
Would You?

Given the chance to live your life over,

would you

accept an invitation to

Re-Live?

By

Alan LeMond

TOP SECRET
F. Y. E. O.

**ALL THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE
REPRODUCED FROM THE ORIGINALS AND
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RE-LIVE CASE FILE~ NO. 3162

THE INITIAL VOLUNTEERS OF THE Re-live EXPERIMENT

NOTE ONE: *The following volunteers are listed as families because each family will ultimately be affected. However, there is only one member of each family actually participating in the test. The participants are: Henry Howard, Marlene Smothers, Maurice (Morris) Thompson, Kiki (no last name), Aaron Trueblood and Sonja Wanamaker.*

NOTE TWO: *Volunteers were not charged for the program. Had they been asked to pay for the experience, none would have been able to afford it.*

In fact, most of the current resentment against Re-Live hinges on the high cost of being able to correct (or 'reshape' to use Re-Live's phrase) past mistakes. The general public is furious that only the very rich can afford the service. This extremely successful corporation has the stamp of approval from various government agencies whose voting members are--it has been charged--secret stock holders. But official approval did not and does prevent scores of lawsuits, filed and being filed against Re-Live. Many are pending in various courts.

Government approval was given even though the fates of the first six (five finished) volunteers are still pending. Because of this unprecedented "jump the gun" policies by the agencies, critics agree with the venerable Senator Wayright from Alabama who said, quite eloquently, "There's some under the table sh... shenanigans goin' on heer. Somebody's got a dog in this hunt."

NOTE THREE: *Out of a vast number of volunteers, the following six were selected very carefully as examples of future Re-Live clients. The aim, of course was an attempt to encompass a variety of troubled personalities and situations.*

Also, amazing as it may seem, the Pre-Re-Live psychological profiles predicted the six volunteers would be a compatible group.

- 1. HENRY HOWARD** *is both a very unhappy family man and someone whose life has been drastically altered by a tragic accident earlier in his life.*
- 2. MARLENE SMOTHERS** *is a prime example of the crashing failure that can come from early, superficial success.*
- 3. MAURICE (MORRIS) THOMPSON** *is the unhealthy and unhappy result of rigidly trying to follow society's every rule to the T, giving oneself no wiggle room for experimental fun times. A hollow Ken doll who wants to be a real boy.*
- 4. KIKI** *is an example of how a life spent in the pursuit of instant pleasure usually results in a waste of talent and is, ultimately of course, a waste of life. Once done it is*

almost impossible to be undone. Unless one has the means to live one's life over.

5. *AARON TRUEBLOOD is a 'walking wounded', someone whose fear-filled life is the result of traumatic childhood experiences over which he had no control.*

6. *SONJA WANNAMAKER is the oldest of the group at 76. She is relatively pleased with her life, but she wants more. After years of study, Sonja believes if she had a chance to do it all over, knowing what she knows now, she would do everything right and live to be a very old, productive and happy human being. Sensible even, close to being a 'Wise Woman.' Revered? Perhaps.*

NOTE FOUR: *All of the information in this report was obtained from the files of Re-Live (and Live Again), various government agency files or from interviews with the participants in the initial Re-Live experiment.*

All--with the exception of Marlene Smothers and the government agencies--cooperated promptly and willingly.

THE FIRST RE-LIVE FAMILIES:

Family One: Henry Eugene Howard. Wife, Marion. Two sons, Dewayne and Norton. Henry, 47. Marion, 46. Dewayne, 18. Norton, 16. Henry is a casualty of the recent economic downturn. An employee of a major manufacturing firm until the company relocated to another country to cut expenses and personnel.

Henry received a large severance check, but over Marion's strong objections, Henry invested most of it in equipment, legal consultation and a saturation advertising campaign for his new business HOWARD'S HANDY HOUSEHOLD HELPER.

Henry had high hopes for his new business, imagining a chain of 4-H's across the nation. But no matter how hard Henry tries, so far he has achieved only moderate success.

His youngest son, Norton, says it'll never fly. The name is gay and will keep people away, and besides, isn't 4-H taken?

Dewayne, his number one son, agreed it was a lame name, but only as an aside, he had absolutely no interest in anything his father did or did not do for a living as long as Good Ole Dad kept on giving him most of the money to do what he needed to do. He had his own ways of getting the rest.

Henry is vaguely aware that Dewayne has some sort of major problem but avoids thinking about it.

The family finances now depend mostly on Marion who is a nurse. The Howard household has suffered severe marital disharmony since Henry lost his job.

Henry's present crisis has brought back into sharp focus a tragic accident which occurred over twenty years ago, a tragedy that seemingly will haunt him forever and influences his relationship with his sons.

If only I could live my life over, Henry often mutters to himself.

Family Two: Marlene Smothers, 30 something, widowed mother of Luella Smothers, 7. Meth addict. (Marlene, not Luella.) Thin and wasted, hovering on the edge of hysteria, this former beauty queen and promising jazz pop star performed under the name Madelyn Smyth. (Why Madelyn? "Who knows? I picked it when I was high... on something...?")

"This once trendy social butterfly, now appears to have been whipped with an ugly stick and is on the verge of extinction" read a review in *Jazz: Red Hot and Blew*.

Her daughter, 7 year old Luella, quiet and serious, lives with her grandmother, Bette, who treats her as well as might be expected from a 50 something, bitter, welfare depending, old before her time woman. (But, fortunately, Bette has retained a relatively reasonable sense of humor.)

Each night Luella burns a candle before a photograph of "Mother" and prays for her.

To Luella, Marlene is a saint.

To Marlene, life is almost over. She took the wrong road and she is at a dead end.

If she could only start her journey over.

Family Three: The very civilized Maurice Thompson is a 34 year old CPA. Single, prim and proper, hair expertly cut and arranged into the current fashion, wearing the latest in men's wear, looking like he stepped right off the pages of *GQ*. Trailing a fragrance of whatever Klein is *NOW*! Although offering a confident face to the world (he is financially secure, having made some shrewd investments) Maurice is actually shy, rigidly repressed, a puppet slavishly following all the rules and expecting others to do so also. Friendless and alone, he seldom, if ever, gets a chance at a second date. At least, not with those he wants to see again

Both parents were alive until his mother was recently and tragically murdered. Morris has been subjected to suspicious stares and whispers since the tragedy and is still considered guilty by the police even though he was found not guilty at the trial.

He is Mother-dominated, dependant, has been all his life, still is. He is haunted by her ghost, to a detrimental, alarming extent. He and his father are not close. Has one estranged sister. No children that he's sure of. One possible. No pets. Hates his job. Hates his life. Becoming bitter about all the fun he's missing.

Wants a do-over.

"This time no more Mr. Shy Guy," he whispers, hoping no one heard.

Family Four: Kiki (no last name; age not given; guesstimate late twenties--could be younger or older; unmarried. Kiki was born into a dirt poor family of six. There would have been more siblings, but two died early. Kiki is the baby. She has always managed to survive no matter how dire the circumstances. She has one son, Gabriel DuChamp, 12, who lives with his father in Paris.

Kiki is delicately beautiful, gives off the scent of fresh flowers and attracts men like bears to a honey pot. Most of her life she took the easy way, enjoying the moment, not worrying overly about who gets hurt. But she is not totally devoid of conscience. She often feels guilty about her spur of the moment actions.

Now pushing 30--she claims--the guilt hits her harder.

She often thinks of the son she doesn't know. Remorse overwhelms her.

Just before learning of the Re-Live program Kiki had a brief awareness that she was an absolute waste of intelligence and talent! "But it's too late to change," she sighed, turning over, almost going back to sleep.

But not! Her cellphone vibrated insistently.

"Hurry! Turn on the TV!" Jones, her dedicated biographer, insisted, his voice fluttering frantically.

Kiki watched, bleary eyed, trying to focus as she switched between the GMA and TODAY spots describing Re-Live, gradually become more and more alert as she realized what the shows were saying. She *just might* be able to actually change her life. To start over! She could be a volunteer for Re-Live. Why not?

"Yes!" she cried, turning the TV up, disturbing the man still sleeping on her bed. "I volunteer!" she shouted, making him jump. "I want to go back and start over,"

"Only....not quite so poor." She whispered, not wanting the sleeping man to hear. She told him she came from a wealthy family.

Family Five: Aaron Trueblood. Late 20s. Youngest of the group. A failed quarterback, Drafted high in the NFL. Fizzled out--physically and mentally. Broodingly attractive. Aaron has severe anti-social personality problems. Unmarried. Has been accused of being violent to women. Has abused alcohol in the past, but is now a total abstainer. Was raised by a

single mother in a trailer under the hot Texas sun until he was thirteen, then they moved to Chicago. His mother had high hopes for her only son. Has a half-brother and sister. He no longer keeps in contact with any of them.

He obsesses about the vastness of time and the universe, seeing himself as smaller than a fruit fly. Life briefer.

He wonders why anyone cares about anything at all. He has no hopes for the future. He does not have a God. He has no goal to pursue.

He wants a reason to live.

Family Six: Sonja Wanamaker, 76. Widowed. Loved her husband. Misses him terribly. Had a family of four. Only one was a disappointment. The youngest, her baby, Bruce is still in prison and will be, she often thought and sighed, for a long time to come.

But Sharon, her oldest, is a lawyer. A good one. Honest. A woman of convictions and compassion. A wonderful daughter. Not married. She's 46 so maybe she never will be. Sonja still has high hopes for her daughter. As far as grandchildren go, Sharon can adopt. It was Sonja's secret dream for her daughter.

Franz, 43, the second child was named after her grandfather, an excellent chef. The younger Franz is also a chef and very successful. Franz is married to Irene, 36, who works as a legal secretary until she and Franz can open their own restaurant. A happy, but childless, couple.

Martin, 41, is an actor. Married last year for the first time to his agent, Gayle, 39, who is pregnant with their first child. Successful, finally, after nearly 15 years of struggle. Has been working, more or less steadily, since he was 36. Currently starring in a musical "Dr. Death Delivers A Baby" where he plays a young married man expecting his first child, struggling to find himself as he nears fatherhood. The musical was panned by critics for being "a downer" "depressing". It bombed, but Martin received rave reviews.

And the disappointment, Bruce? Was he her fault? Could she have spoiled him too much?

She sighed as she sat on her sofa, watching Nightline. Thinking all in all she's had a happy life. She wouldn't change it all that much. Yoga early, she decided. And Bruce...

That! she seriously wanted to change.

Re-Live?

Ha!

Then again, it might be fun.

And wouldn't it be wonderful to *really be able* to control your life for a change!

SO BEGINS the first test of Re-Live.

RE-LIVE: CASE ONE

VALUE REPORT FOR HENRY HOWARD: PRE-CONCEPT STAGE

(The following, excerpted from a 200-plus page narrative report, is essentially that written by Re-Live Third Level Evaluator RT55 who was the first to interview the Howard family after Mr. Howard contacted Re-Live. Mr. Howard caught a spot on Nightline which alerted him to the proposed experiment. Intrigued, he submitted a three page passionate essay describing his desire to volunteer for Re-Live .

RT55, a former teacher and aspiring novelist, was assigned the initial interviews. It was RT55's first case since joining Re-Live.

Changes/corrections were made in the original report only when items were found to be in obvious error.

All changes were verified by at least one other source. There is a major exception to this rule. If Mr. Howard adamantly disagreed with a 'fact' in this or any other subsequent section of the report, but there was no other verification, the 'Howard fact' was inserted with a footnote .

*This report was prepared for The New Horizon Political Alliance.
The re-enacted version is not available at this time.)*

Name: Henry Eugene Howard

Age: 47 Height: 5' 10" Weight: 180

Wife: Marion Elena (nee Napole) 46

Children: Dewayne Anthony Howard 18

Norton Eugene Howard 16

Desperation Level: 9

Knowledge of procedure: Rudimentary--All from Nightline

Religion: Protestant. Not active.

Music preference: Country-- Willie Nelson, a favorite

Examples of psychological problems: Attached

Possible life-changing incident(s) to Re-Live: same as above

Recommendation for subject to enter Concept Stage: Accept

'LIFE IS IMPERMANENT' was carved in neat fun letters into a triangular piece of highly polished walnut. The incised letters were filled with gold leaf and stared at him for every one of the 23 years he spent employed by HiSun Tech Inc. (Henry never missed a working day. He got several--seven, in fact--awards for that.) On whichever desk was his at that stage of his corporate life, in whatever city they were living at the time, that piece of walnut sat all shiny and bright, flashing that inscrutable quote.

It was a gift from Marion when they were still in love, when life was new and bright. She had it made especially for him, presenting it the first day of his new job. "Because you were nervous," she said as she kissed him. "I thought it would ease your mind." Why she thought it would soothe him, he had no idea. The sentence never rang a bell with Henry. "Life is impermanent," Henry looked at the piece of walnut askance. "And... that's news? Who does not know that?" he often thought.

Because Marion gave it to him, he dragged it along wherever he went. All these years. It waited for him to return from all those too long martini lunches. It watched all those wrong decisions made. All those promotions missed. It smirked as his hair thinned and he grew a pot belly.

Now, what to do with it? Take it with him? To constantly remind him of the 23 wasted years of his professional and married life?

Marion probably doesn't even remember. And if she did, she'd say, "Oh, that? You still have it?"

He trashed it. Left his office. Then just before he entered the elevator, he turned and hurried back. Relieved to find it. Carefully placing it on top of the 'things' he had been allowed him to keep.

"WE ARE ALL ENTERTAINERS!" Henry declared at the farewell office party that evening, a party that was just for him. He grabbed the mike from the startled week-end wedding singer with the hand that wasn't holding his third martini of the evening and began to entertain his co-workers.

"One way or another, we sing for our supper." He winked at the frowning singer who was biting his bottom lip with his slightly buck teeth, looking about ready to jump Henry. "We juggle apples and oranges for the King or the President or the office manager. Court Jester? Office Jester? What's the difference? We're all clowns! Except the King!

"Well, no more!" he stated proudly, but a little unsteadily. "From now on, I'm going to be in charge of my own life! I'm going to be The King of Me

while the rest of you clowns" and he pointed at several of his co-workers in his wide-eyed audience, "will still be performing for the Man. Or in this case, the Woman!"

In the silence that followed that announcement, Henry gave a bold one-finger salute to his former top-level boss, the woman who fired him. "Thanks for the downsize, Lucille," he blared from the loudspeakers. "Your stupidity has just given me the first day of the rest of my life."

"Oh, for God's sake, Henry, at least be original," his former boss shot back, looking severely annoyed, before she turned her back on him and concentrated on her cryptic twitter, spreading the word to those who had previously received a glowing recommendation: "Forget Henry. Mean drunk."

"Just kidding," Henry amended, too late for Lucille's tweet. He wasn't *totally* wasted. Besides, he hadn't been presented with his severance check yet. Marion would be so very, very angry if he messed that up.

He did not want to deal with a mad Marion.

MARION GRABBED their coats and tried to take Henry home after his salute to his former boss. She wasn't worried about the check. She'd get the check. It was time for Henry to go home. She knew--through experience--what was going to happen next. She shuddered. Henry could not hold his liquor.

First, he would boast about something 'GRAND' he was going to do in the future.

Never named.

Never happened.

Next, if she didn't get him away from the mike, he would laugh that fake laugh he practiced before a mirror and say he was sorry, sorry, sorry. He was so very sorry if he said anything rude. He was just joking. He was just a Joker after all. "And to prove it," he would say, "I am going to tell some trunny stories. Trunny, you know. Neither quite true or totally funny. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

No one else laughed, except George from the mailroom who liked to see people make fools of themselves. He was an ardent fan of "American Idol" tryouts. He had recorded them all.

SOMETIMES, some of the 'trunny' jokes he cracked about Marion's political

views inserted here and there had hidden truths and were slightly humorous. But not tonight. "My wife joined the tea party, hoping she'd learn to brew a nice pot," Henry said, winking at his wife, dancing back out of her reach. "I said if she wanted nice pot I had some."

There were a few nervous twitters, but no one really laughed. No one really got it. Except her.

Henry was subtly--and ineptly-- making fun of both her political sentiments and her semi-secret pot addiction, which she had explained to him (I don't know how many times!) smoking cannabis was how she was fending off glaucoma which *was* in the family gene pool!

"My mother and grandmother both went blind before they died. I do not want to lose my eyesight!"

She was deathly afraid of going blind. She had nightmares about it.

Henry shrugged with an exaggerated sigh, allowing her the luxury of her expensive habit, rebuffing a puff, sticking to his vodka.

WHEN HENRY was smashed, everything he said was funny. His irritating guffaw followed each of his feeble attempts at humor. "We should build a wall all around the U.S.," Marion says," Henry elaborated in the telling. "And keep everybody else out."

"Then how would she get her Toyotas in?" Henry asked his captive audience, laughing wildly when no one else did.

THE only time his attempt at comedy produced a few nervous titters was when he explained Marion's illegal immigrant fears. Even Henry's "buddy," his co-worker, Eduardo, who remained employed while Henry had to go, laughed a little.

"He speaks Spanish," Henry explained repeatedly to his wife.

"I'd bet my bottom dollar Eduardo's illegal. He's got fake papers," Henry repeated Marion's remarks in a high falsetto voice.

Marion was mortified, even though in her heart of hearts she knew she wasn't the only one who thought like she did.

Eduardo didn't seem to mind. He actually laughed.

Yeah! Big joke! Don't go to Phoenix, Eduardo, Marion thought as she rolled her eyes.

"MARION, take a good look at yourself in a mirror!"¹ Henry suggested once when she was being especially passionate about illegals.

"Don't start!" she warned him. "I do **not** want to hear your liberal socialist agenda," she cried, parroting the TV jester who aired what Henry labeled "The Holy-Hate Entertainment Show."

So, she was guilty of hiring immigrants! How was she to know Juanita was illegal?

Oh! How she hated Henry's pompous-ass smirk.

THEN in his office entertainment shtick, after Henry drank past 'her humiliation period', he would probably get maudlin, as he often did and maybe even sing a bit. Usually, *their* song. Which he would dedicate to her. "*Angel flying too close to the ground...*" he would sing in his wobbly, off-key nasal tenor, not even remotely sounding like Willy.

That was embarrassing enough, but not as disturbing as his story.

When he got to the highest level of drunkenness, he insisted on telling the story of the dead kid.

"I KILLED a kid," Harry would begin. "I killed a little five year old kid. God didn't save the kid. Nobody saved the kid. And the kid died."

Then he would cry. No, he wouldn't cry, he would blubber. Ending with a horrible, gut-wrenching sob which so ripped into her soul that she realized she did have it in her to kill another human being.

THE FIRST TIME Henry told his sad story was to a roomful of mostly strangers. Thank God! Marion thought at the time he was relating it, Thank

God! they're mostly strangers. But when Henry finished, the room was deathly silent. Then she thought maybe a roomful of strangers was worse than a roomful of friends and neighbors, co-workers who would feel a touch of sympathy for the man they knew and mostly liked.

And for her! A little empathy for her, please!

¹ The original report read: "*Marion, you're a two-faced, hypocritical bitch. Take a good hard look at yourself in the mirror for Christ's Sake!*"

But the first time Harry told his story to a roomful of friends, Marion felt everyone was looking at her with fear and pity and revulsion.

Marion did not like for people to look at her like that.

So, after the third time with the story--years ago now--Marion was on her toes, getting proficient quickly. Whisking Henry home before he became definitely drunk.

She failed that day at his farewell office party. Henry wouldn't listen to her. "She is a cell-uh-bra-shun," he informed Marion, in his best generic accent, doing a quick semi-tango back out of her reach, "and to part-tee heart-tee, I am go-ink."

IT WASN'T just to save herself from further humiliation that she wanted Henry to go home. No, she also wanted to save his professional life. Again! She knew every time he related that horrible story to his bosses and co-workers, he'd had to change jobs. And not in the same city!

They would have to move to another city. Again! The previous times the company had graciously--after she insisted!--transferred Henry, she had hung in there.

Well, no more! In any case, there were no more SunTech Inc jobs in the US and she was **not** moving to Guatemala even if they offered him his job back. She had no intention of moving again, anywhere, ever! Is how that goes! Besides, it wasn't good for the boys to be constantly moving. Maybe that was the reason Dwayne was a little... off? They moved too much. Henry would simply have to find work here!

NO ONE casually acquainted with the smiling, affable--when sober-- Henry believed him capable of killing anyone. Not even accidentally. Not before Henry told them what happened

True, he was a little distant. And the warmth he radiated, seemingly at will, could be turned off instantly! and the atmosphere around Henry grew instantly colder.

It's also true, Henry owned several guns (*well, who didn't?*) believing fervently in his gun owning rights. But he wasn't a hunter. He went hunting twice and got nothing because he couldn't bring himself to kill a deer, or rabbit, or a squirrel or quail or anything. He wasn't a predator. Why should he be? He didn't need food. He had plenty to eat. But there were plenty

of predators out there who would never have enough. He needed protection from them.

Even so, he doubted he had it in him to actually pull the trigger and kill another human being.

Marion agreed with him on the gun rights issue. One of their few areas of political agreement.

Actually, she agreed with him on the other thing, too. Henry didn't have the guts to pull the trigger. That she knew.

But she did.

AS a young man, Henry was moderately strong, manly, and with a stout heart. He would stand up for his beliefs in no uncertain terms. Once a young, fervently fiery Henry actually played the hero, stopped all traffic on an interstate 69 to protect a family of ducks crossing the road. When the cops came, as Henry knew they would, he got off with a warning and a wink. The cops saw it as a good deed, after all, done by a good guy.

All the people who knew the young Henry saw him this way.

He helped widows and orphans whenever he could and he once mortgaged his house when the pretty young Marion Napole, a clerk in the grocery store down the street, needed a kidney transplant. He would have given her one of his if it had been a match, but to a disappointed Henry, it was not. But he paid for all the costs Marion's insurance did not.

The operation was a major success, thanks in no small part to the strong stubborn streak Marion possessed and Henry's constant support.

Of course, the whole experience turned out "all good" for a long, long time. At least for Henry, because in love and gratitude, Marion married Henry and eventually became his protector, someone Henry had always needed. Especially so after the accident.

When Henry finally got home that fateful evening after killing the kid, Marion gave him all the love he needed to survive,

BUT the protector/protected roles grew restrictive over the years as they each changed in their individual ways. Henry becoming more introspective and quiet, more guilt-ridden, but strangely more self-reliant. Marion harder "and meaner" Henry thought as she berated him for something minor he forgot to do. "Again! You forgot again? You're useless, you know that?"

Totally useless!

"Henry's not much fun anymore," Marion remarked to her best friend Alice. "I want excitement. Hot passion! I get cold silence."

Henry didn't share much. Marion shared too much.

It was after the boys were born that their relationship began to slowly, but seriously, degrade. Henry-- with Marion devoting more and more of her time to "the boys" --was left increasingly alone. Puttering around in his workshop, working late at the office, playing golf, often alone, Henry receded further inside himself.

Marion tried to share her life with Henry but he refused to participate. All she wanted from her was an occasional roll in the hay. Slam! Bam! Thank you, Ma'am! And good night! What a fairy tale life I lead!

WITH HIS FIRST job transference working for SunTech, Inc., transferred to Phoenix-- which was fine; she liked Phoenix-- the disintegration accelerated. The weakened bonds of matrimony which had already seriously begun to fray, threatened to break. The traits of each, once so cute, were irritating!

Her main "Henry complaint" which she aired, in public, to all their friends was that she resented being the "strong one, the responsible one!" She often hurled that hot boast against his cold silence.

"HENRY is so friggin gullible," Marion confessed to her mother, Willow, a self-proclaimed psychic. "He believes anything anyone says. Well..." she hesitated, "except me. When I get an e-mails from CrossCurrents and I tell him, he always says in that mocking way of his, 'Lies and half-truths.'"

"Well, prove they're not lies," Willow suggested in her smoky voice.

"Sometimes I can! Well, Henry doesn't believe it. But I know it's true. He's just so...so...liberal, he thinks we owe the immigrants something! He says we're all immigrants. We're a nation of immigrants. Except for the rightful owners to whom we generously gave little pieces of their own land! Reservations! Now *there's a people* who should complain about illegal immigrants!" Marion tried to imitate Henry's sarcasm in his pronouncements.

"Oh!" she stopped herself, clenching her fists. "He makes me so mad!

He is such a... a... cliché liberal! He is too blind to see what is happening!"

"Did you ever ask him why he's a liberal?"

"Oh, he gave me some Smart Alec answer. He says he's too intelligent not to be."

"Didn't I told you so," Willow cocked her head up, looking vindicated, blowing smoke from her Kool at the ceiling light.

In the beginning, Willow had warned Marion: "I like Henry. It's true, I do. But be very careful. I have a feeling about Henry. He might lean a little too far left for our family," She advised her only daughter. "It won't matter so much at first, but watch out later!"

Willow tapped her Kool in the ashtray, pinning her daughter with her steel gray eyes. "Huh? Didn't I told you so?"

HENRY bought a small lot on the moon. It was the final straw for Marion.

"Henry!" Marion had yelled at her husband. "You spent one hundred dollars on a 5x5 inch square of moon dust? That was Norton's new pair of shoes! Hell! I could have printed you a moon deed for only \$19.99, thrown in a black frame, complete with glass, for free! and still made money!"

"Yeah," Henry agreed, hanging his head. "That was pretty stupid of me. But if I bought it from you, I would be buying it from you for you and the deed wouldn't be on the internet for everyone to see. Forever! And, of course..." Harry hesitated and grinned the little boy grin Marion used to see so often. His greatest physical asset. "I named it after you," he said softly.

"You named a five by five square inch of moon dust Marion?"

Although her tone was mocking and mean, she was actually touched. She felt a surprising surge of the love she once felt for Henry.

"No," Henry spoke so softly she had to strain to hear. He wore that smirk she hated so much, smashing the love surge just like that! Surprising Marion with his boldness. "I named it Ungrateful."

IT WAS an involuntary movement. She had been drinking too much wine. She had a knife in her hand. She had been cutting the cheese. She released all her stored up resentment and thrust the knife at him.

Luckily, he had a cell phone in his pocket. Besides, it was a cheese knife. It had a rounded end. The most it would have done was give him a

slight bruise. He didn't need to get in such a snit about it.

But he did. He looked at her as if she'd tried to kill him.

It was his guilty conscience at work here, Marion informed him. It was a true transference. Marion analyzed the problem. "It's transference of your guilt for killing that kid!"

HENRY once killed a kid, it was true. But it was an absolute total accident. No one could have prevented it. Friends told him that even though Henry knew they really didn't mean it.

He wracked his brain, constantly, trying to remember exactly what had happened. Had he been distracted in any way? Could he *have* prevented it? Was he singing along with his favorite song, eyes half closed, reliving the past?

He saw it that way in his mind, but he didn't know if it actually happened that way.

He did know he'd been drinking.

Not that much. A couple of beers earlier in the day. He couldn't have stopped if he'd been stone old sober. If he hadn't had a drink for a week. "No one could have stopped in time," was what Marion told him when he got home.

He barely saw the little five year old kid darting out from behind a parked car. He felt the impact. So slight. Not hard at all.

It seemed to take forever to stop, to run back, to find there was no hope.

Henry was never charged. He passed all the tests. Except his own. The accident crushed him.

The kid's family consoled him. The preacher came to call. But Henry was inconsolable.

Time healed him, somewhat, but there remained an ugly scar on his heart.

Once he had to pass the cemetery where the kid was buried and he couldn't even look that way. He almost ran off the road.

Henry stopped in the nearest bar for a drink. It was the start of an unhealthy pattern.

"IF YOU HAVE TO TELL THAT STUPID STORY," Marion admonished

fiercely, "leave out the beers. There is no point to throwing that in. You passed all their tests. Just leave that part out."

That's what he should have done, of course. But when Henry was drinking and the story started, it all came out. Everything. Including the two beers. And him being drunk telling the story made it all worse.

People seemed to shake their heads as if they felt shivers of doubt.

Marion had her doubts, too. Henry and the policeman who tested him at the scene were members of the same lodge, after all.

And, of course, he had to tell that, too!

HENRY accused Marion of not listening to him any more.

And the other two strangers who lived in his house, his two sons, were even worse. Of the loss of his job, Dewayne, the oldest at 18, remarked, displaying major disappointment, "I guess that blows college, huh?"

"You have a college fund," Henry reminded him, wearily, shaking his head, wondering how Dewayne thought he'd ever make it through college. None of his college choices had accepted him, anyway. "We set it up years ago. You know that."

"Oh, yeah.... And Thank God!" Dewayne said, speaking with a little more passion than usual. "Since you don't have a job anymore." Then he stopped as an idea slowly turned on a light in his brain. "Is there enough in there to buy me a car?"

"You have a car!"

"Not that junkie old thing! I want a new car. A newer car."

How could that amazingly happy little boy, that sunshine bright being that had so lit up his life every time he came home have turned into this sullen, spoiled teenager? Henry felt a vague twinge of something shadowy and troubling. I treated him like a toy, maybe? Henry questioned. A toy to play with until I got tired and then put him away. "Go ask your Mother" he would say. Feeling guilty. I was gone so much, he shivered.

"No, there's not enough." Henry sighed, answering finally. "You're stuck with the junkie old thing."

"God! Are we poor now?" Dewayne threw both his long skinny arms high into the air and stomped away.

ONE of Henry's guns was missing.

It was a complete surprise to Marion. "Ask the boys," she suggested as an afterthought, seemingly not worried. Cool as a cucumber.

If she took the gun to shoot him--Henry now had to recognize--it wouldn't be her only attempt on his life. There was that time with the cheese knife.

And! He knew now, for certain, that she actually had tried to poison him. It was no accident.

THEY SAID it was accidental food poisoning.

But he knew better. Marion did it after she learned how much he had spent on advertising for his new business *Henry's Handy Household Helpers*. She didn't yell at him. It was like she was in shock. "Are you totally out of your friggin' mind?" she whispered hoarsely, passionately. She stared at Henry's goofy grin for a long time. "You did it without consulting me?" she asked, incredulous, and when Henry didn't answer, she turned and slowly and deliberately walked out of his temporary office, their bedroom.

She slammed the door.

"I'm getting work for people who need a job!" he shouted after her. "Hear my rhetoric. Hear me roar. I'm a true American!"

SHE POISONED HIM soon after that heated exchange.

She wasn't hungry, she said. You eat. You eat.

Besides, she was meeting Emma for a drink. She might nibble there.

The boys were out, spending the night with friends,

She made his favorite meal that was *so good!* Pasta Coronary, he called it. Made with raw eggs and bacon and fettuccini and oh, was that rich creamy sauce delicious! A spinach salad on the side. Perfect!

See you later, she said, too hurried to kiss him goodbye.

It wasn't long after that he felt the first cramps. Then it was just a blur of pain, of Norton, of lights, of eyeballs peering at his eyeballs until finally...

Thank God! he woke up and the pain was gone. Then when he shifted to his side he groaned. Well, not entirely gone.

LUCKY for him, Norton had changed his mind about spending the night with

his friend Ernie and came home early. He called 911.

"I should really get to know Norton," Henry thought as he dreamed in his hospital bed. "Would Dewayne have called? Would Marion? Would she have changed her mind and called? But what if I get to know Norton and I like him and he changes like Dewayne? He saw Norton becoming rude and sullen like Dewayne, rejecting him.

"Rejection is God's punishment for you killing that kid!" he heard Marion yell at him in his dreams, laughing manically. "It's all your fault. Everything is all your fault!"

Or worse still, what if he and Norton got to be real close and Norton died? Could he take it? Wasn't it better not to care?

"What did you have for lunch?" Marion asked him when he struggled awake from his horrible nightmares. "Where did you eat?" acting as if she had nothing to do with it. "The doctor said it probably was food poisoning."

He wondered where she hid his gun.

THEY SENT him home the next day.

That evening--Henry, lying on the sofa before the TV, not watching the screen, watching the movie in his mind, reliving the story of their marriage, enjoying the good times, trying not to think about the bad times, putting off climbing the stairs to their bedroom, the one he shared with his future assassin--that evening, Henry caught the show on *Nightline*.

"Would you?" the announcer asked. "Given a chance to live your life over, would you accept an invitation to re-live?"

Henry jumped up from the sofa, forgetting he was still weak.

"Yes!" he cried. "I accept! I want to re-live. Oh, God!" Henry pleaded to a God he was taught to believe in. "Let them take me!"

Marion's voice boomed from upstairs, "Henry? What the hell's going on down there?"

Henry got on the computer and began writing.

"I want to relive," he began, "In the worst way..."

RE-LIVE REVIEW OF RT55's REPORT ON HENRY HOWARD:

I like RT55's less chronological and more obviously fictionalized, report on Mr. Howard. It is from now on the preferred report form. Notify all employees of the new policy. It's refreshing.

BUT! there appears to be too much focus on Marion Howard. I realize that RT55 is young and new² to the organization and given that obvious limitation, she has demonstrated--fairly effectively--that Mr. Howard does exist in such an incredibly unaware state that Re-Live would be a great awakening for him.

However, I do have serious reservations.

It does not appear to me that Henry Howard has enough good moral fiber to actually be able to complete the Re-Live process. What was good about Mr. Howard appears to have started fading when he accidentally killed the child. It may be gone now, gone beyond any hope of resuscitation.

However, again, I will allow Henry Howard to pass on to the next level. Agent BA54 will explain to Volunteer Howard exactly how Re-Live works.

If Mr. Howard can comprehend the concept, and give some credible assurance that there is something in him worth saving and BA54 recommends him for inclusion, I will, after perusing BA54's report, decide whether or not it is to be so.

~Agent WT1~

For The New Horizon Political Alliance

² Not totally true. New HE is, but 65 years old.

(The following is the transcript of a CRB-TV interview with Mr. Howard which was conducted post Re-Live.)

EXCERPTS FROM A TRENT THOMPSON CRB-TV INTERVIEW :

CRB: If you could Re-Live once more, would you do so?

MR. HOWARD: I have. But I've experienced it through *my own* program Live Again.

CRB: All right. Then let me ask it *this way*. If you had it to do all over again, would you volunteer for the first Re-Live program? Knowing what you know now?

MR HOWARD: Ummm... maybe? Let me put it *this way*. Even with all the domestic and financial stress I was going through, if I had just one really good friend to confide in, at the time, someone close, Re-live probably would not have fascinated me so. I always explain this to my audiences.

CRB: Explain it to me. How would having a really good friend have changed anything?

MR. HOWARD: My friend wouldn't have let me believe it possible. 'Re-Live? Ridiculous!' My friend Joe, or Tom, or Bob or Charlene or whomever would have said to me, therefore breaking the bubble of my illusion, making me comfortable in my comfort zone.

But, alone, no one to talk to, the Re-Live project beamed before my eyes as a beacon of hope, as a new frontier, a way to actually start over, so that I would once again have dreams of what might be.

CRB: Which brings me back to my original question. Would you volunteer again knowing what you know now? It turned out to be a good thing, did it not?

MR. HOWARD: It did in a rather perverse way work out for the best. But it hurt! I will always be grateful, of course. It did teach me the secret of a wonderful life. But in Live Again, we try not to make the process hurt so much. I mean, we try to soothe the soul.

(At that point Mr. Howard arose from his assigned seat to the surprise of CRB's Thompson and paced about the stage.² Mr. Howard suddenly stopped and pointed at his wife and two sons who sat smiling in the audience.)

² "...smiling at the audience in his very skillful manner, noting, of course, the camera following him. Smiling like the cat that caught the canary," said Trent Thompson. (*Time*. See attached credits.)

MR. HOWARD: This is my family. They are the best! We share a great secret We know the greatest, bestest secret in the whole wide world!

(Long pause; the audience held its breath.)

The Secret is, My Friends, the secret is... FRIENDS! And to have a friend, you must be a friend.

(The audience gasped in disappointment; a smattering of applause.)

Re-Live taught me the value of friends. But it didn't give me any!

(He stared the audience down, daring them to doubt him .)

In that respect it failed! It lacked *the magic ingredient*. FRIENDS!

(He paused, both hands raised above his head in a glorious victory signal.)

That, My Friends, is the Magic ingredient! YOU can be! You ARE the Magic!

(Mr. Howard pointed at the audience for a few seconds and then returned to his seat. Thompson appeared relieved. The audience burst into applause.

(Pause for commercial.)

CRB: 'Friends! That's a big part of your...uh...presentation on your lecture tour, is it not?

MR. HOWARD: The tragedy that comes with the lack of friends is a significant part of my current sales spiel, yes, certainly and for soothe! And that is not a quote from Shakespeare. *(Smiles. The audience tittered, in a ripple, like a wave.)*

CRB: Uh-huh, yeah, I would have thought it was! *(punctuating his statement with a sneer)* Uh... I have a clip to show you. Let's play the clip. We'll begin with the line that starts every one of your shows...uh... lectures. Then we'll switch to another line you repeat often. Listen.

(The burst of a rock band playing E.L.O.'s "Hang on tight to your dreams" reverberated from the speakers and the screen is filled with a close-up of Mr. Howard mesmerizing his fans.

Be a friend! Give of yourself and you will be richer for it.

The same quote was repeated several times in varied settings, same dark blue suit, different ties. Then the quote was changed to the following question being repeatedly asked:

Do you want a redo? Given the chance, would you live your life over?

(The program shifts back to the live interview.)

CRB: Isn't that last line exactly the same as that of Re-Live's question? In fact, did you not plagiarize almost every aspect of Re-Live's program?

MR. HOWARD: We are similar to Re-Live, of course, and that is not exactly a crime. *(Mr. Howard beamed at the camera for a second.)* They almost got it. But not quite. Our concept is more loving, more supportive than that of our competition. When one left Re-Live, one was still alone. But Live Again provides

life long friendships: *The Magic Ingredient*. We don't just teach you and leave you, you are with us forever. We support each other in everything. And I mean everything!

But! Certainly, definitely! The two programs are NOT similar enough for a legal hassle! That's like saying General Mills has a product called breakfast cereal flakes and it would be a crime for any other company to make another breakfast cereal flaked product. Isn't that so? (*Mr. Howard stares intently, innocently, into the camera.*) And besides...Isn't it the most human thing to do, to evolve, to strive toward the ideal? Isn't that what it's all about. The end does justify the means.

CRB: What?

MR. HOWARD: If we were a species that accepted the status quo, who stayed stuck in sameness for thousands and thousands of years, we would have disappeared like the Neanderthals long ago. We would have been chewed up and bones spit out. Is this not so? Didn't the great Shakespeare hang most of his plays on a structure someone else built?

So, you see, you understand? (*The audience appears baffled*) I'm not stealing. I'm fulfilling my ...OUR... human destiny. I'm improving! Striving toward the ideal. Should I be hampered in my quest?

CRB: I suppose that's a matter for the lawyers and the ethics engineers to ..uh...fight about, but the name: Live Again...? Isn't that a pretty obvious rip-off?

("Mr. Howard, shrugging, blessed the audience with a big smile, teeth newly capped, glistening white in the light. He left the question hanging in midair, looking loveable but mischievous."³)

CRB: Well?

MR. HOWARD: Okay, the name we could evolve. We're thinking of new names at this moment and maybe...maybe even sponsoring a naming contest, getting all the world involved.

CRB: The more the merrier, huh? And the money keeps rolling in.

MR. HOWARD: It's not about the money. It's about giving a great gift to some lucky people. It's about the chance to live again. It's about the new friends attained! Supportive friends! The magic ingredient that makes it all work!

CRB: And the money is nothing?

MR. HOWARD: Of course the money is sweet. It's like the frosting on the cake. But it wouldn't work—for most adults—without the cake. Friendship is the cake. Money is the frosting. And frosting, by itself, can make you sick.

³ *Newsweek*. See Index and Credits at the end of this report.

CRB: Uh... Yeah... Right. One last question, Mr. Howard. Does it work? Do either of the programs actually allow you to relive your life?

MR. HOWARD: (*“smiling broadly at the audience, winking at his family, as if at this moment they all shared the same secret”*⁴) Yes and no. Both allow you to live again, but that applies to only a selected, isolated portion of your life. That’s true of both programs. But the great difference between the two lies in the fact that our program promises –and delivers!–more. And! I propose a way to prove it!

(At this point Mr. Howard again jumps up from his seat and advances toward the audience.)

We will select one willing volunteer from this audience and give her or him an opportunity to Live Again. We will allow your program to record the progression.⁵ Uh...not entirely, of course. But, say, beginning, middle and end. What say? And I challenge Re-Live to do the same. We’ll compare results.

(Mr. Howard looks at the audience expectantly)

“Anyone interested? Anyone want to Live Again for free?”

(There was a great hush, then the audience exploded into applause and shouts of “Me! Me! Let it be ME!”.)

⁴ *Washington Post* See Index and Credit

⁵ The proposed demonstration is still pending.

RE-LIVE: 3

VALUE REPORT: PRE-CONCEPT STAGE MARLENE SMOTHERS

(Third Level Evaluator BN53 is officially credited for compiling the following reports on Marlene Smothers, although it is reasonably certain⁶ that most of the research and selection of these reports was done by Ms. Smothers herself and not by BN53. Also, the evaluation summary of Marlene was determined--by experts in the field of literary style--to be the work of Marlene Smothers.

BN53 was demoted shortly after this evaluation, but in spite of that, Marlene Smothers was accepted as a participant in the first actual test. According to Re-Live spokesperson Leslie Wilson, BN53 was demoted for "totally unrelated problems concerning her work performance."

Mistakes discovered were corrected whenever possible and notes inserted when there was reasonable doubt.

Citing the above reasons, First Level Agent WT1, does not endorse the accuracy of this report.⁷

NOTE: Marlene Smothers performs under the name Madelyn Smyth and is a semi-successful jazz pianist/singer.

Name: Marlene June Smothers (a.k.a. Madelyn Smyth)

⁶ There is no legal proof of this.

⁷ Nor does The New Horizon Political Alliance. However it was decided by WT1 to pass Ms Smothers' eligibility on to the next level for further study.

Age: Birth certificate states 29; computer files may have been altered-- other records state her age from 34 to 36
Husband: John Bofffenburger (a.k.a. Lance LaCota) deceased
Children: Luella June Smothers, 7 (Last name was legally changed)
Desperation level: 5 professed at first then changed to 10 (actual)
Knowledge of procedure: Marlene was recruited cold by Agent BN53
Religion: Born into a Roman Catholic family; became a Jehovah's Witness.
Music preference: Jazz and blues
Examples of psychological problems: See attached evaluation report by Dr. T. Possible life-changing incidents: Included in above report
Recommendation to enter Concept Stage: Accept with caveats (i.e. the results of the complete physical⁸ and mental examinations, by Drs. V and T)

(The following reproduced clips from the Hartwell Junction Gazette were given to NHPA by Bette Smothers from her "collection" she says. All were torn from the newspaper and are undated. Unfortunately, files of the Gazette were destroyed in 1995. All archived copies of the paper were also burned, and at this point in time none of the dates have been authenticated so none are given. However, it is generally accepted that Ms. Smothers' true age when participating in the Re-Live program was 34.)

BIRTHS

Pike County births include:

Hartwell Junction: Marlene June Smothers, a girl, to Bette (nee Lundstrum) and Don Smothers. Nov. 21

OBITUARIES

⁸ Marlene's physical, surprisingly, was very good. Dr. V's report is attached at the end of her evaluation.

LAWRENCE DONALD SMOTHERS

Hartwell Junction resident, Lawrence ("Don") Smothers died on Monday at his home. He was 28.

Don was a British Navy veteran and served during the Falkland Crisis. He leaves behind a wife Bette (nee Lundstrum) and a daughter Marlene who is 3.

MARLENE SMOTHERS CROWNED MISS PIKE COUNTY

Accepting her bouquet of roses and her crown, Marlene Smothers, 16, a junior at Hartwell Junction High and the daughter of Bette Smothers, became the new Miss Pike County last night replacing Rhea Fae Carter who (*page torn*)

LOCAL GIRL ON NATIONAL TV

Marlene Smothers, the Indiana Computer Champ from Hartwell Junction, appeared on the *David Letterman Show* last night and was quite a hit when she sang the song she had written in praise of computers.

Marlene will appear Saturday night at Howard Johnson's Blue Room for a limited weekend run. Yes! She will sing the computer song.

WEDDINGS

Marlene Smothers and John Boffenburger announce their recent marriage which was, officiated by New Age Pastor and TV personality Aga Boga. The wedding was held on June 15 in Dollywood.

The wedding will be performed twice again. First at The Church of the Latter Day Saints and then at The Abbey on the hill.

Marlene is the daughter of Bette and the late Don Smothers of Hartwell Junction.

The bride and groom are both entertainers. The bride performs using her birth name⁹ and therefore will keep her maiden name after the

⁹ Later, after her husband's death, Marlene performed using the name Madelyn Smyth.

marriage.

The groom performs under the name Lance LaCota.

The couple will reside in Hartwell Junction, temporarily, and then will move to the West Coast.

OBITUARIES

Dec 25. Former Hartwell Junction resident, John Boffenburger (Lance LaCota) 26, died on Wednesday in an automobile accident in Los Angeles, California.

He leaves behind his wife of two years, former Hartwell Junction resident (former county queen also) Marlene Smothers and an unborn child.

BIRTHS

Pike County births include:

Hartwell Junction: Luella June Boffenburger, a girl, to Marlene (nee: Smothers) and the late John Boffenburger who performed under the name Lance LaCota. July 4.

Following are excerpts from the Evaluation Report submitted by BN53, but which were allegedly written by Marlene Smothers.

"MARLENE was a difficult child," Marlene's mother Bette Smothers claims, then modifies that claim. "Oh, not at first. She was the most adorable baby, cute, so cute...and so good! Oh, my! She never went through the terrible twos. And then... when she was about eight she changed. I don't know... I never knew why." Marlene's mother shifts uncomfortably in her chair, her eyes darting, darkly, guiltily under lowered lids. "Oh, she still seemed happy...." Bette raises one eyebrow into a sarcastic arch, "but it was fake. A fake happy-go-lucky kind of attitude. You could tell it was fake. I could! Oh, she was still cute. She *was* pretty. A lot prettier than I was. Everybody said so. It wasn't just through my eyes....

"But she wasn't satisfied by just being pretty, she wanted desperately to always be the center of attention and to be that she decided the best

way was to make others laugh. Everybody be happy! Look at me! Everybody laugh and be happy! That's what she wanted most, I think." Bette twists her face into a smile, remembering. "She loved to play with animals... People, too. She played with people. She was popular. She loved to dance. She was a lot of fun." Bette pauses to giggle, rubs her chin. "When Marlene left a party, it was over." Bette pauses and sighs. "She was the party. When Marlene left, the party was over!" Bette repeats and sighs again.

"Oh! But not at home! Not when there was just the two of us. At home there was no party. She just moped around. Or stayed in her room tooting on her flute and burning that incense. Patchouli. Pa chew-too-smelly, for me." Bette rolls her eyes, remembering the sound of that flute and the smell of that incense. "I used to think it was me. That it was all my fault. I tend to do that. At first especially. I thought I was the reason she was so unhappy, but since Luella does the same thing, I guess it's genetic. Moping around all the time, I mean. No, Luella doesn't play the flute. Thank God! They get that sadness from Don's side, I guess. But not his fault! Not his fault. Bless his heart. I sure do miss him." Bette has the sniffles for a moment, holding back tears.

"But that's all she wanted to do. Did not want to work! Nosiree, Bob! Did not want to do housework or homework. She scraped through high school making A's in the subjects she liked, but the ones she didn't? She practically flunked Home Ec. Oh, my! Oh, she was smart enough. Too smart! Smart enough to get out of 'work.' Not that she didn't work at things she liked!" Bette pauses to take a deep breath, then rushes on. "She was in the French Club, played *that* flute..." Bette arches her eyebrows to displays maximum irritation, holds her breath and purses disapproving lips for emphasis, then continues in a burst of expelled air. "She worked on the school paper, played field hockey, and excelled in Social Studies. And computers! She even made up a computer program all by herself. Or so she claims... Anyway, it won first place in a statewide contest. And even doing all those geeky things, she was popular. Especially with the boys"

Bette sighs, pulls on the loose skin under her chin, smiles sadly. "I always hoped she was popular because she was pretty and fun to be around. Not because she was real *fun* if you know what I mean." Bette sighs again. Deeper this time. Then continues, "She wanted to visit Rio and Tokyo and do her 'European tour'. She wanted to walk along the Great Wall and sail down the Nile and do it all while she was still young.

"And how you going to afford all that?' I asked, knowing she knew I had nothing. Don died in that... accident¹⁰ and left me... without a pot to piss in. Nothing. Nada. Zilch. But I made do. I sacrificed for that girl!" Bette paused, sighed martyr-like, then abruptly corrected, "But don't get me wrong! I loved Don! I don't blame him. It was an accident. It wasn't even Marlene's fault. His death was an accident...."

"THEN it was Marlene's turn." Bette paused and sniffed. "After Marlene's husband Lance died in his horrible accident, she comes running back home to Mama. Hah! She just came home to drop the baby...Luella.

"While she was here, I practically saved her life every day. She was so depressed all the time. I mean really depressed. I mean, more so even than she used to be. I hid all the sleeping pills and spent all day trying to cheer her up, make her smile. Why, I practically did everything but wear a clown suit, and then one day, just out of the blue, Marlene left. Didn't say by your leave, goodbye, see you later, so long...nothing. She did leave a note. It said, 'I'll be back as soon as I can to get Luella.' And that's the last we heard from her. I don't know if she's dead or not. You say she's still alive. Well, all I know is, she took off and left Luella here with me. Not that Luella is a burden. I love Luella." Bette bit her upper lip. "But she's a downer. Always moping around. Nothing seems to make her happy. I ask her, 'What's wrong?' and she says, 'Nothing. Not anything. Nothing's wrong. And quit asking me that!'"

Bette sighs, shakes her head in utter bafflement. "She didn't get her happy disposition from me." Bette curls a lip sarcastically, barks a sharp laugh, then sighs again.

"And now that Marlene's gone, it's me and little Sad Sack till the end of time, I guess."

"WHY do I still speak about Marlene as if she were dead?" Bette sighs deeply. "Because, to me, she is dead." Bette struggles to get up from the chair she sat in, absent mindedly smoothing her unruly gray hair. "It was the drugs. It was the drugs that killed her. And don't tell me she's still alive. Not to me, she ain't.

¹⁰ Husband Don's death was ruled a suicide. He left no note and no money. Bette refused to acknowledge he killed himself, adamantly stating it was a gun cleaning accident.

"It would take The Blessed Mother Herself to bring Marlene back to life in my mind!"

NOTE: Bette Smothers was contacted by NHPA for the purpose of correcting facts--if necessary--in the original Re-Live report. However Ms. Smothers refused the offer of a chance to do so but said she wouldn't sue if we "spelled her name right."

(Dr. T volunteered the following notes concerning his ex-patient, Marlene Smothers. Dr. T claims the private information no longer fits under the client-doctor privilege since Marlene refused to pay for the sessions and in that sense, he wasn't technically her doctor since she didn't "hire" him in the accepted legal sense since he was not paid for his services "by anyone!". We were told that if we wanted to pay Marlene's bill for the sessions we could have the information. We paid, of course. However, our policy demands--in order to protect our butts-- we keep all this information tight within the few individuals who are directly concerned with this case. -- W,T,1 -- And this time I mean it!)

A preliminary assumption: The demise of her father at the very young age of 28 triggered Marlene's attraction to death. She was only three when he died, but the constant, harshly irritating reminders thrust upon her by her bitter mother, made it seem to Marlene that death was constant and could have an attractive side.

Rethink: Or, actually, perhaps, maybe as my further observations tend to lead me to believe, it wasn't death she sought, it was the intense thrill that comes right before death, or actually, the perfect satisfaction that comes when death is cheated. Again! She spits in the face of Death! It appears she constantly sought that perfect high. Perhaps sexual?

Addendum: Added to the death of her father was the intensely aggrieved condition of her mother who constantly reminded Marlene of how much "Mom" did for her daughter. And! she did all for Marlene while still in mourning for her adored husband, the only one she "would ever really love." The constantly repeated phrase scarred an unloved Marlene.

Hard habits to break: Marlene, lived her life "like a candle in the wind" a wind that blew with increasing fury as she grew older. Her threshold of pleasure grew higher and higher and the quest to scale that ever-increasing threshold grew fiercer as her need grew greater.¹¹ After she met her husband Lance (John Boffenberger) she tried a sampler of available drugs. At first she was reluctant, but eventually through his urging, she tried them all. 'Meth' captured her, giving her a doorway into the energy level she needed to experience life as she wanted, "to take it to the limit one more time." She was primed--extremely

¹¹ The note contains a scribble on the margin as follows: "remember for book."

susceptible--to be the addict she became.¹²

First Conclusion: There is not any one "Major Event" in Marlene's life that led her in this direction. It appears to be a part of her personality make-up. Genetic, I believe. She, with a gnawing need for pleasure and an addictive personality, easily became dependent on drugs.

Marlene's Self Analysis: "No one ever loved me. I saw other kids being loved. Not me. I wasn't even for sure what I was missing. I had nothing to compare it to. The only way I ever got any attention and concern was when I did something brilliant... or dangerous or wrong. It's easier to do wrong. And, of course, what could be 'wronger and dangerouser' than dope? It's twisted, but it's true. I became an addict for love..."

No amount of discussion can persuade Marlene from that view of her addiction.

However: In all due respect to the life-changing effects of hard drugs, and the fact of her obviously addictive genes, **together** they were not enough to kill her life-affirming spirit. It was her final loss of all hope that nearly did her in. When Lance, "the only one who ever loved me, the one who finally showed me what love is, when he died in that senseless accident, I didn't want to live anymore."

She repeats this often. "The cops killed my Lance, my life."

She actually believes the cops killed Lance. When, in fact, the death was an accident. In flight from the pursuing police, the suspect lost control of his SUV and slammed into the side of Lance's small sports car. The suspect lived, but the impact killed Lance instantly.

No matter how I explain it to her, Marlene insists "the cops killed my Lance... And killed me, too."¹³ In a way, of course, she is almost right about herself. When her love was gone, the only love she could remember knowing, so was she. Almost.

The Very Nearly Final Nail: Marlene--with Lance, her husband's urgings--experimented with most of the popular legal and illegal substances: alcohol, prescription drugs, cocaine, both powdered and in the form of crack rock; PCP, meth, ecstasy, and so on, until she eventually--for a short time-- became hooked on heroin. Surprisingly, she kicked that habit successfully,

¹² Most of this section was quoted verbatim in his e-book "The Marlene I Knew"

¹³ Lance was an innocent victim killed in a police chase. *Evansville Herald*, see credits section.

and fairly quickly, but she can not give up meth.

Marlene's Self Analysis: As Marlene related her story to me, in her disconnected fashion, I recorded it. With my comments edited out, this is how it unfolds:

THE MARLENE TAPES (excerpts)

I wanted to be a teacher until the Challenger exploded. That cured me of that friggin daydream. Teaching appeared to me to be a dangerous profession. *(Series of hacking laughs)* Eighty-six was quite a year. You remember? Or you too old? You probably forgot everything since yesterday. How old are you anyway? Got an ashtray?

Whatta you mean, I can't smoke in here? In that case I'll step outside for a minute. Whatta you mean, you're going to charge me whether I'm here or not? It's a friggin break I'm takin. Jeeze! How much they payin you an hour anyway? Gimme a break.

Oh, yeah! That's right. I'm takin one. Get it?

(a high pitched giggle, followed by a long silence, except for distant squeak of rubber soles on marble, the click-click of high heels, sounds of door slams, an indescribable babble of faraway voices, hissing like that of steam pipes, and the shuffling of papers)

Okay, I'm back. Whew! Did I need that. Maybe I should start getting nicotine shots. Do they do that? Is that legal? Would it kill you? You're a friggin doc ain't you? You should know. Okay, Okay, start the meter.

Where was I? Oh, yeah. Eighty-six when that teacher Christa something or other died along with my dreams of a teaching career. I know it don't make sense, of course, but after that I always equated teachers with losers. So who sets out to be a loser? Losership is an accidental honor which I have purposefully obtained. Like that, Doc. Pretty clever, huh? Maybe I can put that in a song.

(high pitched giggle; creak of chair.)

Like what you're lookin at, Doc? Hey, I don't mind. Still lookin good! Right? Maybe a little too thin. I should get back on my health food kick. And there's too many ugly red bumps on my face, but then I been sick. (fake cough; loud musical laugh)

You think I'm different on stage than I am off. Different than I am now? You're damn right I'm different. On stage, that's me. Caressing the keys on that piano, letting go the music in my soul. Making people *feel* something! Good... mostly. Sometimes sad. But a good soft sadness. The French have a word for it, don't they? Tris... something. And it's sexy, too. Anyway, that's me! Up there on stage. Off-stage, I wear the face the world taught me to wear to protect myself. I act this way so the world won't bother me so much. This crude person you see, this face, this body--this ain't me. I'm in here. Inside my head hiding from the world. Because... Because... You know why? Because if I came out from behind my painted face wearing all my pink frilly things, with my face all fresh and open like it once was, the world would squash me like a bug! Put that in your proverbial pipe and smoke on it! Huh?

(pause)

Except, of course, when I sing. The music protects me then. I can hide behind my music. I can dance and sing and be free, floating on the music being "as soft and warm as a nurse-er-ree...."

(long pause)

Yeah, 86 was quite the year! I remember that year vividly. Reagan shook his big stick at Khadafy, remember? Chernobyl blew up. New coke failed. That was news! Imagine that. Big news! The Corn Syrup Factory failed at something! Yeah. Feed pap to the pigs, they'll eat it up. And! And! Cary Grant died. Mom actually cried. Ain't that funny? She had more passion for flickers of light dancing on a silver screen than she did for her own daughter. Oh, yeah, there was the Iran Contra Scandal that year. Remember? And I lost my virginity. I remember that year well!

(high pitched giggle)

How old was I? Ummm... Let's see. Young, I don't remember. Trying a sneaky way to find out how old I am? Quit trying to trick me. Oh, yes, you were! Got anything to drink here? Coke, coffee, Screwdriver, Bloody Mary? Jack or Jim? No?

Anyway, it was Billy. This kid from Indy. He spent the summer with his

Aunt Gertrude. Said he'd give me his brand new bike. To Keep! if I would. So I did. Then he wouldn't give me the bike. So I beat him the hell up and took the bike anyway.

I'm a lot stronger than I look.

(a wild, slightly hysterical laugh)

Mom didn't let me keep it, though. The bike. She made me give it back and apologize for beating up the son of a bitch.

(A sharp bark)

Billy finally grew a pair and admitted he promised to give it to me. But that didn't cut no ice with Mom.

I think I know what temporary insanity is. For back then, I thought, for a fleeting second, I thought I'd tell her exactly what happened and she would let me keep the bike because I'd earned it by telling the truth...

(another wild laugh)

I changed my mind and decided not to tell what really happened. But even though I decided not to tell, somehow or other I did. It was like someone else took over my mind. I heard the words coming out of my mouth and I couldn't stop them. Billy said nothing. He wasn't a total dumb ass. Of course it was stupid of me to think I would get better treatment when I told her the truth. I know that now! But, like I said, I was stupid back then. Billy was a little smarter, but he had the advantage of growing up in the big city.

I should have lied. I should have said the bike was hot. I appropriated it. Finders, keepers!

(long laugh)

Mom almost had me committed. To think that her baby girl would do such a dreadful, perverted thing! To have sex at my age! Sex was bad enough if you waited until you were married. Ugh! Sex! She said. She punished me for days. I couldn't do anything! She would not even let me play my flute. She threatened to sell it.

Maybe that's why Dad killed himself. Maybe she actually hated sex, maybe all she ever done was lay there and say, "Get it over with."

(snort of laughter?)

Was... how did you say it... "the incident with Billy" life changing? Hmm... Yeah. I guess. Inadvertently.

Somehow or other that incident made connections in my mind that had

never been there before. I didn't really realize it at the time. I told you I was born stupid, didn't I? Anyway, I finally got a real good vague notion of how the world works. I saw it like it was an electric grid of dos and don'ts. Fun and Not Fun. A checkerboard grid of flashes and sparks. Somehow I saw all the trades and the shocks you have to make and take to get what you want. Like my eyes were suddenly opened and I heard a voice say, "Don't fuck up and tell the absolute truth about anything!" Excuse the French. But, maybe that's how everybody figures it out. All by themselves. By getting punished for doing something against the Will of the Grid! Maybe nobody can tell you how you have to live. There's something predetermined for you. It's a big secret. Your job is to find out what it is. You have to find out for yourself. It has to be shocked into you by the Will of the Great Grid. Some people get a map when they are born. Some don't. I didn't.

(Short snort)

Get it? No? Well, I'll draw you a picture later.

Anyway, that changed me.

What was I before?

A free spirit. Naïve. Trusting and truthful. Loving everything. Everyone. Eager to try anything.

So, what was I after eight?

Learning the ways of the world. Being slick. Cold. Crafty, Conniving. I left all my old religions behind and got a new one. Do unto them before they do unto you.

Ah, yes, that was what I was. Until I met Lance. Then I changed and I became me again! Back in my own skin. The little girl I used to be. All with the help of only a few chemicals.

(hysterical laugh)

A little, I changed back. Maybe more than a little, I guess. With Lance I was me. I was free.

Then when he died... I guess I slipped back into darkness. His death warped my life. Again. I became flashy and crude and shallow and seemingly solid. But underneath was the real me. All soft and warm and fuzzy. The me I don't let you see!

And,,, I used drugs. Sometimes... Every day. Like now.

(long pause)

Only in music am I me.

(she hums for a while)

I wanna write a book. Titled '*Nothing Lasts Forever*' It'd be...it'd be for those...to help those who...*really and truly* believe in 'Happily Ever After.' To prepare them for their future. I mean, it'll be a public service.

(a very long pause)

I feel I'm in layers, like an onion, you know? But, if you peel off the layers, there's nothing left. Now, ain't that just friggin' profound enough to be obscure? You sure I can't smoke in here? It would really help my mental state.

Whadda mean, am I on drugs now? Hell, yes, I'm on drugs now! That's why I'm here talking to you. Damn! You might know I'd draw a dumb ass. Where'd you get your friggin degree from? Some offshore diploma mill? I wanna get off drugs. That's what I'm seeing you for. You're a shrink. You gotta help me. It's the law. Right?

(giggle)

Now where was I? Ummm.... Anyway, I believe not having a father warped my life. First! That was the first of my onion layers...almost the first. Maybe Mom was first. But it doesn't matter. They both warped me with their warp. Apparently. They were both one fry short of a Happy Meal. How sane are you if you kill yourself? Daddy was a major warp. But having a mad mother obsessed by her dead husband, who *only loved* her dead husband was a major warp, too. But she didn't really. Know what I'm sayin? She didn't really love him. She hated him for leavin her is what I believe.

Anyway, Daddy obsessed her so much, she didn't have time for me.

I remember mainly only getting interested attention when I did something clever, so I tried to do clever things. Especially in front of other people. I loved it when they loved me.

(silence, deep breathing)

I cheated though or I'd get someone else to do things for me... when I could and take the credit. And I usually could. In exchange for favors, of course. I had to. I couldn't do all those things I wanted to do--that they expected me to do!-- if I didn't cheat. Except the flute. I couldn't cheat on that. It was the only thing I really loved to do that I didn't want to cheat on. If I could. And I probably could find a way if I looked hard enough. You know what I mean? You can always find a way to cheat. It's all funny, huh?

Anyway, I don't play the flute anymore.

(She cocks her head listening to songs from the past. Humming along.)

What would I change if I could go back and change anything in my life?
That's a stupid question. You can't change anything. It is what it is. It's set in concrete! I don't care what you say, I say it's not possible. I really, really don't believe it is. Nothing, not even God can change things that's already happened. Not that I believe in God.

(silence)

You know what I believe in? Nothing! That's what I believe in. A whole lot of nothing. Men landing on the moon? Pshaw! That was all a sham, filmed in a back lot of Disney Studios or Lucas did it. A moon sham was what Mom called it. Who's gonna go there and find out if there are real footprints in the moon dust? Nobody, that's who!

(more silence)

You think I believe that because Mom believed that, don't you? You think that's the only reason I believe the moon landing was a sham because Mom told me it was, don't you? Well, you're wrong. I've seen shows about it on TV. Or maybe I heard it on the radio? Anyway, it made sense To me.

(sharp harsh laugh)

And Mom.

(silence)

And Lance... Lance believed it.

He believed about the Bilderbacks, too. You know, that conspiracy group... Lance told me about them... the Bilderbacks or bergs, or something. Lance believed they probably set up the moon landing. Trying to pull the wool over our eyes just because they could. Practice for when they took over the whole world. You know changing the currency of the world to be all the same, and all like that.

(sounds of restless pacing)

Hey, they a piano here? Anywhere? No? Well, what the hell, I'll acappella.

(sings)

You taught me to love you... you stole my heart... then ran away laughing when we broke apart. Now... you ask me to come back. You say that you'll change. You say that our love life... can be rearranged. I think I will do that. I'll come back to you. I'll say that I love you and swear to be true. But, this time it'll be different. I'll play things your way. Gonna pretend that I love you and then run away....

Gonna run away laughing. Gonna laugh when you cry. Gonna run away
laughin with a tear in my eye....

(stops singing)

Like that? I wrote that. Bet you wonder why that wasn't a number
one hit, don't you?

(loud, long hacking laugh)

Damn, I need another smoke. Okay, okay, I'll wait. So, tell me
something. What you got so far?

Aww, come on. More questions?

Okay, Okay. If I could change one thing. If I could go back and
change *only* one thing, what would it be?

Ummmm... uh... Oh! I know.

I think....

I'd change my dad killing himself. And that Billy thing. And Lance
dying... And whatever made me give up the flute. And... Luella. I'd change
what makes me see Lance every time I see Luella and.... Everything! I want
to change everything.

I can't choose just one thing. I want to change them all!

ASSESSMENT OF BN-53's REPORT ON MARLENE SMOTHERS

It is difficult to get a handle on Ms. Smothers from the compiled information which is irritatingly sparse, but there appears to be two personalities here. One likeable; one not. Maybe if the crude side were elevated and the musical personality less dreamy, Ms. Smothers could be a winner.

But! Is it possible for Marlene to "get her act together," to be the woman she really is, so she can actually Re-Live? The outlook is uncertain, but that should be cleared up in JI69's report after he has completed his investigation.

IF...JI69 believes Marlene has the strength of character to undergo a rigid rehab program and is determined to be able to withstand the pressure of the change Re-Live will force her to make, then it will be Go!

The above statement is designed to give JI69 a nudge in the right direction, because, at this time, I am inclined to include Marlene Smothers in the first study because I believe she is more typical of creative people than not..

~Agent WT1~

For The New Horizon Political Alliance

NOTE: Marlene refused to be interviewed by the New Horizon Political Alliance (NHPA). Morally, she says in turning down our request for an interview, she is restrained from doing so due to the fact that "Re-Live saved my pretty little ass and I would prefer to do or say nothing that would harm them. 'Love those who do ye good', and all that, you know"

"But!," she is, she claims, "considering legal action since [she] was promised a second free session" if she was not completely satisfied with the first. "And complete satisfaction was not achieved." Also, "by withholding said promised session, Re-Live was imposing considerable damage to [Marlene's] creative spirit and imposing anguish on [her] soul."

CHAPTER 4

PRE-CONCEPT REPORT ON MAURICE ALLEN THOMPSON

The following third level evaluation of Maurice Thompson was compiled and edited in tandem by the team of BW58 and CP59. However, most of the original copy was written by CP59 and therefore lacks much of the enthusiasm that BW58 expresses otherwise, especially when discussing the unsolved murder of Thompson's mother.¹⁴

Both Agents were methodical in their researching and recording of the facts. After careful scrutiny, no mistakes were discovered in their report. Footnotes were inserted only "when further clarification and/or humor was deemed necessary," according to the agent(s).¹⁵

Both of the agents emphasized that Mr. Thompson should be included as a participant in the program. "His life is a major waste. It is sad to see so much potential atrophy. When we got to know him, we found 'Mouse' (as we nicknamed him) to be-- beneath his shell-- full of good humor and extremely likeable. As hard as that is to believe at first meeting."

Both agents, also, accept as true Mr. Thompson's claim of innocence in the sensational **I Killed My Mother** murder case. "I had absolutely no involvement in the death of my mother. I did *not* confess to that crime."

In our interview, Mr. Thompson stated that the facts of his case as were presented in the report "were substantially correct, but much was missing. Nuances were clearly missing. It is nuance that colors a situation making it unique. So, while it is substantially correct, it is not true."

Both agents believe the truth to which Mr. Thompson is referring does not exist.

¹⁴ Previous reports solely by BW58 were fiery, less intellectual. It is interesting to determine which parts of the report were edited and/or written by BW58 and which by CP59. My opinion on which is which is found in *The Thompson Truth: personal view* (\$2.99--download now.) along with an educated guess on the question of who actually murdered Thompson's mother.

¹⁵ Most likely this and further quotes came from CP59. BW58 swears he wanted no part of any "such sorry opinion," therefore the quotes were added to emphasize that BW58 was not necessarily in agreement. BW58 did add, to emphasize his recommendation, that Mr. Thompson needs "help bad., but he isn't damaged to the extent that some of his potential can not be salvage."

Name: Maurice (Morris) Allen Thompson

Age: 35 Height: 6' Weight 158

Wife: Never married

Children: One possible.

Religion: Raised Protestant

Desperation Level: 8

Knowledge of procedure: Read an article on Re-Live which was published in
Scientific Psychology Today

Major psychological problem: Extremely repressed

Possible life-changing incident(s) to Re-Live: "With possible exception of the murder of his mother, Morris's problem is essentially the overcoming of racial prejudice more than any one incident. Maurice, half Korean half European descent with startling off-beat but handsome appearance combined with impeccable Oriental manners has a graceful, reserved air. All this causes jealous reactions on first impression from his masculine peers leading to racial taunts and some mild bullying, driving an already shy guy deeper inside himself. These personality traits--especially his extreme reticence emotionally--may also have increased speculation that Mr. Thompson had a hand in his mother's death. He appears cold. "Part of his problem, it seems to me, is that he has some distressing doubts--potentially harmful to himself--concerning his sexual identity,"¹⁶ and a tendency to overindulge in alcohol. He has suffered blackouts as a result.

Music preference: Professes to like some of all music, but pop, soft rock, classical guitar and Mozart preferred.

Recommendation for subject to enter Concept stage: Accept

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE

¹⁶ Psychological report by Dr. T, employee of NHPA. "Further, Mr. Thompson shudders at the fragrance of natural vanilla. He has an intense dislike to that particular scent. I label it a phobia," Dr. T writes.

DIGITALLY RECORDED AND FICTIONALLY ¹⁷
ENHANCED COLLECTION OF MAURICE ALLEN
THOMPSON

“What do I really, really want?” Maurice Thompson--*‘Friends call me Morris; like the cat, you know’*-- repeated the question with a slight slur, surprised a little at ... what was her name again? What did they call her in the bar...Carmelita? At Carmelita with the Big Red Hair wanting to go so deep so fast. “Well,” he considered for a moment, handing her a glass of his favorite wine as he sipped from his own, noting how the color of the wine almost matched her puffy red hair. And her lips. He decided she must have had a lip job, a silicon injection. And the tits? He could guess where they came from. Much too big, too firm, too perfect to be real. The lips, too. Was the grin permanent or was she smiling? He decided the grin was real. Maybe he wasn’t as bad tonight as he had feared. But, he winced, remembering, admitting reluctantly to himself, he had been awfully quick on the trigger and so he commented sarcastically to himself, under his breath not daring to say it loud, “Speaking of going so deep so fast.” She said “What?” as his lips curled into a rueful smile. He imagined it made him look sexy

“Well, there are *two* things I really, really want at the moment,” he answered her question, finally, after a time of contemplation, standing, posed, naked under his faux velvet cabernet colored satin Hugh Hefner smoking jacket, chomping down on the pipe which he had smoked--actually--only once. It had a tendency to wobble and spray bright red sparks. He leaned against the bar. “I want a thousand years of peace on earth and the great gray New York Times

¹⁷ Thompson recorded everything that occurred when he entertained visitors. These recording have been fictionally enhanced with details supplied by all the women involved who cooperated with the understanding that none of their actual names would appear in the report. Due to a clerical error, all the names are actual names.

to learn English. Listen to this," he sputtered, scattering sparks, suddenly remembering a pet peeve of his, picking up a newspaper from the impeccably white marble of his library/bar. "‘If Bill Clinton was President.’ Was! The proper word is were. If-Were. They are a pair! Can you imagine, *The New York Times!*"

‘Carmelita’ looked more than a little dubious, sniffing the air, wondering what the awful smell was. That pipe, probably.

Maurice was sounding off to his latest date, whose real name was Julie Wilson, and who was about to be his late date, as she stealthily slipped into her expensive pearl gray DM slippers and prepared to depart. She wanted no more lessons on “The Right Way” to do things. The entire evening had been a lecture on how to do *Anything!* The right and proper way, And *blah, blah, blah...*

Well! one thing was for sure, *Right Way Maurice* sure as Hell didn’t know the Right Way to do the Main Thing! She mumbled as she got dressed, nervously annoyed.

“Gee, it’s late,” Julie chirruped in her best fake chirrup, fed up to here with the drunk pompous a-hole, fluttering on before he could interrupt her, “and I have an important meeting in the morning.” She pushed a button on her iPhone. “What’s the address here? Oh, no, don’t bother,” she said, smiling, waving him off when he offered to drive her home. “I’ll call a cab. It’ll be here any minute. I’ll wait in the lobby... or outside.”

“Wait, Carmelita! Don’t go! What’s your hurry? Stay a while longer. Stay the night. I can’t live without you,” he begged, with alcoholic fervor, overacting, grinning too big.

She insisted even more firmly that she had to go.

Morris shrugged. “At least, my beautiful, sexy Carmelita, let me walk you to the lobby door.” He

bowed in a large Cavalier fashion, almost losing his balance.

“Carmelita was that red headed skanky bitch you were hitting on in the bar before you saw me! And I don’t like wine! And I’m not your beautiful sexy anything. I must have been way too drunk. So, *You* wait in here. *I* wait outside. And by the way, the name is Julie, Jerk!”

“Julie Jerk. Colorful name,” he mumbled, secretly pleased by his comment, erasing his insecurity momentarily.

“Thanks for dinner,” she mumbled back over her shoulder as she left.

He could not figure out exactly what he said or did that set her off like that. Maybe it was his new cologne. Too flowery? Not manly enough?

“**I had a twin...**” Morris spoke softly, trying to read her reaction, moving closer, hoping she liked his new cologne, sure this one was the hugging, loving kind, thinking she would feel bad for him, would comfort him and then...

He had tried, awkwardly, just a few minutes ago to embrace her, but she had turned away quickly. The new cologne?

Morris bit his bottom lip to keep his mind on the golf game. He was so horny, he had earlier decided to think of something less than erotic, like his golf game. There sure as hell was nothing sexy about his golf game. That way he thought he could forestall any premature embarrassment. But he was so eager to try his new love making technique, his mind was *so* getting ahead of the golf game, visualizing the climax, before the first green.. He almost laughed at himself, but stopped just in time.

“Had...?” She drew back a little. Just a little. Actually, she may have just arched her back. His breath?

“He died in...” Morris paused. He wondered what

her reaction would be if he said out loud the thought that flashed across his mind. *I was hungry. I ate him in the womb.* Daring? Kind of wild? Or just a little too sick? Maybe. Probably wouldn't get a good reaction, he decided. "He didn't live past birth," he finished after the long pause, which worked out alright. It made him appear sensitive, as if his emotions were overcoming him, but he had fought back and won; his manhood intact.

He felt that tic in the left side of his face again.

"Oh! I'm so sorry," the girl said, sipping on her third holiday Manhattan, actually relaxing a bit, feeling a pang of sympathy for this strange man, but wanting to change the subject. "Ummm...you make a good drink for an accountant." She had matched him, drink for drink, so far. But maybe it was time, he decided, to switch to wine before he got too drunk to perform. "And apparently you make good money, too," she finished, looking around admiringly at the richly furnished room.

"I'm a CPA actually. And thank you. And don't be sorry. I didn't even know I had a twin until last week when Mom finally told me. Although..." his voice dropped to a low whisper..."I always suspected something important was missing, you know what I mean? As if part of me was gone..."

She eased away from him in slow, dancing circles until the coffee table was between them. "You mean, no one else knew? No one else could have told you? Your Dad or ...you have a sister, you said?"

"I don't think my sister knew. And my dad wouldn't have told me. Not if Mom told him not to. No one went against Mom." Although he spoke quietly, he felt his blood pressure rising. Why did even the thought of her do this to him? "Huh!" the word exploded from him. "If Mom wants something to remain a secret. It remains a secret! No one goes against Mom. Certainly not Dad. Big mean Irish son of a ... " he paused. "Usually. There was

that one time Dad really helped me out. Went against Mom to do it, too!

"Mostly Mom rules the roost," his voice was quiet and soft, but menace rumbled in the undertones. "She lays down the laws. Mom is made of titanium and nothing bends her!"

He paused, trying to control himself. He forced a laugh. "She made me what I am today."

"Is your mother in good health?" the girl asked, a little uneasily.

"Yes, thank God! I don't know what I'd do if she ... passed away," he shuddered, trying to hold back the tears in his voice. Why did the thought of his mother bring out all these intense emotions in him?

Morris sat down beside her on the sofa. "Why did she finally tell you?" the girl asked, placing her drink on the glass-topped, delicately carved, mahogany coffee table and standing up, pretending to examine the spines of his many books wondering if he'd read all these. Or were they just for show.

Morris quickly slipped a coaster under her drink noting her butt was shapely and large the way he liked. "*Baby's got back,*" he sang to himself. "It was an accident," he said out loud. "I think it was an accident. We had an argu... a misunderstanding and ...well, she has a temper. And uh... she said...at one point. 'I wish your brother had lived instead of you!' And I said, 'What? What brother?' But she wouldn't answer. I wouldn't stop asking until she finally told me I was a twin. My brother died in childbirth. And then she said it almost killed her when David died. She named him David even after he was already dead. And said if ... I died, if I died, too, it would...it would kill her. But I was such a disappointment and how she wished David had lived instead of me." Morris paused, took a deep breath and stood up slowly, standing very still, clenching his fists.

"And I knew then for the first time why she had sometimes slipped and called me David. When I

asked her once why David? She said it was because she was going to name me that at first. But when she told me about my twin, I knew for the first time why. She was wishing I *was* David." His eyes were wide, his nostrils flared.

. "And you know what? A horrible thought flashed across my mind. I saw myself picking something up, something heavy, and hitting her with it. I kept hitting her over and over until she was dead!" He realized he was gripping his wine glass with white knuckles. He was surprised he hadn't snapped the stem.

He paused, the sudden cold passion unexpectedly shaking him, making him shiver. He tried a laugh, but it sounded dry and brittle. "I guess that makes me a real bad guy, huh?" He looked up at her, trying to smile in a wry, apologetic manner, as if he had just told a bad joke, wondering how he had gone so far off track. Maybe if he put on some music, something soft and jazzy, it would work anyway. He was soothed with the warmth of all the alcohol he had consumed and the surge of energy that had suddenly swept over him. Maybe she would think him dangerous and tough... and sexy...and Wow! Was he horny!

He was never sure who made the first move, but somehow it had worked out and they ended up on the floor, ripping each other's clothes off. And! what was even better, Morris had performed magnificently! If he did say so himself. Experiencing a warm glow of satisfaction.

He wondered what she thought. She said nothing. The glow died a little.

But It was his mother who ruined it all.

"**W e l l**," he said, smug and comfortable, almost, except for that nagging worry that they had performed without protection.

"No, no, not that," she had insisted, making him

stop with the condom. So he took a chance.

"Well," he repeated. "That was great, "I don't feel like killing my mother anymore."

She looked as if he had slapped her.

"Not that I ever....uh...ever did...really want to kill her, I mean." He tried a jolly laugh, deep and manly.

But she wasn't buying it. "Oh, shit!" the girl said, in a sort of growl, "what have I done!" looking around frantically for her clothes.

"What?"

"Ah, come on! I can't take it. Another Mama's boy. You can't even have sex without thinking of Momma. It's another incestual love-hate relationship. This one teetering on the edge of homicidal horror. I will not go through this again. I may be a social worker, but I am not going to have to deal with clients on *my own* time! Okay, what did you do with my clothes?"

"You don't have to go, Sandra. You can stay the night. You can have your own room. Please. I'll make you the greatest breakfast you've ever tasted in the morning. I'll make you a breakfast like Momma...uh...used to make," he finished, lamely.

"The name is Sharon, Jerk! And oh, yes, I do have to go. And if I was staying the night, I sure as hell wouldn't want my own room. And what's more, I hate great breakfasts in the mornings made by weird guys with an Oedipus complex! So where the fuck are my clothes, Short Dong Wong Chong!?"

"Wow! That was rude," he said, pleasantly and smoothly.

"My clothes!" she demanded.

"Your clothes are here, Sharon Jerk." He bowed gracefully, opening a closet door, taking out two hangers, on which all her clothes, including her new Rene' Designed white silk panties, hung neatly. He handed them to her. "And by the way, I think I know your sister Judy. Judy Jerk? Any relation?"

She dressed in a flash and slammed the door much too hard on the way out.

He later heard she was pregnant. He had a nagging feeling it might be his, but he didn't try to find out. He didn't think about it much.

No, I'm not against whistle blowers, uh...Angel...?"

"It's Angela." Her voice was sharper than intended. She softened it. "Go on."

"Even that Swedish egomaniac... who leaked all those secret documents, what's his name?"

"He isn't Swedish, he's Australian."

"Oh? He's so pasty faced I thought he was Swedish. Anyway, even he is important in the great scheme of things. *Even* he has a preset place in our obtaining eventual total freedom to be..." Morris stood and opened his arms wide as if he had nothing to hide. "*We'll have to be ourselves! Don't you see?* We'll have no choice but to be what and who we really are."

"My mother was Swedish," Angela's voice returned to sharpness.

"Uh...what?" What did he say now? "Sorry for...for...whatever. My bad... Anyway, don't you see, I believe it will be to everyone's best interest when everyone will have no secrets. When the internet finally blossoms into its own, when everyone knows everything about everybody. Then we will all have to be REAL!" He pounded his fist into his open palm." Whack! She jumped a little.

"You can't say, 'Hey! I ran the four minute mile in high school' and expect to be believed on your word alone! Anyone can look it up on their cell phone. There it is on the internet. You didn't even finish the race. You stumbled right before you crossed the finish line. See! Look! Here's how it really went down." Morris was on fire. Maybe he should have gone into politics.

"See! No secrets for anyone. Not even the government. How great would that be!" He looked at her expectantly, waiting a second for her comment

and then rushed on, pacing about the room, deep in thought. "Or will it? Will it be in a sense as if our minds and lives are totally connected becoming one great beast composed of us. Talk about your loss of Privacy!"

He paused, wondering why she was looking at him so strangely. Then he continued, trying to make himself clearer. "But will our loss of any privacy at all change society so much that we will all become worker ants in an information colony, totally controlled by our no longer secret passions, by our cheapest desires? Will we be 'happy' living our assigned roles for life, from birth to death, all for a fulfilled passion or two? Is that what it's all about, Angela?"

Angela was staring at him intently with her eyes wide open and her head at a wary tilt. "How much wine have you had?"

"This is my second," he answered honestly. Of course, she already knew about the Manhattans and he didn't mention the two shots of tequila he secretly took to bolster his romantic skills. "But, I digress. Whistle blowers have their places, but it's a delicate balance... UH..." he stammered, noting her increasingly anxious frown, "why did you ask that question in the first place? How did it come up?"

"I said I had a problem and I was interested in your opinion. What is your opinion of whistle blowers? And you were off like a terd of hurdles, running into outer space, spouting absolute nonsense. I'm sorry I asked. Believe me, I am." Angela wondered where she put her purse. "I am so sorry I asked."

"I didn't mean to be rude or unfeeling about your problem ... uh... if you have a problem. I just wanted to set up the context to better explain how I reached my conclusion about whistle blowers.

"What I'm trying to say is that whistleblowers have their place in completing the interconnected future when we all becomes truly joined, when the

media is truly the message, when all is revealed, everything there is to know about each of us”

“... and blah blah blah...,” Angela finished for him.

Cute as he was and as anxious for a little action as she was, Angela decided it wasn't worth it.

“Uh...I gotta go,” she said, as he stood there looking rather stunned. She began gathering up her things. Luckily she drove. “I'll call you. Thanks for dinner. Tell Marietta I said hello. I'll have to thank her for setting...uh...getting us together. Bye. Bye. Is this door locked? Oh! Turn it left. Okay. Bye, bye. Had fun...”

“Sure, I know what Hell is,” Morris answered the interrogator's question. It was his first interview for the Re-Live experiment. “It's having to live your life over, doing everything exactly the same way. Knowing what is going to happen but not being able to use that knowledge to change anything in any way. That's my idea of hell.”

“So, if Re-Live is like that...uh...unable to change the past, would you still like a do-over, so to speak?”

“Is it?”

“Not exactly. We'll get into the details later. Right now, we need more information on you.”

“Like what?”

“Like what makes Morris Morris. We'll start with why you want to Re-Live? Why do you?” the interrogator asked politely.

“I...uh...I want to ...I want to ... uh, set new goals for myself. I want to ...uh...be different. To change things.” He paused.

“So...” Morris (Maurice was pronounced Morris by all his Minneapolis friends in spite of his repeated requests not to do so, until he finally gave up and accepted Morris) faced his interviewer and asked, rather arrogantly and bravely for him, “...so is Re-Live like that? Can I review all my past...uh.... mistakes and misfortunes and change things this time around?”

“You can pick one thing you wish to change,” the young man behind the desk answered softly, his athletic bulk belying the voice, “but you must be mindful of the possible domino effect of the change. There may be collateral damage. We don’t know yet. That’s why we are inviting volunteers to be our test subjects. It is possible that some things or events that subsequently also change may not be to your liking.”

“Oh!” Morris said, a little taken back by the news. “That was not mentioned in the article. Which I find deplorable. Wonder how much that inept reporter got paid! It was a woman, wasn’t it? Beautiful and dumb.” Morris rolled his eyes and attempted a wry chuckle.

“That’s about the third slur you’ve made against women. Why do you hate women so?” the interviewer asked.

Morris humped, in high dudgeon. “I don’t hate women!” Then he paused and shrugged his shoulders. “But women, apparently, hate me.”

“You know why you hate women so?” the interviewer persisted.

Morris took offense. “Hey! Listen, already! I do not hate...!”

“You hate women because you need them so,” the interviewer interrupted.

Morris sat up straight, took a deep breath and glared at the interviewer. “That is totally ridiculous!”

“You need women sooo much, but you are so bottled up and repressed you are atremble at the very mention of sex and you perform poorly when you get the rare chance. You clamp down on yourself. Hard! You’re afraid you’ll display your natural, animal self. And how uncivilized would that be! You see yourself going wild, ravishing the fair damsel, displaying your wanton side. You see sex as a fight against yourself. You are so leery of it, of the visions the word itself creates, it makes you blush. And you seldom get any satisfaction, mainly because

you get yourself drunk to loosen your inhibitions which, it would appear, harms your performance ...”

“That is not so. I have sex with women all the time! Successful sex! And what you just described is totally not me. And how do you know...uh...think you know so fucking much about me?” He stopped, embarrassed he had lost his temper again, then continued in a quieter, controlled tone, “...And I repeat I have *great sex* with women all the time!”

The interrogator looked skeptical and Morris was trying to decide if he would find more pleasure in slamming the arrogant a-hole’s head against the wall than experiencing Re-Live. He also realized he should tell the arrogant a-hole that he knew Karate even if he didn’t, and was about to do so in spite of the fact the man looked really big, when he was knocked aback by the next question from a voice behind him.

“Did you ever have sex with a man?” a woman’s voice asked.

He whirled around and gasped. It was his cousin Mike in drag.

He took a deep breath and was thirteen again and his cousin Mike was spending the night. Mike was the same age. A few months older. A year behind him in school. Mike had failed the second grade. They had a great day. They didn’t fight even once. Mom outdid herself, making his favorite barbequed beef. And her famous saffron rice. And no broccoli and no salad! It was a great day.

James Thompson, his father, was a mechanic who made a decent living, but he was Irish, and he felt obligated to live up to his stereotype. He spent a lot of time in the local pub drinking, playing darts, flirting with all the waitresses, and fighting, generally having his idea of a fun time.

That last activity often turned into a problem. He had to be bailed out of jail three times and once or twice was sued by the loser of the fight. And the

money went. So, the Thompson house was small and meagerly furnished. There were no extra beds. Mike had to sleep with Morris in his bed.

He didn't remember how it happened. He just remembered laughing and giggling and them pulling each others dick and they were both hard when Mom burst into the room. "What the hell's going on here?" she screamed. "Are you both little girls?" She forced them both to go out into the living room in their underwear where his father was, half-drunk, watching the replay of a football game. Mom got his little sister Lynn out of bed and spend a good half hour humiliating the two perverts while his father sighed and tried to follow the game. James told his wife to quit being such a bitch to shut up and let the poor boys alone. She had punished them enough. It was no biggie. Let it go.

That really set her off. And during her tirade against the fairy she married, and before Mom could order him out of her Christian home, Mike had grabbed his things and took off out the door, running practically naked, hell bent for his house. It was only six blocks away. Mom called out after him. "God already knows what you did! I'll talk to your mother tomorrow. I'll tell everybody!" she shouted so everyone in the neighborhood could hear. "That's a promise, Pervert!"

"You say one word to anyone about this, and I swear I'll kill you," Morris shouted in his mother's face with all the passion he could muster. She slapped him and called the cops. He spent the night in juvenile detention until his father got him out and forced Mom to drop the complaint.

He and Mike weren't friends after that. He had never felt so bad in his whole life.

"**Have you** ever had sex with a man?" the young perky blonde who looked so much like Mike would look all grown up, repeated the question, standing, hands on

hips, feet apart, in front of him now, demanding an answer, abruptly jerking Morris back from that horrible memory.

“Of course not!...uh...if you don't count Bible Camp.” Morris tried a dry chuckle, displaying a rare attempt at humor, looking at the blonde. He couldn't get over the Mike resemblance. Did she think his joke was funny? She's not laughing. “Hah! Just kidding. I plagiarized that from a stand-up guy on Comedy Central.”

“You can't even think about it, can you?” the blonde leaned forward, stared at him hard, directly into his eyes. “Just the very idea scares the hell out of you, right? In fact, any type of unconventional sex makes your skin crawl, right?”

“Wrong! I have no desire, no reason to think about it. The very idea disgusts me! And! I am not repressed!”

“Here!” the blonde said handing a square white card to Morris. “Turn it over and look at it.”

Morris took the card and turned it over.

It was a bright red 69 on a bright yellow background.

Incredibly, Morris blushed a bright scarlet.

That was almost it. He was really getting pissed off at these two. The dude is probably gay, Morris decided. Was she too?

Morris took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down. He realized he had to get away for a moment. “I have to use the restroom,” he said in an unnaturally deep voice and walked out of the room not wanting to ask directions.

Morris was actually afraid the young man would offer to show him. He hurried away down the hall. He needed a few minutes alone.

“**O kay,**” the blonde-- who had apparently appointed herself The New Head Interrogator-- began when a composed Morris returned, “Now, let's get back to

you. Do you have any special hobbies?"

Morris cleared his throat. "Yes," he finally answered. "I have some special hobbies, but I fail to see how..."

"Just answer the question, please," the blonde spoke softly, but insistently.

Morris shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "I...uh...make apricot jam and I draw."

"Apricot jam?"

"Well, I was kidding about the jam. But I do draw."

She looked annoyed. "What do you draw?"

"Comics," Morris answered curtly, wondering if he really wanted to go through with this.

"Go on," she insisted softly.

"It's just for me."

"Morris, I think at this point you are in danger of not being accepted into the Re-Live program." She stood, frowning down at him, arms crossed.

He knew it, she was a hard edged bitch. Probably a lesbian.

Morris bit his upper lip, took a deep breath and shrugged. "What the hell. Okay, one is called **Super Bum** and it's about this once homeless man who picked himself up off the streets and becomes a fabulously successful architect. He has international fame. One day he passes a homeless young man on the street before one of his buildings, begging for money and it disturbed him realizing that was once him. Homeless on the streets. Later, in his present home, his beautiful, spacious condo, in one of his most impressive buildings, The Manners Tower, Martin Manners--**Super Bum's** real name--Martin realizes he must do something to help, not only that young man he saw, but all homeless people everywhere. So....he becomes, like, the super hero who fights for the homeless, and says deep thoughty thoughts like, 'Being poor is like being in quicksand, the more you struggle, the deeper in debt you get.' and he gives away a lot of money which often is wasted, but

sometimes! Once in a while! It all works out and Martin Manners a.k.a. **Super Bum** has saved another poor wretch from the mean streets.” Morris wipes a pretend tear from his eye.

“That sounds trite,” the blonde said disdainfully, raising both her heavily accented eyebrows and looking as if she smelled something bad. She had totally ignored his faint attempt at humor

Her holier than thou attitude fueled his anger and he almost lost it, but he managed to calm himself down as he stared at her calmly. ‘It was my best offense,” Morris explained. “To show no emotion. That usually threw my attackers off their game. Emotion was what they were looking for, I guess. I thought of them as emotional vampires, feeding on those who dare to live”

“Have you ever been poor?” the blonde asked, ignoring his emotional vampires totally. “I mean since you’ve been out on your own?”

“Uh... in college, I guess.” Then he thought about it, remembering all the money-making schemes he had concocted in his college years. And his remarkable skill at poker. “No,” he admitted, “not really.”

“Any other comics...?”

“I...uh...have one other that I’m starting. It takes place on two planets, one that is very different from earth, basically a mining colony on a huge airless rock. And the other very earth-like. Both are peopled with self-replicating robots. They worship us, the robots on both planets. We made them, after all, and then we sent them out into space, to their respective planets. We are their Gods. Each planet worships us in its own unique fashion. The first, as I said, is a mining colony and the second... uh... the original quest was to find a planet hospitable for humans, or almost so. And then their job--the robots-- is to make it into a virtual second earth....uh....” He stopped: the blonde was looking bored. “I just started it, the strip. I haven’t gotten far...”

“Do you know what’s going to happen?”

Morris barked out a laugh. "No... not really. It's like writing and reading at the same time. 'What will happen next?' I keep asking myself."

"Any other ridiculous hobbies?"

"What?"

"Hobbies. Any other hobbies?"

"I'm writing a play...a musical about politics..."

"Original," the blonde sniffed, dryly. "Anything else?"

"I play the piano."

"Ever play professionally?"

"I was in a rock band once...for a while. **Bad Advice**. Not long. We found out there was already a band named that so we had to change our name. But we couldn't agree on a name. I wanted to call us **The Rotating Pineapples** but nobody else did. The others said with a name like that, we'd have to play island music. We fought about the name which became the straw that broke the camel's back, so we broke up. I didn't really have the time, anyway. I was the first to quit. It kept me from class work, from doing my best. Anyway, I only did it to meet girls."

"Did it work?"

"umm ...so-so..."

"Did you write your own music?"

"Uh...mostly we did covers, but ...Yeah... A few of us did. Once I wrote a song we played. It became our theme song. We played it at every gig. It sort of fit our band. '**Never Pop a Pimple**' was fun and full of bad advice and...uh... well, some good, but mostly bad. Hah. It was fun to dance to. It seemed to fit what we were at the time, what we were all about."

"You seem to remember it fondly. Are you sorry you quit the band? That you were the cause of the breakup?"

"I wasn't really. But, yeah, sometimes. A little. I still write music. But now just for me."

"Love songs?"

“Yeah. Some.”

“Have you ever been in love?”

Violet Nightshade was parading in front of the bank carrying a sign that demanded the bank “Give us back our money!” She had long dark shiny hair that glistened like black saran wrap, hair that hugged her head sleekly, falling to just above her shoulders. An ear, subtly pointed, peeked out on each side of her oval face making her out to be the offspring of a Vulcan and a pixie.

Violet had big dark blue eyes. Huge eyes. Looking like she was a Japanimation character come to life. “My eyes are violet,” she says when asked, “that’s why I chose Violet as my real name.”

Her birth name was Rose Deffendahl (“*And don’t ever, ever, ever call me Rosie!*”) and she didn’t weigh more than a minute. A strong wind would blow her over. But she was not the demure maiden she appeared to be. So, to match her real personality, and to stop forever hearing that dreaded ‘Rosie’ shouted at her, Rose changed her name-- much to her family’s dismay.

“Hey, I’m still a flower,” she said. “Just a different one. And Deffendahl is too hard to spell. And I like Nightshade. It fits. Violet Nightshade. See! It’s a story in itself!”

Violet’s violet eyes accosted Morris accusingly as she lowered her head and blazed them at him. He tried to step around her. But she could shuffle pretty fast and he was not amused after the first three foiled passes. She seemed to be able, effortlessly, easily, to glide in front of him and block his path.

After a few minutes of Violet’s shrill and harsh condemnations of him and all his greedy kind for doing business with a bandit bank, he demanded she let him by.

Violet gave in grudgingly, being by firm and loudly shouted conviction, non-violent, but she did think long and hard about her non-violent views when Morris threatened her with a swift kick. She considered using her sign as a weapon.

As he walked away, he heard her say, "I'll wait for you."

And somehow that struck him as the funniest thing he had ever heard.

He almost collapsed in a fit of laughter. He had to go back and talk to her. Which he did, of course, and that led to the best three years of his life.

"Love as Chemistry! That's the stupidest idea ever!" Violet pronounced one day in their third year. She had developed the habit of making broad defensive statements about the weirdest things, snatching random ideas out of the air like so many gnats. And, like Pavlov's Dog, he salivated, jumping to the bait. He always took the opposite side. He had to. It was part of being him. And anyway, that's what she wanted. Maybe it was a brain exercise thing for her. Maybe it was a kind of extreme workout for her intellectual muscles.

In any event, Morris always obliged her by being her foil.

"Don't tell me about chemistry," he warned Violet, but saying it with an impish smile, "You captured me with your chemistry, the Perfume of the Sirens."¹⁸

Violet was in her mood. If you said, "Look, Violet, there's a big black dog."

Violet would say, "Oh that dog's not so black. *Or* big."

So they fought.

"You must have smelled something," Violet finally

¹⁸ The complete story of "Violet and Morris" is contained in JI69's report

agreed after they had both exhausted their arguments pro and con and made love like they usually did after a stupid fight. The stupider the fight the better the lovemaking. And this time to Morris it was special. "But whatever perfume it was," Violet continued, smiling, "it must have been pretty potent to have captured an up-tight hard-ass like you. We had a good run, didn't we?"

Why did she use the past tense when she asked that? Morris shivered, wondering, feeling uneasy.

Morris *had never been so* happy. They both appeared to be happy... well, at least contented. Morris was happy in spite of that faint dusting of unease spread by Mom's strong disapproval of Violet. Open and rude disapproval! The happy couple seldom visited her in spite of Mom's constant invitations and reproaches; they almost always turned her down, sometimes offering the most outlandish and unbelievable excuses. Finally, eventually, every time, Violet gave in. "I will just ignore everything she says," Violet declared. This meant, of course, he was going, too. So they wasted a long, long Sunday afternoon with Mom and Dad.

Dad, of course, liked Violet. He had an eye for the ladies.

"Your real name is Rosie Deffendoll?" Dad asked her one evening, three years almost to the day after they met. It was the zillionth time he had asked the exact same question. Violet nodded with a smile, ignoring the dreaded Rosie. She knew Dad didn't really care about her name change, he simply wanted to keep her talking to him while Mom bustled around glaring. Morris knew Dad was in for a hard time after he and Violet left. "Why did you change it?" Dad asked with that big silly grin on his face, acting the fool, thinking he still had it. Inside, he was still that handsome young man of twenty with white teeth

flashing at all the girls.

"Hiding from the narks, more than likely," Mom remarked sarcastically from the kitchen. "Or from her pimp," she added, barely mumbling, but everyone heard.

And for some reason--he was never absolutely sure why, Mom had been even ruder in the past--Violet became scary angry.

"We have to go!" she shouted, standing up. "Morris! Let's go."

"We just got here! Sit down!" Morris, startled, spoke sharply, shocking her. He had never spoken to her quite like that. And it was the absolutely the wrong thing to do!

She sat down, but wouldn't speak to him at all the rest of that long cold evening. He wracked his brain trying to figure out how to make it better. Just because he told her to sit down? Very much an overreaction. That surely couldn't be it. Was his simple request all *that bad*?

When they got home, she still would not speak to him. He slept on the sofa.

The next day while he was at work, she moved out. She left no note, no clue to why she was missing, except for the ghosts she left behind, constantly whispering to him in the empty apartment. Should he report her missing to the police? Violet would kill him for that.

Incredibly enough--incredibly amazing to him--her leaving broke his heart and he really, really hurt. Bad!

"I must have been in love," he realized.

"In love?" he repeated, climbing out of his reverie, finally answering the blonde's question. "Yes. Once. I think." Wondering where Violet was.

"Okay, Mr. Thompson, now comes the 32 million dollar question. Did you kill your mother, or in any way participate in the murder?" The young man

asked, apparently taking over again.

"I did not."

"You failed the polygraph test. And you confessed to..."

"I did not!" Morris started to lose his temper, then took a deep breath. "It was inconclusive, the test" he added. "I did not kill her. It's just.... It's like... anytime I think of...her. I get emotional..." He took another deep breath. "So when they asked me if I had ever wanted to kill her... I was tired. My mother had just been killed. I couldn't think straight and...I told them about the one time I had...when she told me about my twin...about the one time when I thought of killing her. But I didn't! I swear I didn't!"

The young man paused and smiled. "Well, the jury believed you. And I believe you.," he said so softly and sweetly it made Morris shiver with disgust. "I have my own built-in Truth Rader."

Morris bit his bottom lip and said nothing.

"So...Let us go on to the 64 million dollar question," the blonde spoke up. "What would you change in your life if you could?"

Morris hesitated. He had the whole answer in his mind, but only as a thing, a desire. He couldn't describe it.

"We're waiting," whispered the young man softly.

Morris looked up. Squared his shoulders and answered as sarcastically as he could. "I want to look like Matt Damon, sing like John Denver, write like Tom Robbins. And! I don't want to be an accountant anymore... And, oh yeah! I want be in love with every woman I meet. But most of all I want passion!"

They both looked amused. "And what would you have to change in your life to have such passion?" the blonde asked.

"Isn't it all the mother's fault?" Morris asked staring at her intently. "Doesn't it all have to do with the hormones in your mother's body at the time you were in the womb?' And your first few days or

months of life? If she breast fed you or not?"

"So you are saying we should change your dead mother... not you?"

"No, change me as a boy. Inject me with the right kind of hormones, make me the man I really am!"

"You think your defect is physical?"

"Isn't it? Isn't every human defect of physical origin?"

A RECORDS SEARCH of Maurice Allen Thompson produced no previous (before the Mother Murder) trouble with the law, not even a traffic ticket.

There is one blot on his record and that is the domestic violence charge leveled at the boy by his mother when he was in his early teens. The charge was dropped when the father testified against the mother.

Mr. Thompson refused to talk about the incident and the details of the case are sealed at the judge's order citing Mr. Thompson's age at the time.

MR. MAURICE ALLEN THOMPSON: MEDICAL REPORT~CONCLUSION

Everything is A-OK with the exception of slightly elevated blood pressure. Given a prescription.

THOMPSON ASSESSMENT BY AGENTS BW58 AND CP 59

We agree on one thing, and practically one thing only. Mr. Thompson should be included in the rank of volunteers considered for the privilege of Re-Living. He represents-- in another of our rare shared opinions¹⁹ -- a growing segment of the world's populations, especially those in the 'so-called' major industrial nations. Imprisoned inside his head by some of Society's outdated and severely rigid rules, Mr. Thompson further aggravated his situation by choosing a profession of additional rigidity and has become a passionless Prisoner of Rules.

He would be in our opinion the perfect test case for this type of individual. If Mr. Thompson can achieve success in the Re-Live program, many, many others can also.

¹⁹ The two agents (BW58 and CP59) are currently undergoing marriage counseling; "working things out."

*ASSESSMENT OF THE CP57/BW56 ASSESSMENT :
RE MAURICE THOMPSON*

I reluctantly agree with the CP57/BW56 recommendation without great enthusiasm. There's something about Mr. Thompson that chills me. However, I can find no logical reason for refusing Mr. Thompson's request to become a volunteer for the first Re-Live test.

I will kick the 'problem' of the questionable human being that he appears to be up to the next level where MA68 will determine if Mr. Thompson is deserving. But I will offer the following friendly advice to MA68 :

Observe the subject very carefully; do not give an inch! There is something I find unnerving about Thompson. He is, in my opinion, the weakest candidate to have been passed up into the second round. Much depends on your report,

Mr. Thompson needs to get real. The question is can he?

~AGENT WT1~

FOR THE NEW HORIZON POLITICAL ALLIANCE

CHAPTER 5

KIKI

VALUE REPORT ON KIKI: Pre-Concept Stage

(Following are excerpts from a 300 page report submitted by Third Level Evaluator DM92 to Re-Live's Supreme Authority, WT1.

The original report, much of it redundant, appeared to indicate that Kiwi had a strong influence on DM92, "Overwhelming influence," according to those in power at Re-Live, and so Third Level Agent DM92 was commanded to enter a Re-Indoctrination Program "A.S.A.P."

As ordered, so it was done.

Since the re-indoctrination, DM92 has not been a happy camper. He has attempted suicide three times.

Just sayin...)

FOLLOWING ARE EXERCPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR
KENNY JONES WHICH WAS CONDUCTED BY DM92

"Without a doubt, one of the most beautiful flowers to ever blossom in a ghetto," so reads the first sentence of a novel now (still) being written by Kenny Hosea Jones. "I wanted to essentially celebrate the life of Kiki," Mr. Jones states with a bemused expression, explaining why he was writing his book (which he has tentatively titled KIWI) and why it was taking so long, "It is taking me so long because I, like so many before and after me, fell madly in love with Kiwi ...Uh... I mean Kiki, the exotic slum flower! ...And," he adds after a pause, with

suppressed enthusiasm, “I do not want to let her go. If I never finish the book, she will always be mine!” Then Mr. Jones visibly relaxes. Actually crumpling into himself. He smiles crookedly and sighs. “But something will happen someday and I will finish it. I already have the last line written. Want to hear it? Here’s how it goes: ‘With never so much as a fare-thee-well to the woman who had spiritually sustained me through my long dark winter, I ambled away.’”

Mr. Jones leaves one with little doubt as to the answer of the question ‘Why has the book not been published?’

Kiki has all her life managed to impress favorably *most* all those who had the good fortune to meet her, however briefly.²⁰

“Yes, *almost all* men who meet her like her,” Mr. Jones semi-agreed with our comment, noting there *were* a few exceptions, even with men, and “all women dislike Kiki.”

Kiki agrees. She laughs with genuine pleasure, proud of herself.

“But to semi-dispute what I just said,” Mr. Jones amends, clearing his throat, “Kiwi leaves a very indelible impression even on those who pretend to dislike her.”

“Kiki,” I corrected him.

“ummm...what? Oh, yeah, Kiki.” Then he reared back in his chair his head held high, defiantly. “I’m getting a little worried, though. I can’t tell the difference between the two. Sometimes. It’s like they are becoming the same person. And what would happen, I wonder, if I wrote something in the novel, like having Kiwi fall in love with a character I pick, maybe based on me, would Kiki in the real world have to fall in love with me also?”

He forced a laugh. “Just kidding.”

At the point in her life when she first learned of Re-Live from Jones, her mentor and unofficial biographer, “Kiki was becoming extremely bored with her shallow existence and she secretly, nightly, ached for a knight on a white horse to gallop up and take her away by force, to whisk her away to their castle high on a hill behind a moat, where she and her love would live happily ever after.

“Not just for a long weekend.

“But all the men she had met, *almost every one*, became irritating to an unbearable screeching degree way the hell before the weekend was over,” Jones writes. “All except one. Jean DeChamp, her son’s father. ‘Jean was something special,’ Kiwi sighs in a happy-sad way.

“Jean DeChamp....” she whispers his name. Then, “Ah,” she sighs, “that miserable rat..”

Jean had turned the tables on her. She had bored him! He left her! Left her to have the baby all alone! And ...and Then! He had the nerve to sue for sole custody!

²⁰ And that includes yours truly, WT1.

She didn't fight it.

"I knew my baby would be better off with his father in Paris than with me wherever I was,' she rationalized, trying not to think about the money.²¹

"Mamma is a rolling stone," she sings. She hums it when she is feeling acutely, strangely, painfully lonely.

NAME: Kiwi (no last name)

AGE: 29 (best guess, no official birth certificate.)

SPOUSE: Briefly married to Jean DeChamp

CHILDREN: Son, Gabriel DeChamp 12; lives with his father in Paris

RELIGION: Raised Catholic, but money is her god.

DESPERATION LEVEL: 7

KNOWLEDGE OF RE-LIVE: TV shows and internet research

MAJOR PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS: Life long conditioning has left her a survivor, appearing strong and dependable, but essentially she is a selfish loner; definitely not a team player. And each major setback in her life reinforces her aversion to serious attachment. She needs to learn to trust.

RECOMMENDATION: Accept. She is at a delicate reachable point in her life and her potential is definitely worth encouraging.

FOLLOWING IS AN ESSAY SUBMITTED BY KIKI TO RE-LIVE WHEN SHE APPLIED FOR ACCEPTANCE IN THE FIRST HUMAN TEST:

I don't remember much of my childhood. Fortunately. Because, looking back now, I know it wouldn't have been good memory. I don't feel sad about it. It just was. I consciously try to remember only those things that make me happy.

For example, my first memory was when I was ...maybe six and I wanted to go to school, but Mamma said no. I would learn what I needed to learn from her. She would teach me how to run a house for the man who would eventually "own" me.

(T O B E C O N T I N U E D)

²¹ Reportedly Mr. DeChamp paid Kiki \$250,000 for "rights" to the child, their son Gabriel Ortega DeChamp.

Next month