meeting you, sir," Jonathan offered his hand to Lou as he rose from his chair.

"Lou, call me Lou. Did you know about this?"

"Kinda, she said she was going to ask Dr. Kantos for some help, after the lecture was breaking up. I guess she did."

Lou headed down the hall toward Julie's room. "Julie, what did you do?" he asked as he got close to the open door.

Julie launched through the door opening, carrying her shoes and past Lou. "I told him that I was working on one of the professor's project teams and would he be available to help us? He said sure, anyway he could."

"But did you ask if I could have an interview with him? Jonathan said he's a recluse, maybe the reason I never heard of him is he DOESN'T GIVE INTERVIEWS!"

Julie stopped at the end of the hall and slipped the shoes on, looking at him as she did, "You're my dad; of course he'll talk to you. I'll call you later. Don't sweat it; you'll get a great story out of it, trust me." She then bounded down the stairs and pushed open the screen door.

"You better call. I've got a ton of questions about all this..." he said as he followed her to the door, catching it before it slammed home behind her

Jonathan leaned across the seat and opened the passenger-side door. Julie swung it open and got in. She waved out the window as the car left the parking lot. Lou stood watching the car head down the street. Then he saw Julie's car, still parked in the handicapped space. "Damn, I'll bet she took her keys with her too!" he thought to himself.

Chapter 3

(Just Like) Starting Over: 16-19 John Lennon

Monday morning, rain caused Lou to skip his usual morning bike ride. He had decided to use the extra time to drive to work before the heavy traffic on the road began. After spending most of the weekend researching Dr. Kantos on-line, he was eager to put his plan into motion. If he played things just right with O'Connor, his boss, he figured he would have the chance to do a story that might finally get things back on track for him. For some time, Lou believed his time off, after his heart operation, had taken a toll on his career at the paper.

He felt that people, though happy on the surface to see him back, were very tentative with him. As if he would be leaving again soon. When asked, and he was asked often, that first week back, 'What are you going to do now?' he would just say, 'Get back to work.' He could not fathom what on earth they thought he would otherwise do, if not work. The worst effect of this attitude was in the kind of story assignments he had been given since his return, ('light-weight column fillers', as he saw them). Well he had an assignment in mind that would *not* be one of those again. His challenge though, would be getting O'Connor to let him do it.

The morning staff meeting, in the fifth floor conference room, began late as usual. The floor to ceiling windows, opposite the doorway, framed an overcast skyline. The rain had now lessened to a steady mist. The tops of the taller buildings of downtown Providence disappeared into the low hanging clouds. The light from the recessed spotlights, which dotted the ceiling above the double wide conference room table, outshone the daylight through the windows. Time seems to crawl ever so slowly on days like this, turning a meeting into a challenge of one's mental endurance.

It was scheduled to be just thirty minutes, yet nobody ever wanted it to start. They had to be dragged away from what they were doing, mostly banging away on their keyboards, while talking on the phone. Watching the clock, to get to the meeting on time, was not a priority. This tended to get O'Connor in an even surlier mood. But try as he might, (sending automated appointment reminders through the email didn't work), he never managed to get his staff to ever start one of these meetings on time. Today Lou was the first one in the room, after O'Connor. He took a seat on the end nearest the window.

O'Connor never sat. He took up his position midway up the table on the side opposite Lou. The entire wall behind him was a whiteboard.

Hank O'Connor was about Lou's age, a bit shorter and much thinner. He always wore tailored shirts, never with a jacket, to showcase this leanness. He would often pace about during these meetings. Roaming allowed him to quickly get in the face of his people, seated at the table, should the whim strike him.

He looked out the windows at the darkening weather beyond. "Idiots were wrong again!" he said.

"Yeah, I skipped my ride this morning."

O'Connor grabbed a dry-write marker from the tray attached to the whiteboard. He began to write. As he did he complained, "I was supposed to get in a round of golf with Preston, this afternoon – that's out the window now."

"Preston? Really."

O'Connor finished what he wanted to scribble on the board and turned around to face Lou. The overhead lights reflected through his short thinning hair as he looked down at Lou. He had five years on Lou, but they had started with the paper the same year. His thin face was deeply lined around his eyes, from the sun of the summer just past. His brown eyes were locked on Lou as he arched his eyebrows

(Just Like) Starting Over

up, "Yeah, Preston invited me to his club—in Newport. Not too shabby, right?"

"*Here he goes again*", Lou thought. Preston was the head of the media conglomerate that had just acquired their paper. O'Connor was looking to get into the inner circle of the new owners. In an era of papers being gobbled up left and right, the only security was to be working for the predator company. O'Connor viewed anything that OOG invited him to as a sign he was on the way up. Lou didn't want to bite on O'Connor's little tidbit. He could care less about Preston and his lot at Omni Orion Group. But he couldn't ignore the 'honor' Preston had extended to O'Connor.

"No, no, sounds great." Now others began to file into the room. Lou decided not to pursue this line of conversation. It would serve no good purpose for him. He had gotten a read on O'Connor's mood and that was all he really needed at the moment. This was going to be a 'helmet and cup' meeting. Lou opened his leather bound notepad, took out the Cross pen it held and jotted down a few words, hoping that O'Connor would move his attentions elsewhere. He did.

"Bennett, did you check that source yet?"

"Yes I did, Hank. Just got off the phone. It's a go."

"Well get a final copy released by this afternoon."

"*Little kiss ass*", Lou thought. Ryan Bennett was a young reporter that had been hired while Lou was convalescing. Ryan came around the end of the table and sat directly across the table from Lou. "Morning", he said with a broad grin as he sat down.

"Hey there Ryan. Got a story wrapped up for this evening?"

"Yeah, just a column and a half on that school teacher screwing around with her eighth grade student."

"Oh, yeah, I heard about that. Not bad, good going."

Most of the twelve seats around the table were now filled and O'Connor called for the assembled to, '*Cut the chit-chat*'. The group stopped their small talk and looked up at O'Connor. He then led them

through the hot-list for the day. One by one he made sure that someone had been assigned to each item listed. He would give a brief outline or direction he wanted to be followed for each story. If a reporter asked for clarification they were met with a brusque reply, as if the question was a criticism. O'Connor never considered, for a moment, that he had not provided them enough information to take on their assignment. Thankfully today, the meeting looked like it would finish up without any verbal fireworks. Lou had given a status on the light weight story he was working on for next week's Sunday edition. He had not been given anything else from the hot-list, as usual. Just as the group was breaking up, Lou saw his chance to pitch his story idea.

"I saw Gurney was in town yesterday."

O'Connor, wiping off the meetings notes from the whiteboard, turned around quickly to face Lou. All the others were out of the room, but he still asked in a lower voice, "From the Globe?"

"Yeah, it definitely was him. I was picking up my kid at the university. He attended the same lecture my daughter Julie had."

"Whose lecture?" he said as he went to the door and closed it.

"A real egghead in global economics, a Dr. Kantos."

"Wait a minute, I've heard of that name...what was it now?" O'Connor paced toward the windows, still holding the eraser. "I remember, years ago he resigned from the President's Council of Economic advisors in a big huff," he said as he turned back at Lou. "But that was ages ago. He became a bit of a recluse after that. I can't think of anything he's done since then." O'Connor stood there with a serene expression on his face. He was content in his commanding knowledge of anything newsworthy, even going back 'ages'. Lou realized he had to choose his response carefully else O'Connor would retreat into a defensive mode. Lou needed to *very* carefully jiggle the baited hook.

"That's why I mentioned it. I figured you would know why the Globe had sent Gurney down here."

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"Knowing who Kantos is doesn't tell me what Gurney was up to..."

"Right, exactly!" Lou said nodding in agreement.

"But I also know Gurney and he is a sneaky S.O.B. from way back. He once swiped my flight ticket, right out of my carry-on bag in the bar at Logan." He pointed a wagging finger in Lou's direction. Lou gave him back his best 'Oh My God' shocked expression.

"No shit! The nerve of that guy!"

"Damn straight! I missed the flight, missed the press conference in DC and got chewed out by my editor. He damn near got my ass fired."

"Think he's doing something on Kantos?"

"Course he is, but why now? What is Dr. Kantos up to lately that would bring Gurney down from Boston to see him? Did you see him talking to Kantos?"

"No, not really. He was just there with lots of people, mostly students, hanging around Kantos, after he had finished the lecture. I just noticed him as I was looking for Julie in the crowd." Lou started to feel uncomfortable as he embellished on his 'little white lie'. Could he keep the lie interesting and real enough for O'Connor to finally take the bait?

"I assure you he wasn't there picking up his kid. No, he must be on to Kantos for something." He turned back to the window and thought for a moment. Then he whirled back in Lou's direction, again pointing his finger. "What was the lecture about?"

"Time Banking," Lou shot back.

O'Connor's face looked like he just remembered he left the pot on the boil, at home. The term was something he truly was drawing a blank on. He then stammered out a question, "Time what?" Lou jumped right in, giving O'Connor the Readers Digest 'condensed version' of what Julie had told him about the lecture. Then it appeared that signs of life were coming back to O'Connor's face.

"OK, okay, I get it now," he put his hand up signaling Lou to stop. He had gotten enough. Lou stopped talking and sat back in his chair and awaited the solution, which was sure to come now, from O'Connor.

"The Global Economic Forum is coming to Newport early next month. I'll bet Kantos is going to spring this thing on them. Gurney is probably working up material for a story." O'Connor walked to the head of the table and bounced the eraser off it and caught it in his hand. "But we'll do our story before the meeting even starts. Tell Sawyer and Bennett to get in here..."

"Shit!" thought Lou, "*he's spit out the hook!*" "Hank, Hank, you said yourself, '*the guy is a recluse*'. He won't talk to just anyone, right? Gurney probably got no more than the students did. He just sat in on the lecture. But my kid actually met him and spoke to him."

"Really?"

"Absolutely! She told me she practically got invited over to the house, by the guy and his wife."

"Lou, that's perfect. You're her dad, you go along with her, right? Then put some questions to him and see if he'll go for a full boot interview."

"Great idea, Hank! Kind of social chit-chat morphs into 'nuts and bolts' discussion about his theory."

"*Exactly*, you got it. Well skip Sawyer and Bennett, there's a crowd anyway. You take this yourself. Give Sawyer your copy for the Sunday edition story. He'll finish it off. I want you on this Kantos thing flat-out. No telling when Gurney might get something in The Globe about it. The sooner we get something out the better I'll feel. That meeting is in our backyard and I'll be damned if that S.O.B. will get anything on it, before we do. It's a PROCOM story, not the frigg'n Globe's. Preston would shit a brick, if I let that happen!"

"Right, Hank. I'll get right to it." said Lou, getting up from his chair. He knew O'Connor expected only 'arms and legs flying' once he gave a subordinate their marching orders. So he made sure he moved

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out the door quickly. He also made sure O'Connor didn't catch a glimpse of the grin he had on his face. "Thanks boss", he thought to himself.

###

Early that following Saturday morning, Julie and Lou left for T.F. Green to catch the flight to Baltimore to visit the Kantos place in Maryland. Julie was unusually cooperative with Lou about meeting the strict travel regimen he had outlined to her, "Pack just a carry-on, do it the night before, have a quick light breakfast in the morning, leave extra early to have time in hand, should traffic or getting through security, become bottlenecks."

Traveling 'Lou's way' meant being on the road by 4:30am. For Julie getting up at 4:00 am, as Lou had done, was too much to ask. Instead, she had slept in her cloths and rolled out of bed, grabbed her bag, only after Lou came looking for her at twenty-five past four. On the ride to the airport, she munched on a bagel and drank coffee from an extra-large cup, both of which she swiped off the kitchen counter, as she breezed through, on her way to the front door.

"I didn't intend you to bring the cup with you," Lou said as he drove.

"Well, we'd still be back there if I hadn't. Be thankful that I got most of your list done. Eating is something I can do anywhere."

He looked away from the empty road ahead, for a second. Julie was gulping at the coffee to lower the level in the jumbo cup, as the car sped along. "Careful..." he said with a broad grin. Julie looked over at him.

"Well it would be easier, if you weren't breaking the frigg'n sound barrier right now. I thought we were leaving early so you wouldn't have to do this?"

"I like doing this, you know that," he turned back to the road ahead. He tapped the brakes lightly and turned off onto the RT 95 on-ramp. The tires began to give an audible indication that they were

losing grip on the old road surface. Lou controlled the drift of the big rear-drive sedan, to the tune of the tires. "Like I always say..."

"A happy tire is a singing tire!" she said as she held the mug away from her. She kept it just above the dashboard in front of her. "You know if this spills, it'll probably short out the whole system and then where will we be? All this running around getting going at this God-awful time of day – all for nothing!" She looked over at him. He was still smiling. He always did this and she always hated it. "One of these days..." she said under her breath.

They had now merged onto the highway. Lou quickly signaled and smoothly moved into the center lane of the deserted road. "Now you're starting to sound like your mother." He turned to her and raised an eyebrow. "Really, she used to get all wound up with ideas of what 'might happen' to us, if this or that went wrong. I used to ask her if she ever considered that I knew what I was doing, even though she didn't. I mean, like today, my not knowing how to fly doesn't mean the plane won't get in the air, right? I mean the pilot and crew know what the hell they're doing. They will get us where we're going regardless of whether or not the passengers understand anything about flying a jet airplane."

"It's not the same thing."

"The hell it's not. When I was your age, I was racing competitively. I had my national competition license, the whole thing. I did it for years. The issue wasn't my knowing what I was doing; it was your mother having trust in me. Even worse, was her believing that I would, even for a second, put her in a dangerous situation."

"It's wasn't that, believe me. She just really hates to go fast."

Lou looked over at her. She was sipping her coffee again. She looked over the rim at him and bounced her eyebrows. "So you get the same treatment?"

Julie took the cup from her lips. "Yup, and believe me, I don't come anywhere close to what you do."

"Well in that old shit-box, I would hope not."

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"So get me a new one..." she said turning back to the cup.

"Yeah, right. Right after I win the lottery... and buy a place on the bay, and get myself a new car... sure I'll add it to my list."

"No, really, she is petrified of going fast. I think Grandma must've let her baby carriage roll down a hill or something, when she was in it."

"More likely your aunt Linda did."

They both broke into laughter. Julie had to keep the mouthful of coffee from spewing out. After she swallowed, her laughter became louder than Lou's. "And, and ... I can just see your mom hanging on tight and looking back up at her big sister with a 'Why are you doing this to *me?*' expression on her face."

"What is it with her? She doesn't ever get it, does she? I see it all the time with them. Auntie Linda treats her like she's still a little kid. Boy seeing them together really makes me thankful I'm an only child."

"Yeah, your mom didn't exactly win the 'sister lottery' with her. But she always sticks up for Linda. Even after all the crap she's taken from her over the years. And your Grandmother is no help, either. I remember times when we'd go over there and within minutes the two of them would turn your mother into a stumbling, fumbling, little eight year old. It always pissed me off. But your mom just never saw it. And my telling her about it and prodding her to stand up for herself, only made it worse for me. Sometimes I'm amazed we lasted long enough to have you."

"Gee, thanks. Remind me to do you a favor too, sometime."

"I'll make a note of it..."

They said little more for the remainder of the drive to the airport. They didn't have to. Over the years, since Lou's divorce, they often shared 'notes' about Lou's ex-wife. It seemed that more often than not, Julie would bring up annoying behaviors that her mother had also

shown to Lou, during their marriage. He hoped that by talking to her about them, that Julie might be able to better understand her, maybe it would help the two of them get along better. Yet, Lou realized that Julie was probably also having the same sort of 'gripe' sessions with her mother about him, going on about his annoying behaviors. He only hoped that Julie would use these confidences, she was gaining from them, for good and not ill. He couldn't tolerate having his only child, turn into a scheming, manipulative, well...a typical 'only child'.

Finding a parking space in the short-term lot was not a problem. The shuttle bus came just as they pulled their two carry-ons out of the trunk. They walked past the sailboat that is displayed prominently on the first floor, of the passenger terminal. Going up the escalator, Lou glanced back at the sloop and wondered if it had ever actually been in the water or had it been cobbled together just for this purpose? It served as a kind of 'department store mannequin' for the sailing industry of Rhode Island, but showing the latest sails and gear instead of woman's clothes.

As they waited to board, Julie picked up another course of breakfast at the snack-bar across from their gate. She came back to the passenger line with yogurt and a granola bar in one hand and a banana in the other hand. To Lou, it seemed that she was constantly eating and yet, never gained weight. He gave her a look as she stuffed the items into her carry-on. "What? All I had was a bagel? I can't make it through the flight just eating salted peanuts." He remained silent and just slowly shook his head.

Once they were settled in to their seats on the plane, Julie quickly finished off the food. Then, as the flight crew went through the emergency instructions spiel, she stuffed the banana peel and other bits of trash into the barf-bag. She stuffed the wadded-up bag into the pocket of the seat in front of her. She then sat back in her seat and watched out her window as they took off. As the plane leveled off and banked south she could see the park at the tip of Newport. It was where her father had taken her, as a child, to fly her first kite. She smiled to herself as the memory came to her. "*Now we're flying again,*" she thought.

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"So you never did fill me in on how you pulled this off?" she said.

"I haven't pulled anything off, yet."

"Well we're flying down to Maryland aren't we? And the paper is paying for it, right?"

"For me, not you."

"Dad, come on, tell me. How did you get the assignment?"

She was looking at him with wide eyes begging. In the morning sun, the yellow speckles in her brown eyes became like gold dust shimmering. "Well it was surprisingly easy. All I had to do was get O'Connor to think that the Globe was getting a story right under his nose, by someone he would like nothing better than to punch in the nose."

"Who?"

"Gurney..."

"Hey, I remember you talking about him before! You and he had a run-in or something up in Boston, right?"

"Not so much a 'run-in' as a drop-off with a bizarre twist. I was a new reporter working for the old Record," Julie gave him a blank look. "They're gone now. Anyway, Gurney was the hot-shot on the staff. So I was told to run over to Logan and hand deliver an overstuffed leather bound portfolio to him, before he took off for DC. So I get there and find him right where they told me he'd be, sitting in the bar in the Eastern Airlines terminal. So I give him the folio and he tells me to hand him the ticket that's sticking out of the carry-on at his feet. He takes the ticket and tells me to wait a minute, because he wants me to bring the folio back. So while I'm standing there, I notice that there are two drinks on the table and that the bag, I had taken the ticket from, was next to the empty chair opposite Gurney. So I immediately 'smell a rat'..."

"You always 'smell a rat', Dad. I swear you say that to me all the time."

He waited until he felt she had gotten the full effect of triumph over 'the old man'. These outbursts of hers had become more prevalent as Julie had matured into her later teens. He was no longer the 'infallible father', no longer someone that she would listen to with unquestioning attention. Lou was just happy that she still listened at all. Her jabs or questions, directed his way, were not seen by him as a threat to his parental 'authority'. That boat had sailed years before. No, he saw Julie's attitude as an indication that she would never be anyone's fool. And to Lou, if that was the only thing that he passed on to her, he would have done alright as a father.

"As I was saying... he takes out an envelope from the folio. Then scribbles down something on a piece of note paper, stuffs the ticket and note in the envelope and addresses it. He tells me to drop it in the mail on my way back to the paper. So I take off back to the paper with the envelope, like he told me."

"I don't get it..."

"I didn't either, at the time, but later I put two and two together. You see the envelope was addressed to the Globe."

"But Gurney was working for the Record, like you."

"Exactly. I almost brought it back to my editor, but decided that this was way over my pay-rate. I figured the safest thing would be to just do what he had told me. So I mailed it. Turns out Gurney had been drinking with O'Connor before I had shown up."

"Your boss?"

"Yeah, but then he was at the Globe. He had just been given his first big assignment. Covering the swearing in of a local M.I.T. professor into the cabinet in DC. Gurney ran into him at the bar. Once he learned that O'Connor's big assignment was to cover the same story he was covering, he sent word back to the Record for his folio. I guess he had contact info or something that he needed to put on the envelope.

O'Connor got so screwed up with the airline people, about not having a ticket, that he missed the flight. He had to tell his boss he

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had lost the ticket. He never did get to DC in time to cover the swearing in ceremony. Anyway in a couple of weeks I hear that Gurney had left us for the Globe. That was almost six months before the Record folds."

"What a little snake!"

"No, more of a rat deserting the sinking ship. If I had been a little quicker on the up-take, I would have gotten out too. Gurney was just more experienced at this game than I was then."

"What about O'Connor?"

"Well it was about a year after, when I heard O'Connor was coming to PROCOM. I had just started working there and the story, of his screw-up, arrived at the paper before he did. The first time I heard the gossip, I realized it must have been O'Connor that was drinking with Gurney that day. After being pretty much ignored and passed over by management at the Globe, he figured he needed a change. Gurney, on the other hand, just took off once he got to the Globe. He became the 'fair haired boy' and is now their number one reporter with a rumored fat salary to boot.

Everyone, at work, pretty much knows that O'Connor has really got an attitude about the Globe and specifically about Gurney. But I'm the only one who knows why."

"So?"

"So I had the perfect 'bait' to get O'Connor to bite on my story idea. Once he believed that my doing this story on Dr. Kantos might pull the rug out from under Gurney and the Globe, I had him right where I wanted him. Hell, I should've told him the only seat available was first class, he probably would've OK'd that too!"

Julie grinned along with him. "See, I knew you could pull this off. Jonathan and the rest of the team thought I was just BS'ing them, when I said I'd get all the help they needed from Dr. K."

"Well I still don't know how much help all this is going to be for your 'team'. But it could be a real shot in the arm for me, at PROCOM. Since coming back to work, I haven't gotten a decent assignment. It's

like they all think I'll croak if they give me a real story assignment. If I nail this one, they'll see that I can do just as good a story as before. Maybe then they'll stop treating me like a damn Leper."

"Right! And you'll take me along to Sweden, when you get the Pulitzer..." she said with a broad grin.

"You mean New York."

"No, I've been to New York. I want to go to the fancy dinner ceremony in Sweden, or is it Norway?"

"You're thinking of that other prize, the Nobel Prize. The newspaper prize is given out at luncheon in a library at Columbia University..."

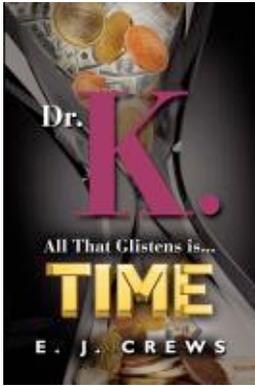
"Really? Well I've spent enough time in libraries lately, I'll pass."

"I'll remember you said that when I get the invite."

"Sure."

"Hey, smart guy, someone gets one every year. I'd go to a damn hotdog stand if that's where they were giving them away."

Their flight continued routinely on to Baltimore-Washington. Julie dozed with her head resting against the window shade. Lou went through the notes he had collected on Dr. Kantos. He was determined to find a good hook that he could play up in his article. Something that people did not know, or would expect, from such an academic. Just writing a dry, fact filled piece, about this doctor of economics, would not do. Yet he had not found anything in his research effort, for the past week, that showed any promise of something out of the ordinary. Finally Lou sat back and closed his eyes and thought, *"It all depends on this interview. This guy has got to open up to me, big time."*



Inspired by his students, Dr. K. rejoins the battle of ideas, after many years of self-imposed professional exile. They take action after hearing his revolutionary theory of a digital substitute for currency. If universally adopted, Work Units, (WU) could replace all of the world's failing currencies. Dr. K.'s new-found popularity elicits the unwanted attention of the global elite's minions: the Department of Defense, the U.S. Senate and the multi-national media empire Omni Orion Group.

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