

Chapter Fourteen

We parked the car in Ackerman's gas station on Columbus Avenue ten blocks south of the Municipal Building. The police had blocked the north end of the avenue to the protesters. The demonstrators would be arriving that way, and the police wanted to avoid direct confrontations.

June and I joined the throngs of people of all ages, all genders and all colors walking toward the barricades that cordoned off the demonstration area. Many of them carried placards. "Down with Bigotry and Racism." "Humans Are Not Animals." "Love Makes the World Go Round, Hatred Makes It Go Down." "All People Are Made in God's Image." "Democracy Embraces All People." And many more.

An undercurrent of gravity ran through the walkers. Their faces and body language displayed a variety of emotions. Anger, idealism, disgust, frustration, agitation, anguish, alarm, desperation. But regardless of what every individual was feeling, they were all united in a sense of the gravity of the situation. It was an important day. A critical day. A monster had risen from the slimy depths of society and was gathering strength. It had to be stopped before it tore apart their beloved United States of America. June and I shared their urgency and many of the other emotions as well.

The sides of the avenue on both sides of the walkers were packed with hundreds of onlookers. We passed the Shiloh Gospel Church just when a stream of black people in their Sunday best were emerging from Sunday services. Parents hustled their children away, but many others remained to watch the spectacle.

As we approached Jamestown Road, I could see the Mitzvah Tank in the distance across the avenue to our left. It was parked right off the avenue

in front of a nondescript square box of a building, which I recognized as the Chabad House. A few bearded young men in white shirts and colorful yarmulkes stood beside three folding tables covered with stacks of leaflets and assorted religious articles. Some of the passersby stopped to view the display. One Lubavitcher was offering Shabbat candles to young women who appeared Jewish. Another was helping a young man in shorts and sandals put on *tefillin*.

June pulled a small but powerful pair of binoculars from her ample handbag and trained them on the Mitzvah Tank. “Adrian! Look! That’s David doing the *tefillin* thing!”

I took the binoculars and looked. It was indeed David. He looked happy and excited as he wrapped the black leather straps around the young man’s left arm. Four other young man were waiting their turn. Most of them had probably never put on *tefillin* in their lives. Perhaps just on the day of their bar-mitzvah. Their Judaism did not play an important role in their lives, certainly not to the extent of strapping on *tefillin* every day. But on that day, it seemed eminently appropriate. I am Jewish, they were declaring, and I’m proud of it.

I studied David’s face while he was giving random Jewish people a distinctly Jewish experience. I could read that face so well, and it was clear that he felt he was doing something terribly important, something extremely meaningful, that he was playing a small role in something historical. He was oblivious to the hatred and malice that hung over Hesterville like a noxious cloud. He looked inspired. He was fighting evil with good. He was on the side of the angels.

June and I stepped into the doorway of a hardware store to make a plan. We didn’t want David to see us. We needed to find a vantage point from which we could observe the demonstration in the municipal parking lot and also watch David unobserved. I looked up and saw some people gathered on the roof of a four-story apartment building. The roof was our best bet.

The stairs to the roof were crowded with others who had the same idea,

but we pushed our way through and found a spot at the edge of the roof. I let June look around first, and then I took the binoculars.

First, I looked at the Mitzvah Tank. Activity was strong, and David was intensely involved. Every once in a while, he turned in my direction, and I could see the excitement on his face. I envied him. When had I ever felt such a surge of excitement? Not when I was in Congress. That was a disaster. Not even when I held the first copies of my newly published books. Of course, I was profoundly pleased, but in my mind, it was on to the next thing. The moment itself was disappointingly anticlimactic. As for the times of the writing, they were deeply exciting and fulfilling. But I had never experienced a single point in time, a single moment, when my head glowed and I breathed joy. David was experiencing just such a moment, and although I had begged him not to come, I was happy for him.

I turned the binoculars to the north. The low buildings between us and the municipal building did not obstruct the sight lines. I had never seen such a spectacle. I had been to places with huge crowds. I was in Berlin when Barrack Obama drew two hundred thousand cheering people when he was running for President. I had been to the Super Bowl more than once. I was in many places. But this was different.

The municipal parking lot was completely filled with demonstrators wearing tee-shirts or jackets emblazoned with the slogans of their respective groups and baseball caps with the emblem of the American Identity Party. Numerous more demonstrators jammed the northern part of the avenue as far as I could see. I saw many men and women of all ages but no children. They were all white. A long row of pickup trucks was parked on the avenue in front of the municipal parking lot.

The barricades were set up below us about a block from the demonstration area. Hundreds and hundreds of walkers had reached the barricades. The southern part of the avenue was clogged with them. They stood shoulder to shoulder with an air of expectancy, although no one knew what to expect.

The police were present in force. Governor Cimarron had considered calling out the national guard, but he decided that would be too incendiary. Instead, he requested that other townships send reinforcements, and I could see many police cars in a variety of makes and colors. The Hesterville police chief was in overall command, but coordination would be difficult. The police presence was heaviest at the barricades around the perimeter of the demonstration area, but many police also circulated through the crowds.

There were ambulances parked both on the south and the north parts of Columbus Avenue, and television trucks at the barricades. The media were not allowed into the demonstration area. Nonetheless, some enterprising newspeople had managed to get through with cameramen, and they were interviewing demonstrators for the live audience. A news helicopter hovered overhead.

As I watched, Farragut walked onto the stage. He nodded to the AIP dignitaries and waved to the raucous multitude. Then he stepped to the podium and raised his hand for silence. A sound technician adjusted the microphone for him and tested it.

“Welcome! Welcome!” Farragut shouted. The loudspeakers screeched, and he lowered his voice without lowering the intensity. “What a beautiful sight! I look around at the precious faces of my brothers and sisters in the American Identity Party, and tears come to my eyes. We’ve been sleeping long enough, my friends, and right here, in front of my eyes, I see the awakening of our people. We will not be silent while our beloved America is taken from us by others. We fought for this land. We spilled our blood for this land. This is our America! No one else is welcome in our America. If they want to be here, it can be only on our terms. Only we are the owners of this wonderful land. Only we will decide who comes and who leaves.”

He paused and looked around. Then he raised two fists into the air.

“Repeat after me. Our America for our Americans!”

The crowd erupted in a roar. “Our America for our Americans!”

“Again!” shouted Farragut.

The roar was even louder. “Our America for our Americans!”

“Again!”

“Our America for our Americans!”

He raised his hands for silence.

“What should we do about the illegal immigrants?”

“Send them back!”

“Where should we send them?”

“Where they came from!”

“What should we do about the fake Americans?”

“Send them back!”

“What should we do about the Hispanics?”

“Send them back!”

“Where should we send them?”

“Mexico!”

“What should we do about the blacks?”

“Send them back!”

“Where should we send them?”

“Africa!”

“What should we do about the Jews?”

“Send them back!”

“Where should we send them?”

“Poland!”

“What should we do about the Asians?”

“Send them back!”

“Where should we send them?”

“Asia!”

“That’s right, my friends. Send them all back. We don’t want them here. Unless they serve our interests.” He raised his fists. “And who makes the rules? Who lays down the law?”

“We do!”

“That’s exactly right, my noble brothers and sisters. This is our land. No

one will replace us. Do you agree?”

The crowd exploded with a primal roar, sudden and powerful as a thunderclap, and then the chants began.

“The spics will not replace us! The niggers will not replace us! The Jews will not replace us! The gooks will not replace us! The spics will not replace us! The niggers will not replace us! The Jews will not replace us! The gooks will not replace us! The spics will not replace us! The niggers will not replace us! The Jews will not replace us! The gooks will not replace us!”

Farragut lifted his hands, and the chants subsided.

“Let’s have a round of applause for our good friends in the media. They are witnessing this historic gathering, and I’m sure they’ll report to their viewers with fairness. Come on, a round of applause for the media.”

There was a ripple of unenthusiastic applause, but Farragut was pleased. The media was not the enemy of his people. Without the media, they would sink into obscurity.

“And now ... the time has come. We have to take this event to the next level. We will march. Let’s light our tiki torches!”

A sea of tiki torches sprang to flaming life all over the demonstration area. There were at least a thousand. Maybe two thousand. I didn’t count.

“Get ready! And remember, we are not savages. The march must be peaceful. No violence!”

The instructions were met with loud snickers, and the crowd surged toward the avenue. The beds of the pickup trucks quickly filled with demonstrators. The others lined up on the sides or behind them. Most had tiki torches. Some waved placards aloft.

Farragut thrust his fists into the air.

“Gentlemen! Start your engines!”