

Sanctuary

by Greg Gourdian

Prologue

The polarized glass of the hospital suite window was set to screen the harsh glare of the afternoon sun to a dim glow that left the quiet private room in near darkness. Cynthia lay in the comforting emptiness of the constant morphine drip provided by her patient-controlled analgesia pump, gathering her strength for Charles' visit. She lay trapped in a love turned bitterly sour by the pain of her cancers. A silent ribbon of light appeared as the door gently opened.

Entering the room Charles is saddened by the lighting, he thinks, 'She keeps herself hidden in darkness for me when the light would be so much cheerier. She can't bear to let me see the scars where cancers and surgeons have had their way with her.'

"Cynthia dear, you should let in the light you know, it isn't good for you to hide yourself in the dark, it's depressing. You know you'll feel better in the light."

Smiling for her benefit he crosses to the window and keys down the polarization to let in more daylight before approaching her bed.

Cynthia turned away from the window, the light, and Charles' pain and distress. Anger rose within her in spite of the soporific narcotic, acid flooded her empty stomach and began to burn. She resented the mild sensation of it, knowing without the comfort of the drug the pain would be excruciating, she felt the absence of her pain keenly, its loss somehow symbolic of so many other things she had lost or had been taken away from her.

'Charles.' she thinks his name to herself with tones of frustration, anger and resentment. Exploring her heart, searching for the pain of their diminished love, like a tongue probing a sore tooth.

"It hurts my eyes Charles, please, the light hurts my eyes"

She cannot look at him, framed in the glow of the window. She knows this is his trick, his innocent way of keeping her face turned away from him so that he needn't look upon the ruined remains of her face, or worse, see her feelings that lived amidst her scars, that burned in her eyes, furrowing stiff tissues in painful lines, etching pain, anger and resentment into her cancer marbled features.

Of all the pains the morphine could steal away from her, she missed the pain in her heart the most. The feelings were still there, muted, struggling to assert themselves through the smothering weight of the morphine but the feelings were

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oddly distant almost as if they belonged to a stranger and not herself at all. Cynthia mourned the absence of the brilliant emotions with which she was accustomed to burning, and accepted in their place this rankling love that twisted in her heart with anguished hate, confusing her, and leaving her powerless to resist Charles' misguided ministrations.

Touching Cynthia's temple tenderly, tears welled in his eyes. The denial that rose habitually to his tongue in his defense was caught in his throat so tightly he could not cough to clear it; Charles could not free the words that would weave comfort for him, comfort meant, or so he wished to believe, for Cynthia. In her effort to reject him, and, so he thought, to spare him from her agonies, he saw the shattered remains of her love for him. He was filled with the overwhelming love he felt for her which renewed his spirit and determination to see her through this illness and returned to a healthy life again.

Charles missed her when he thought of her, which was quite often these days; far more often than before her first cancers appeared.

Before her cancer began they had become strangers to each other.

The life he provided her was enough to keep her close, but the youthful vigor of their love had deliquesced into a tar pit in which their feelings became mired and sank beneath the surface where they spoiled and turned to stone as if they were dinosaurs suffering extinction and the smothering transformation into fossils.

Cynthia's fear and the pain that followed the blooms of cancer that grew to gorge upon her skin had awakened her from her emotional lassitude and sent her flying back to him. For a few brief years they were happy together in a way they could never know before, while they fought the first few rounds of her disease together and fooled each other into believing victory was just ahead, while the cancers, indifferent to the punishments of chemicals, radiation, surgery, and their denial, grew on.

"Cynthia, you must live on just a little while longer, please. Hang on. I love you, I've always loved you; I couldn't bear to lose you now, not now."

"Charles, you want to keep me with you forever, but I don't want that anymore, I want to go. I want to die."

"But you needn't die you know, not really. You really needn't die. How could you want to die? You know how much it hurts me to hear you say that. Our project is nearly finished, you can be saved; you'll live on, with me. Just hang on a few more days, I promise, I will save you."

"Nooooo! Charles, no! I don't want to be saved by your project! Its horrible, its evil, its insane! Let me go Charles! Please, please Charles, let me go..."

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Dr. Jenner was concluding the final tests for today's demonstration When Charles Laughton came in. 'In person,' Jenner thought to himself, 'this must be serious.'

Jenner glanced around nervously, hoping that nothing was laying about that would convey anything but the most positive image of their project.

The prospective test subjects, lying comatose in their life support systems, were as clean and healthy as they could be in their circumstances. They hardly resembled the spooky living corpses Jenner saw when he was alone with them.

The patient that occupied the center of the room was heavily drugged and stirred feebly. 'The project couldn't look better, under the circumstances,' Jenner decided.

With a visible effort Jenner pumped himself up to the effervescent personality that Laughton expected of him. Laughton himself was ordinarily a dynamic man, overflowing with confidence, exuding an energetic mastery of the world around him. Laughton distrusted quiet men, even Laughton's servants were expected to speak their minds on occasion.

"Mr. Laughton, so good to see you," Jenner smiled as he approached Charles to take his hand firmly in his own hand and pump it the three times he had learned by imitating Laughton. Jenner wondered how many others, like himself, concealed grimaces with smiles in the presence of this powerful man.

"I trust your wife is doing well?" Jenner said, even as he thought 'Not,' to himself very clearly.

Jenner knew damn well that Charles' unexpected personal visit could only mean that Cynthia Laughton was dying at last; that she might be dead in days now, or possibly only hours.

Charles Laughton was far too busy to visit the project on any but the most urgent business. He would not trust the daily reports that crossed his desk when it came down to the wire. He would only trust his direct appraisal of the man in charge, Dr. Jenner.

"Thank you Robert, but no, no, things couldn't be much worse for Cynthia today. Can you tell me we are finally able to save her?"

"No." Dr. Jenner was startled by the boldness of the truth coming from his own lips but that was how it was with Laughton, damn it. Laughton's charismatic aura seemed to cut through all pretension to make speaking even the most terrifying truth more comforting than risking a lie. It was too late to deny he had said it; vacillation would only appear to be weakness.

"No, we can't save Cynthia today, nor tomorrow, or next week. We can try, but

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we would fail.”

As if to contradict him the living corpse suspended in its maze of life support systems groaned forth a “no” of its own. It was a lifeless moan, barely audible, a nearly silent word whose apparent agreement seemed to contradict Jenner's meaning, yet, it was spoken by a being almost certainly incapable of thought.

No mind could be venturing forth a reasoned opinion or response from within the ruined husk strapped to the table. The shadowy remnant of a mind there could at best fasten weakly on the form of a word it had once known and echo it back in mimicry of an ability to communicate that was now forever beyond its power to pursuit.

“No-ooo...” It weakly wailed like the ghost it was, haunting a corpse that clung to senseless life. “No-o..”

“I knew it Jenner. Who writes your damn reports for you, your damn lies you are too afraid to speak yourself?”

Robert Jenner's brief flirtation with honesty was past, in the face of blatant truth an outright lie might just fly more easily at this point.

“Somers sir.”

“She's fired.”

“I need to keep her on sir.” Laughton would respect loyalty, he admired it. He could save Somers' job for her.

“You're all fired.”

It was over.

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"I did my best to save your job for you." Glasses clinked and voices warbled softly in the quiet background noises of the bar. Muted punk rock hinted at the nostalgia with which the heedless listeners might have reflected on their youth.

"I can imagine your surprise when he killed the whole project, but why? We were so close, we nearly had it!"

"It was his wife; she's dying you know." Tom Landry ventured forth the secret that Robert thought was his privilege alone to know. "Don't look so shocked Bob, half the staff knows. It wasn't hard to deduce."

"Damn!" Sheila rejoined, "His wife?"

"No, damn his wife!" Bob blurted. 'If she'd only lasted another year or three...'

"What's wrong with his wife?" Sheila pursued. She was disturbed to have been left out of the very heart, the soul, of their project.

Sheila, habitually lost in her work, had little interest in the world beyond her laboratory; between them Tom and Bob pieced together the Laughton's tragedy and Cynthia's imminent demise.

Sheila took it all in, relieved at last that the project had had such a warm and human purpose to balance the clinical chill they had all worked in together. The secrecy, especially, had been numbing, but the murders? The truth of the murders was dangerously close to breaking free of the chains of rationalizations with which she had shackled them to keep them hidden away from the world.

The murders were driving her mad is what they were doing.

The project had started innocently enough. Lab animals and all that. The trials had gone well, although the animals never recovered completely. The shift to human subjects startled her, but she had come around to the arguments offered by Bob.

Their patients came to them in two ways, body donors and spirit donors. The body donors had all been lost to inexplicable comas where their brain functions had ceased with no apparent injury to their brains. The project's living 'patients' were legally and technically dead. They were barely clinging to their lives, lives that would soon slip away even though their bodies were nearly healthy. There were no known means by which to intervene to save them.

The spirit donors were dying patients whose minds remained alive and vital while their bodies failed them in myriad ways through accidents, disease, or old age.

These two types of donors were brought together by the mysterious project, melded into new beings, living beings, but not at all well.

The brain dead body donors recovered enough life to survive without the costly

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machines that had held them in limbo awaiting their fate.

The mortally afflicted spirit donors died, as they were expected to, helped on a little bit, perhaps; but still, they would have died, anyway, they'd had no hope left at all, except for the project.

But, the 'new' patients, the melded creatures whose bodies were hosts to spirits they had not been born with were hopelessly incapacitated and were killed.

Not killed, murdered. What else could you call it?

Sheila wasn't aware of the murders at first. And then for awhile she was aware of the killings but she denied it. Then she started investigating and discovered coincidences in the records of the new patients' deaths that couldn't be chance. Tom or Bob had attended every death. None of the twenty or so technicians and nurses that staffed the project had ever been present. The staff was always away from their monitoring stations at the time.

At last Sheila confronted Bob, deciding it would be safe to go to him first rather than call the police. Her career would be as totally ruined as his if the murders were made public, never mind that she was innocent of any wrong-doing herself. She was, perversely, more vulnerable to ruin by this atrocity because she was a woman. She would be presumed to have been too stupid to know what was going on, reinforcing the persistent stereotyping of women, especially blonde women, as hopelessly dumb.

If not condemned for stupidity the Sheila would be presumed to have known all about the murders from the beginning and to have gone along with it willingly, perpetuating the myth of women as evil that went back to Eve in the bible.

So Sheila had gone to Bob to hear his side of the story, to be fair to him, not to protect herself or her career. Or so she had told herself.

Bob already knew she had been investigating the deaths, the murders. But they weren't really murders, he had argued.

Perhaps not; the creatures they destroyed were hardly human.

Their awareness of themselves or the world around them scarcely existed. They could neither learn, nor grow, nor participate in life in any way that mattered, even to themselves

Bob let them live on for months or even years while Sheila studied them to assure herself that Bob was right. Finally she came to agree with his conclusions.

The murders resumed.

Sheila had argued that the point of the project was to save the dying patients by transferring their consciousness into the living bodies of brain-dead patients, and

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that if they gave their melded patients every opportunity to live they might eventually develop into people again, especially the newer ones who were obviously less damaged, clearly more human in their appearances than the earliest subjects.

If the test subjects were killed any human potential they might have would die with them and no one would ever know. Sheila had argued that the data gleaned from the slightest recovery of a test subject might be meaningful to the advancement of the project.

But there wasn't room to keep so many subjects alive in secret. There wasn't time to slow the pace of new tests of their procedures.

So the melded patients died. They were murdered.

It rocked Sheila to her core when Bob accused her of equating the patients' situations with that of fetuses being aborted. She had thought herself resolved to the need and rightfulness of abortions, she had had one herself. The parallels to the patients she defended and the fetuses she would allow to be sacrificed disturbed her.

Clinging to her hard won belief in the right to choose had swayed Sheila to see Bob's point, just as he had thought it would. Sheila resented having her own inner conflicts turned against her. Her doubts about the murders persisted even though she went along.

In the end Sheila's pragmatic self-interest was always strongest.

Now at last the murders could stop even though the secrecy surrounding them would still have to continue. All the murders would live on in Sheila's conscience to haunt her.

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Internet News Service: Cynthia Leah Boight Laughton, wife of industrialist Charles Laughton died this morning at 4:20 am. At 52 years of age Cynthia Laughton finally succumbed to the cancer that had slowly consumed her life for more than twenty years.

Once considered to be a promising artist, with several successful exhibitions following her marriage to Charles Laughton at age 20, Cynthia's career came to a stagnant conclusion a few years before being diagnosed with cancer.

Cynthia Laughton's withdrawal from society caused some speculation that her marriage was headed for divorce, but then she surprised everyone with her sudden return to society, a return that seemed to have been precipitated by her disease.

Cynthia's spirit in battling her disease was heartening to the millions throughout the world who shared her plight; her continued survival against all odds inspired many others to resist and overcome their own cancers. Her endowments to charities and research institutes to battle cancer, made with her husband's considerable wealth, continue to promote research into many varieties of cancer and to provide treatment and comfort to those suffering with cancer.

Perhaps most important of all, Cynthia Laughton's endowments to empower citizen groups promoted green movements and have helped curb the rising pollution and degradation of the environment which underlies the alarming rate of growth of cancer throughout the world.

Services for Cynthia Laughton will be held Tuesday at 2 pm in Boight Park before the 'Fountain of Life.' The park will be closed to the public for the duration. The public is asked not to attend. Please send donations in lieu of flowers or gifts to The Boight Foundation For Global Health.

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The sun shone harshly on the black umbrellas that sheltered the small crowd by the fountain. UV and IR rays were eating away at the mourners; their grief was confused with their worries for their own skins.

These were some of society's most elite and mighty, people who were rarely seen in the light of day without full dress, capes, sun block, sunhats and umbrellas. Even then they braved the sun's deadly radiation only briefly.

Charles Laughton was not among the mourners, nor was Cynthia's remains. The crowd was anxious and uncertain how to proceed without the charismatic presence of either Charles or Cynthia to lead them. They were good sycophants for the most part, most knew this but denied their inferior status with grace.

Their discomfort was a result of Charles' jest and revenge. He could never tolerate the weaker people that had always seemed to hover about his wife. Indeed, for awhile Charles had managed to drive them off after they were married. Charles managed keep his knowledge of his culpability for having destroyed Cynthia's career hidden from himself. In driving off the 'flies' as he had thought of them, Charles had isolated Cynthia from the energy that had driven her artistic inspirations.

As Cynthia had pined away in the isolation Charles had imposed upon her Cynthia's talents atrophied and died. Charles had always been confused by art, he presumed that the merit of art lay not in the artist, but in the social fabric that sustained it. He supposed that society would find talent anywhere it needed to in order to suit its own purposes and that the merits of the individuals who were lauded or disdained seemed irrelevant to the rewards or punishments with which people deemed artists were bestowed.

Art threatened Charles; when Cynthia's talents dried up he was comforted, albeit disturbed as well, because her ardor for himself seemed to wane as well.

Charles had been attracted to Cynthia by her captivating presence. While others were drawn to her talent, Charles was drawn by the sheer numbers of people who gravitated around her. Charles recognized in Cynthia, or so he thought, a woman as powerful as himself in her ability to enthrall so many willing people. He believed that a woman with such extraordinary, captivating power was the only sort he could ever hope to desire.

In driving off the flies he had driven off the manifestation of Cynthia's power, that part of her that could catch and hold his attention. Consequently, just as Cynthia's interest in him waned, so too did Charles' interest in her wane. For her this period was one of bitterness. She had come to understand that Charles would not compete for her attention but simply drive all others away.

At first this had pleased her. She had been unaware of the importance of other

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people in her life since they had always been there. Now, in the isolation imposed by her husband she began to languish without at first understanding why.

As Cynthia began to realize what she had lost, she began to resent Charles' interference, but it was already too late. In her isolation with him she had come to adopt his view of her old friends; seen in that merciless perspective, they were no longer attractive to her. When she tried to return to her old companions she found she had become a stranger, an outsider. Their eagerness to once again exalt her only put her off.

She didn't know where to turn; she was without direction in her life. She turned inward upon herself and adopted the isolation that Charles had imposed, making it her home.

When her disease began to bloom upon her fair skin she was trying to revive her talent by turning from portraiture to landscapes. Her pursuit of the natural world had come to replace both her friends and Charles in her life and she courted her new work dangerously, flirting nakedly with a sun untempered by the polluted sky as she worked below its solemn gaze.

No one was surprised, least of all herself when the cancers had appeared upon her. She could admit to herself that she had somehow perversely been courting cancer and death rather than life and the sun as she painted. Cynthia suspected that it was this dark romance with death that had so tainted her paintings that they alienated her old admirers who could not revere her new abominations.

Cynthia accepted responsibility for the failure of her new work to find a home with her old audience; just as she accepted the success with which her new cancers found a home within her.

What surprised Cynthia was the brevity of her acceptance of her disease. Once out in the open her romance with death turned to terror. She turned to Charles who was the only person remaining in her world. Nor did he not spurn her, for at last she was wholly in his power.

Charles had always tried to deny his will to dominate Cynthia. He saw no responsibility with driving off her friends as an attack upon her spirit. Now, without any seeming effort on his part, she was finally entirely in his power.

Charles exulted! He understood that her cancer had driven him into his arms but he had no problem with that. He never could have accepted that he had helped her to court her terrible disease, either by the privation of company that set her adrift from humanity, or by the degradation of the environment that followed his factories wherever he would build them.

Charles was free to enjoy his new found power over his wife without guilt; he scarcely noticed how much she had changed from the woman she once was.

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Where before he had believed he had sought a powerful partner, he now found himself with a child-like bride, and this pleased him because now his authority was assured.

Charles indulged Cynthia's every whim and fancy as only he could; his wealth and power in the world were great enough to buy small nations, or even Silicon Valley.

As Cynthia learned to use Charles' wealth more and more toward her own purposes her spirit was rekindled by the breadth and depths to which she could aspire. All the smoldering resentment toward Charles returned with new inspiration; she turned his wealth against him with a vengeance, funding any number of causes that she hoped would choke his factories with enough lawsuits and regulations to restore some semblance of health to the world she had watched him carelessly destroy.

Charles was too infatuated with his role as a father to the woman who had become his child-like wife to pay attention to the conflicts of interest that arose between Cynthia's projects and his own. His wealth was more than enough to weather the inconveniences that sprouted from her social movements. In the long run Charles began to find it cheaper to anticipate her growing influence and go along with it supportively, than to pay lawyers to fight her on his behalf when he himself could not resist her.

As Cynthia's sickness overtook her body her spirit grew stronger; she found herself once more at the hub of society. Before, the sycophants she had attracted had admired her talent and she had eventually spurned them for their weaknesses. Now, the sycophants were drawn to the wealth and power she commanded and she forgave them their weaknesses. Cynthia learned to tolerate her sycophants again, provided they proved useful to any of her multitude of causes.

Cynthia treated them all with warmth, compassion, and respect and they loved her as well as they could be allowed to in return.

By the time Cynthia took to her bed in her hospital suite she had built an empire of her own from the fruits of her husband's wealth, but she was once more alone with her pain, bitter and angry with herself, her husband, and the world.

The sycophants' black umbrellas closed quietly as dusk descended and the inertia which had held everyone nervously waiting out their last devotions to Cynthia finally broke. As if excused by some stern teacher they drifted quietly away a little puzzled that no one came to let them know they were there to be insulted.

Charles sadly laid Cynthia's ashes to rest in the earth of his own grave and then he left his life to rest with her as well. His suicide was quiet and anticlimactic. His lawyers were well paid to keep his final moments private; they succeeded in

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downplaying this final event to the press.

Charles' immense estate was but a fragment of its former glory; he had allowed all his wealth to wither under the onslaught of Cynthia's projects.

Still, he was incredibly wealthy when he died.

The bulk of his estate went to endow the project upon which he had staked all of his hopes for the future.

But Sheila, Tom, and Bob were left out in the cold.

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Billy was frightened. He didn't want Grandma to live with him. Grandma scared him. Grandma was mean. He didn't care if she was dying, let her die! He knew he'd be miserable if they made her live with him.

At the Reincarnation Incorporated clinic Grandma was waiting. She had a court order to enforce her transfer to her youngest grandchild, and she would soon be free of the pain and suffering her aged body tormented her with. To be young again, what joy! And a boy this time, how interesting...

In the courtroom Karen and William Tingold Sr. sat at the table with their attorneys and listened as a junior partner argued for their young son's life. William Sr. kept his cancer secret on advice from their attorney. William was conflicted about trying to save his only child's independence. On the one hand, he feared what a terrible thing it would be for the boy to be forced to share his life with his Grandmother. On the other hand he realized that he might soon need to share his son's life to save himself from death's door. But William dreaded sharing his with his mother as well. They were fighting to preserve their son's independence on the grounds that his son's civil rights were being violated by being forced to share his life with his grandmother. The ACLU was footing the bill, but would withdraw if they knew William Sr. was fighting, not for his son, but for himself.

The senior partner of Brown, Ferris, Whering and Mugs was worried. He had to lose this case, but it would have to be close. He had to make it look as if every possible avenue of argument was exhausted in the attempt to preserve young William's independence. This was a landmark case and would boost his firm's image regardless of the outcome, but it must never look as if the case had already been decided months before the jury selection even commenced.

The jury looked good. The members empanelled were carefully screened, their records doctored. They would show their compassion and concern for young William openly, while upholding the law of the land that would allow the senior Mrs. Tingold, to share her grandson's life. Few of the jurors were middle aged or older; since this was a case that would favor the young, if won, it helped to give the jury the appearance of being biased in favor of the defense. In this gray society ruled by aged baby-boomers the civil rights of the young were on the decline; however the pretense that everything was decided fairly and legally was important to maintain the peace. These were troubled times.

The jurors were rotten to the core, with disease. They were referred to the court by an old boys' network of physicians eager to protect their own rights to share the lives of their children when the need should arise. Each juror wanted the promise of extended life the grandmother was fighting for; each knew their own life was at stake if they found in favor of the boy; the grandmother must win.

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There would be no one to point out the bias of the jurors. This was a done deal.

“In conclusion, we ask you to overturn the Laughton Law to protect this young boy’s innocence and freedom, to allow him to grow up a whole and undivided person free to pursuit his own life independently of his grandmother. The interests of Mrs. Tingold can never really be in harmony with the youthful aspirations of a six year old boy and her imposed intimacy can never allow him to mature as a healthy, whole, sane or male individual. Please show mercy for this defenseless boy and preserve him from perpetual bondage to his grandmother. Thank you.”

As the defense attorney rested his case, William Sr. wondered what was wrong. The defense seemed well orchestrated, solidly made, but he sensed that he had lost. At the opposite table his mother smiled knowingly. She winked and leered. William Sr. shuddered.

‘Perhaps,’ William thought, ‘it would be better to transfer to a bond-body, or a convict, or even just to die.’ He didn’t dare even imagine a life shared with his mother so intimately.

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The body-bonder's office was doing brisk business.

"Do you think you'll get a decent associate?" Marta asked her neighbor in line.

"I hope so, I had an uncle who would have made a good associate, but he chose my younger brother. I did everything I could to make myself more attractive to him, diet, exercise, the whole deal. But, six years difference was too much for me to overcome."

"I know." Marta replied, "I bet you come from a large family too. What's your name?"

"Stuart. Of course I do, seems like everyone does these days. No one wants to risk being without a healthy child when they are ready to associate."

"Yeah, my family has a few relatives who might make good associates for me, but there is too much competition."

"I bet everyone here has the same problem. But you look good. Have you been following a program?"

"Don't be silly, I've been working out and dieting same as you. What else is there to do?"

"Well, my dad says that schools used to teach you how to read and write and figure. You wouldn't believe some of the stories he tells about the 'old days'. He's even taught me some history."

"You're lucky. Sounds like your dad cared for you for more than just your body. My folks could care less what I might be interested in, so long as I'm a fit vessel for the preservation of the family."

"But here I am now, being bonded on the open market to someone I'm not even related to, because they have more children than they can use."

"Thanks, I know I was lucky. But where will it all end? Did you know we're approaching the second generation of Incarnations?"

"No, what's that?"

"Well, Reincarnation Incorporated's been operating nearly twenty years now, and some of the first associates are looking for new partners for themselves. Their old partners' bodies are getting too old or too sick in spite of getting the best care available."

"Oh! And they're being reincarnated a second time? I didn't know they could do that."

"No one was sure they could. I've heard that the senior associates become

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diminished in strength after transferring a second time, their body partners can finally have more power over them as a result.”

“They wouldn’t allow that though would they? Wouldn’t they just use more conditioning of their junior associates to maintain control?”

“Maybe. Not always. A junior partner with too much conditioning can’t be trained to work for their senior partners. So maybe the newest associate can take advantage of the power struggle between the older associates. But it could go the other way too. If the partners already have a good working relationship, then they may opt for a new junior partner with the maximum conditioning.

“A total wipe.”

“I thought total wipes were a myth.”

“They are. No one can be totally wiped. But they can be so heavily conditioned that they lose all assertiveness, all imagination, everything that characterizes them as an individual. They get trained to withdraw into their minds to live in simple dreams without any reference to the real world or any relationship with their senior partners. At least, that’s the theory. Sometimes a wiped junior partner is powerful enough to interact and torment their senior partners in spite of their conditioning, but as far as I know that’s very rare.”

To be continued....

* * *

This story was first written in 1981. We had nearly 400 pages then, but lost them all due to becoming homeless.

c’este la vie...

Enjoy!

love, Grigori Rho Gharveyn, aka Roger Holler, Greg Gourdian, and many more...

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Bio:

We have been collectively known by the name Greg Gourdian for the purposes of publishing our articles however some of our stories, poetry, and songs have bylines with our given name, Roger Holler.

We are currently known as Grigori Rho Gharveyn, or simply Gharveyn.

We perceive ourselves as a collective of people spanning many worlds in different universes. We seem to share many bodies; however we have only one body here in this world we share with you now.

We worked with the general public as a psychic reader in several psychic fairs for a little over four years from 1981 to 1986.

Much of our written work has been channeled however we often have no idea whose voices are speaking through us when we are channeling.

We have many strange tales to tell regarding our odd adventures in this world, in other worlds, or on our spiritual journeys.

We try to tell our tales in a humorous, engaging, entertaining manner.

While we were a high-school student we channeled classes in metaphysics and parapsychology, and taught classes in sociology, and psychology.

We are still emerging from the closet in regard to being a collective of many people inhabiting what appears to be a single body in the context of the world we appear to share with you. Our current written works reflect this change in our personal perspective by adopting plural forms of reference to ourselves that may not always appear consistently, particularly in our older work. Using plural forms of self-reference helps us to develop a greater awareness of ourselves as a collective as well as conveying to other people how we perceive ourselves.

We hope you will understand if we may sometimes sound awkward, confusing, or conceited as a consequence of making this adjustment to our self-references.

Our group's primary beliefs share these ideals:

- Love should always be universal.*
- Liberty should be unconditional for everyone.*
- Justice is best served by not judging yourself or any other people.*

For further details please read the section [about Gharveyn](#) on our website or view our profiles on [Linked In](#) or on [Temple Illuminatus...](#)

Namaste