

LOOKING BACKWARDS

John Boston

The first time I ever heard of the name Julian Crane, I was sitting in a diner just outside of Columbus, Nebraska. There's whole hell of a lot of nothing in Nebraska. I have no idea why anyone would want to live here, but my boss wanted me to recruit some kid named Chase Wheeler who lived nearby, so off I went. I gave the kid my sales pitch, but I don't think he bought it. I work for a major record label and my job is to go out and sign new talent. Get them locked in before anyone else can. Believe me, it's not a glamorous job, not by any stretch of the imagination. I'm away from home for weeks on end. I have a son, whom I haven't seen in nearly two months. My wife has threatened to leave me on more than one occasion. The pay is good, not great, so you might ask: why do you stay?

I stay because I'm too damn old to do anything else. I got started at just about everything much later than most people. I got married at 36. Had my first child at 38. Had my first real job at 40. I never even owned a suit before age 40, if you can believe that? The economy is in the toilet because of all the trouble the Arabs have been giving us with their oil. Gas now costs over a dollar a gallon in California. It's really not a good time to leave if there ever is a good time.

The real reason I stay is because, for the first time in my life, I don't have to answer to anyone, except the VP of the company. He likes me and generally leaves me alone, so long as I can bring in new talent every month. I've actually had two jobs before this one that paid better, but I was dealing with people and their stupidity all day. It just wasn't worth the money. I like doing things my way, the Mike Gleason way. If I want to start work at ten in the morning and stay till midnight, I can do it. I even have an expense credit card. I don't think accounting even checks it. I had to submit a copy to the VP once a few months ago, but nothing ever became of it. It sucks being away from the family all the time, but my wife understands. She doesn't like it, but she understands. It's hard enough to get any job nowadays, let alone a good one....so here I am in this diner in the middle of nowhere Nebraska, hoping to snag this kid. Things could be better, but then again, they could certainly be much worse.

I ordered a cup of coffee and a donut. They were both surprisingly good. I had been on the road for hours and was exhausted. See, the company goes through a travel agency for my traveling. They find me the cheapest possible route and lodging to meet my goal. More than once, I've tried explaining to my boss that when I show up in a cheap rental car, with a cheap suit, and stay in a cheap hotel, people are going to assume the company I represent is cheap. It's not exactly a difficult line of reasoning to follow. The company actually has its own jet. I've been on it a few times. That gets people's attention. When I pull up to someone's house in an old Dodge Polara, it doesn't exactly scream excitement. My job is to woo people on a tight budget. It's a hell of a lot easier said than done.

Anyway, I had to drive from Omaha to Columbus, then back to Omaha, then board a plane back to Los Angeles in the morning. It was now just past five-thirty. I left LA this morning at seven-thirty. I was exhausted, so I stopped in for a coffee. Maybe if I hadn't, everything would have been different. Maybe.....maybe not.

I was just on my way out the door, when this freckled-faced kid comes in, holding a piece of paper. The girl looked ecstatic like she had just won the lottery.

"EVERYBODY! JULIAN IS GOING TO MAKE ANOTHER PREDICTION THIS EVENING AT THE PARK. SIX O'CLOCK. TELL EVERYONE TO BE THERE!" she screamed and took off.

I walked over to the register to pay. The old hen working behind the booth looked like she had seen better days.

"Who the hell is Julian?" I asked.

"Our village idiot. I think he's just a crazy hippy. I'll admit though, he is starting to convince quite a few people that he really is from the future."

"You're kidding? I didn't think Nebraska even allowed hippies in." I added.

"Last week, he correctly predicted the score of the Angels and Cubs game. I don't know, maybe he just guessed correctly. A few days before that, he predicted the final score of some big hockey game. People around here are skeptical, but interested if you know what I mean." said the old woman.

"Really? So where is the park?"

"Right in the middle of town. You can't miss it. All the roads in town pretty much lead right up to it."

I left the diner and headed out to my car. Now, if you were to ask me why I did it, I couldn't say. Omaha is a little over an hour away. It wasn't like I was really going out of my way to see the kid, the park ended up being less than a ten-minute drive from the diner. I don't know, I guess when I was younger, this kind of stuff would really have interested me. Before I had bills to pay and places to be, I would have listened to someone like Julian for hours. But, that was then, this is now. I figured it wouldn't hurt to at least hear him out.....after all: *what harm could it possibly do?*

Julian Crane was about a hundred and fifty pounds of dork. Glasses, messy hair, clothes that didn't fit. This poor kid didn't look like he could blow out a candle without screwing it up. He was speaking from a gazebo in the middle of the park. There was a pretty decent-sized group of people around him. Not just kids, but people of all ages. One of them even had a video camera he was using to record him. It was a very surreal atmosphere. A strange mix of mid-western farm kids and academics, all sitting on the grass, waiting for the Messiah to speak. It took a few minutes, but then he stopped talking to a group behind him and stepped out in front of the gazebo. He got a hero's welcome from the crowd.

"Hello, all! So nice to be surrounded by friends and loved ones. Well, I'll not waste any more of your time. I know many of you are growing tired of my sports scores, so I thought I'd mix it up a bit here. I know my skeptics and doubting Thomases will say that I am just being lucky. Well, try this one on for size: tomorrow, the stock market is going to close down 14.55 points for a final close of 627.19. That is all. Thank you for stopping by. God bless you all." he said and stepped off the gazebo.

I made it a point to write down the numbers. The kid has balls, I've got to give him that. Hell, if he got this right, I might even start to take him seriously.

I drove back to the motel near Omaha and there was a message waiting for me in the room. It was that Chase kid. I was really surprised. I didn't think he was interested. Clearly, I was wrong. He was a country music star, who was beginning to get noticed here in Nebraska. I'll be the first one to admit that I don't know shit about music. I couldn't tell you the difference between a chorale and a chord if my life depended on it. I don't really even listen to the music, cause at times, it's not about the music...*it's about the person singing it*. Chase was hungry. I listened to several of his songs. Good, but nothing earth-shattering. I figured we'd sign him to a single three-year deal with the standard one album fare. I liked the fact that he wanted to get better, that's what I look for. I've seen some very talented musicians who made great music but were just hot mess of a human being and knew enough not to touch them. My company had an image and that image was good old-fashioned *Americana*. We don't just sign country music stars, we have a diverse field, even several negroes. We just don't sign hippies, or anyone who has recently been arrested. When studios sign one of our boys or girls, they know exactly what they are getting. A solid, no-bullshit workhorse, who will do exactly what they are told. Maybe not the most talented musician in the world, but someone who can take direction and work with others. That's becoming harder to find in this industry.

Chase wanted to sign our contract but wanted his "*lawyer friend*" to read it first. I had no problem with that, I was just hoping to be back home in LA tomorrow morning. That didn't look like it was going to happen. I had my secretary fax over a copy of the contract. I drove back out to Columbus and handed it to Chase. I gave him the number to my motel room and asked him to please let me know when he is ready to sign. It was just a waiting game now. I thought about just getting a motel in Columbus, but both were filled. There was some big Ag convention in the town. So, I drove back to my motel and just waited.

I woke up the next morning and got a cup of coffee. I called my wife from the room. My son had gotten in trouble at school. My wife handled business. It sucks being an absentee father. My wife hated to be the bad guy, she usually left that for me. I didn't like it much either, but difficult things still had to be done. I just hoped my son wasn't going to make this a habit.

So, there I am in my motel room, just watching TV and drinking coffee when Chase calls me and says he's ready to sign. I ask him if he's sure and he goes: *oh, yes sir.....I'm ready!*

Thank God. I called the airline and got my ticket for the next flight tomorrow afternoon out of Omaha. I drive out to Columbus once more. Out to his farm and he signed the contract. I chit-chatted with his folks for a while, before heading back to the motel. Now, at no point in all of this, was I thinking about Julian's wild prediction. It wasn't even on my radar. I was more

concerned with getting Mr. Chase signed up to be part of *The Hyatt Record Family*. Once his name was on the dotted line, I called ahead and put him in touch with our production manager, Wally. He did tour dates and studio bookings. I really had pretty much forgotten about Julian.

It was around six that evening. I went across the street to a little pub to have some dinner and drink a beer. I sat down at the bar and a girl took my order. There was only one TV in the bar and it was on a local news channel. I nearly shit myself when the anchorman started talking about the carnage on Wall Street.

"Another down day on Wall Street. The markets closed down over fourteen points to settle the day at 627.19. It's lowest level in almost twelve years as the damage from Arab oil embargo becomes more severe than previously thought."

I took out my notepad and looked at the number. It was exactly the same. I couldn't believe it. The kid had been right all along. Maybe, I was trying the wrong type of talent.

I went back to my motel room and called my boss at his house, something I had only done once before. I filled him in on what I had witnessed and what Julian had predicted. He was intrigued, but still very skeptical. After all, time travel was impossible. Knowing the future was impossible, at least that's what we believed at the time. I knew then that Julian was no joke. He was the real deal. I just had to convince my boss of that.

"Look, we're not going to be able to keep a lid on him for much longer. I figure the sooner we can sign him, the better."

The boss wasn't really fired up about signing a "circus act". I was pissed, but I understood why. I was probably being played. We all were. Granted, this kid was good, I've got to give him that. Somehow, he had access to information the rest of us simply didn't. Still, predicting the final close of the Dow was *muy* impressive, by anyone's standards. I was able to convince him to stick around Columbus for a few more days. I mean after all, if this kid was from the future: *he was going to need a very good agent.*

Julian wasn't too hard to find. He worked at the Columbus Public Library. I caught up with him on his lunch break.

"Julian....my name is Mike. Mike Gleason." I said and extended out my hand.

He gave me a firm handshake.....very firm. Kind of caught me off guard.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Mike. I only make one prediction a week, you're going to have to wait until next Monday."

"I'm just asking for five minutes of your time, that's all," I said.

He motioned for me to sit down next to him. He offered me some chips.

"Julian, I'm in the people business. I sign talent for a record company. I'd like you to think about going to work for us."

Julian said nothing and continued to eat his sandwich in silence.

"Look, I'm sure you're skeptical of people like myself. We have a well-earned reputation. I'm not here to make money off you, I would just hate to see someone with your talent get ripped off by less than honorable people in my profession. You really might want to think about hiring a manager."

"Thank you for your time Mr. Mike, but I have a manager." he said.

"Oh, who might that be?"

"My grandmother."

"Your grandmother?"

"Yup."

"Well, I'm sure you're in very capable hands here, but if you want to really take your act to the next level, give me a call," I said and handed him my card.

"What exactly do you mean by my act?" he asked

"Well, come on kid. We both know you aren't from the future." I replied.

"I never said I was."

"Well, then how else can you predict these things with pinpoint accuracy?"

"I'll explain everything in due time. I gotta go, my lunch hour is almost up," he said.

"Julian, you're either a genius pretending to be an idiot.or an idiot pretending to be a genius. Either way, this is not going to work out well for you unless you have someone like me to watch over you. The wolves of this world will devour you in seconds."

"Mike.....you were at my last reading, correct?"

"Yes."

"Remember the four people sitting in the front row. The ones who were bigger dorks than even me?"

"Vaguely."

"That's Professor Bronson and his staff. He's a math instructor at the University of Lincoln. He's been trying to prove me to be a fake for the last three months. He can't do it and neither will you. I'm not a phony and I don't have an act." he said defiantly.

"All the more reason to let me help you," I said and put my hand on his shoulder.

Julian stuck my business card in his pocket and shuffled down the steps. He turned and waved. I waved back. I don't know, there was just something genuine and honest about the kid. I really meant what I said. He was going to need some help. I just hoped I would be the one to help him.

"Hey Mr. Mike?" he said, turning around.

"Yes?"

"You like football?" he asked

"Of course."

"The Huskers are playing Wisconsin next week. They lose 21-20," he said.

"If you say so," I said and waved him goodbye.

I figured that was the end of it. I was on to him and he knew it. it's one thing to represent a real talent, it's another to represent a fraud. I drove back to the motel and checked out. Before I left, I gave the motel clerk a proposition. He was just a kid. Nineteen and eager to get as far from Nebraska as he possibly could. He kept asking me all about Los Angeles and if the stories about the women were true.

"What's your name kid?" I asked

"Nick...Nick Wilson," he said.

"Tell you what Nick. You like watching the Huskers?" I asked.

"Of course. I watch every game."

"I want you to call me next weekend at my house in Los Angeles. I want you to tell me the final score of the game. You do this for me and I promise you, if you ever come to LA, I'll show you around the city and show you the parts of the city, I think you'll really like if you know what I mean." I said smiling.

Nick's eyes got very big. He quickly put my number in his pocket.

"Yes sir, I won't forget.....you can count on me."

"I know I can. Have you ever been to the Sunset Strip?" I asked.

"No, why?"

"I know some women there. They would just love to get their hands on a nice innocent young farm boy like yourself. If you're up to it?" I said.

"Oh, I'm up to it, believe me, I'm up to it."

"Don't forget to call," I said

I figured that would be that. I figured he'd forget about me, as soon as the next piece of ass crawled into that motel. But, Nick is a man that stays true to his word. He did call, five minutes after the game ended. He was very excited.

"Man, that was a great game. I can't believe they beat us," he said.

"What was the final score?"

"21-20. They cinched it with a field goal at the last minute. Man, I can't believe it."

I hung up on Nick. I sat down on my sofa. I poured myself a drink. My wife saw me as she passed by.

"Everything alright?"

"No dear.....we have ourselves a major league problem here," I replied.

For the next three days, I did nothing but sit at home and think. I took my family to a ballgame, took my wife to bed, and called in sick from work, which I have never done before, not once, in 46 years, if you can believe that. I was a part of this now. I knew what I had to do, I just wasn't sure how to go about doing it. I drove over to my boss's house. He had a mansion near the Hollywood Bowl. I had never been there before. I wasn't inside for very long and my most immediate and pressing thought was: *Christ dude, just how much money do you have?*

We sat down on his sofa. He poured the drinks. I filled him in on what had happened in Nebraska. I told him about the scores. I reminded him that he had correctly predicted the DOW average a day before.

"He's just too young to be that good. He says a group of geeks from the college has been following him for months and they don't believe he's lying. He knows. I don't know how he knows, but he knows."

"So, you want to try and sign him?"

"I know it's a long shot, I get it. I'd hate to know, we could have missed out on the most amazing person of the 20th century. Just give me a week. If I can't hook him by then, I'll call it quits. Just give me a week."

He sat back on his sofa. I knew I had him. It was just too good a proposition to pass up.

"Okay, one week. I can give you that, but I don't want your regular clients to fall by the wayside either. I can have Johnson and Perez cover your regulars. Don't burn me on this one. I've seen my share of professional bull shitters to really get excited about this. Seen enough con men and con women to last a lifetime. Some are very convincing. Sooner or later, he's going to ask you for money. What are you going to tell him?"

"Don't know. I guess I'll cross that bridge when I get there. Right now, I have to gain his trust. If I get him to sign, how far are you willing to go?" I asked.

"Not very far. We can promise him a ton of money down the road if he pans out, but I'm not going to throw a lot of money at him right now, not until he proves himself. If he really is from the future, are you sure you want to sign him and be responsible for him? He's going to be more popular than Elvis and the Beatles."

"Anyone else gets a hold of him, they're going to go chew him up and shit him out like week old burrito. He gets burned once, he might now want to cook again, if you know what I mean."

"Okay, one week. I'll have Marcy book your flight and make your reservations. Hope the wife understands."

"Yeah....me too."

I was back in Nebraska two days later. I stayed at the same motel, with the same weird kid, Nick. His face lit up like a Christmas tree when he saw me.

"See, I told you I'd call you. I always keep my word. So, how's about showing me those places you talked about?"

"Maybe later. You ever heard of Julian Price?"

"No, should I?"

"He's about your age. He's been making a bunch of predictions about sporting events and so far his track record is a hundred percent. it's almost like he can see into the future."

"Maybe he's just really good at making odds. I got a cousin that can do pretty much the same thing. He's incredible. You take any two football teams and ask him what the score will be. Nine times out of ten, he can get to within 2 points of what the final score will be. Don't know how he does it. He ain't from the future, that's for damn sure." said the kid.

"If it were just sports scores, I could agree with you, but he's predicted other things that have come true as well."

"So, when I come to LA, you're going to show me around, right?"

"Sure."

"I got your number, I'll give you a call."

Thankfully there was another guest behind me that grabbed the kid's attention. I was tired from the flight but knew I had to get to Columbus. I rented a car and drove out. I didn't know why I was driving out there, I didn't even know where to find him, I just couldn't sit in my room until the morning. I felt like if I were to wait, even for a few hours, I might miss my window of

opportunity. I picked up a local newspaper when I stopped in a gas station in Columbus, and sure enough, the headline confirmed it. Julian's secret was out for the entire world to see.

LOCAL MAN HAS UNUSUAL ABILITY TO PREDICT FUTURE EVENTS! NOW 10 FOR 10.

I had to find this kid before someone else did. Some people might use his ability for their own personal gain, as terrible a thought as it may be. I was going to gain some as well, but Julian was going to gain a whole lot more if I was writing his ticket. With me in the driver's seat, there would be no stopping us. I needed to test him, to see just how good he really was. I just had to get to him first, before anyone else.

I found him pushing a cart of books around at his job in the library. He didn't look too thrilled to see me.

"Morning Julian."

"Good morning Mike. I doubt you came here to get a book," he said.

"I'm not much of a reader Julian. I figure if anyone really had anything worthwhile to say, they'd either be dead or in prison."

"Fair enough. My grandmother got me this job. I guess it could be worse."

"Julian.....you've got a very unique ability. I can help you. Look, I've seen plenty of people with boatloads of talent spend their lives pushing carts if you know what I mean. Just because you are unique, doesn't mean you are going to be successful."

"What makes you think I want to be famous or successful?"

"Because, if you really wanted to make money, you'd be swimming in it right now. Everyone in the country would know who you are. Instead, you want to impress your peers. I can understand that, but you can't possibly be satisfied with that. That's what this is about with you.....getting back at all the kids in school who gave you a hard time."

I could tell by the look on his face I had hit pay dirt.

"You're from LA. You're probably a big shot there. You probably have a big house and a pretty wife. I grew up with my grandparents because my mother left me when I was three. I never had a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of. What would you know about growing up in a place like this?"

"Julian. I grew up in a small farming town in California. My old man was a worthless drunk who beat my mom like she was his sparring partner. My sister and I lived with relatives for two years, cause my dad beat my mom so badly, she spent a month in the hospital. Do you think you're the only one who's ever had it tough? I worked for everything I have. Nobody ever gave me a damn thing. Sure, I got a big house and a pretty wife. I earned them. Pretty soon, there's going to be a whole bunch of people invading your life. People that will make you all kinds of promises, tell

you whatever it is you want to hear. Kid, I don't care if you tell me to piss off and never want to talk to me again. It would just kill me to see somebody like you fall under the spell of the wrong person. You're sheep in a field of wolves and the fence separating you two is getting smaller by the day. See, I don't think you care about money, not really. You want the whole world to know, you're not just some loser from a trailer park in Nebraska, am I right?"

Julian said nothing, which was pretty much the same thing as saying everything.

"I grew up in the same trailer park you did. So, do you want to sign with someone who never stepped foot inside one or me? I know what it's like to be so poor you have to eat cigarettes to kill your hunger. To have to wear the same clothes for two weeks straight. The way everybody in school looked down at you like you were a different species of human. So, yeah, I know what it's like and it sucks. Look, forget it. What the hell would I know about somebody like you." I said and walked away.

"Wait.....wait, hold on. Are you on the level with me? You aren't just saying all this stuff to get close to me?" he asked.

"My sister, she's had a very rough life. Got married to the wrong guy and I mean like, really the wrong guy. Her baby was born addicted to heroin. Have you ever seen a baby born into this world, screaming its head off for a fix? I adopted him. He's my son. I never told him who his real mother was. My sister is due to get out of prison next year. Maybe I'll introduce them, maybe I won't. I would be in the same boat she is, but someone stepped in and helped me. Without this person, I don't even know where I'd be. I'm here because somebody gave a shit and I'm just returning the favor."

Julian was silent. I don't know why I told him my personal history. Maybe this just wasn't about money after all. I really did want to sign him, not just for the money, because I knew what would happen if he signed with the wrong person. The wrong people are everywhere in our society. I was just tired of seeing them win all the time.

"Be here tonight at six thirty. We'll go over some stuff," he said

"Okay, I'll be here."

He went back to pushing his cart. I was so upset that I had to go outside and calm myself down. I'd like to think at my age, I've put all that crap behind me. I guess I was just kidding myself. I'm still that little boy sitting at the dinner table wondering where the hell all our food went. Some days, I would get so mad at my father, that I could honestly imagine myself shooting him. I made a vow the day I got married that I would never be like my father. I would never put anyone through what he put us through. I would be the father I never had. I guess in some small way, I was trying to be Julian's father as well. I just had to hope he would let me in.

I hung around Columbus for the rest of the day. Not that there was much to do. I found his address in the phone book. He lived in a run-down house on the edge of town. I asked around. Most of the townspeople by now had heard of him. It wasn't a very big town. The local newspaper story wasn't going to help. I figured we'd have a few days max before the wolves came looking for their dinner. If he really was able to predict the future, I doubted a contract was

going to make much of a difference at all. At some point, Julian was going to get big.....and I mean big. I spent the better part of the day racking my brain, trying to figure out how he was able to know these things. It was almost as if someone was just telling him. Someone from the future. Maybe someone was using him as a ploy. I needed to meet the man behind the scenes. The wizard of oz. Someone who knew all of this was going through Julian because they didn't want to be identified. Why on Earth they chose a kid from a small hick town in Nebraska to be his voice, I had no idea. I figured they had to be close to him. Someone he trusts. Someone in his small circle of friends. I knew if I spent enough time around him, I could figure it out. I just had to get close enough to him to find the real brains behind this operation. Maybe Julian was the perfect person. No one would look twice at him, except for the fact he can predict the future.

I read the newspaper article on Julian. It didn't give much background info on him, just his predictions. They interviewed the staff from the University of Nebraska who admitted that they were stumped. They genuinely believe his ability was unique. He was not merely crunching numbers or applying some exotic formula. The professor liked to debunk fakes and conmen. He had met his match with Julian. A kid just out of high school had stumped some of the best minds in the state. The paper went on to say that Julian had written three predictions, which were put in a special lock box in the newspaper's office. Only Julian had a key for the box. Each week, they would read one of his predictions. Julian now had everybody on edge. He told them he had predicted the winner of the World Series that year. If he got that right, the excitement was going to hit the fan. The predictions would be published in full on the Friday edition of the paper, just as he had written them. That would be in two days. I could hardly wait. Once the TV cameras arrived, I would be out of time. If I didn't have his trust by then, this would all have been for nothing.

I met up with him after he had punched out. He wanted to show me around the library. He showed me the reading room. He showed me the room where you could look at all the old newspapers. He showed me his favorite section, the encyclopedia section. It was here where he spent most of his free time. He picked up a book and thumbed through it. I knew he had a point, I was just hoping he would make it sooner rather than later.

"All of mankind's knowledge is right here in this encyclopedia. Everything you could want to know. Want to know how many days of sunshine Capetown, South Africa has? It's right here. Want to know who invented the radio, or even how the radio works? it's all here, waiting to be read. All this knowledge.....all this incredible knowledge and yet we as a species have overlooked the most obvious."

"What's that?"

"We don't really know a damn thing about us? We don't know how we got here on Earth. No one believes we evolved from microbes. We don't know anything about our history. We know the major events of the last two thousand years, but we as a species have been on the planet much, much longer than that."

"True, but we had no real way to record it. A hundred years ago doesn't mean shit because there was no way to record it for future generations to see or experience. it's like nothing existed up until the beginning of this century." I said.

"Yes, but most of all, science has absolutely no answer for one of the most basic questions of our existence," said Julian.

"Which is what?"

"Why do we dream? Makes no sense. Yet, without it, we go nuts. Dreaming is vital for our mental and physical health. Not just sleep, but r.e.m sleep." said Julian.

"I suppose you're right. What does dreaming have to do with your ability to predict the future?" I asked.

"Everything Mr. Mike.....everything. Have you ever heard of the Great Sphinx of Egypt?"

"Sure."

"Okay, do you know why it was built?"

"I have no idea why it was built. Maybe to honor one of their gods?"

"Goodness no, that was for the generations that came later, after the great flood. The real architects of the Sphinx were more advanced in many ways than we are today. You see Mike, they were just recreating what they saw on the planet Mars. They wanted the whole world and future generations to know that they visited the planet. 1974 is not the zenith of human development. Not even close."

"Julian, I'm open to a lot of things, but I doubt very much the ancient Egyptians went to Mars. That's too much even for me." I said.

"Why is it so hard to believe?"

"Julian, we're still decades away from being able to send humans to Mars with our technology. How did they do it? Did they just get in a rocket and fly there?"

"Of course not. They never even left Egypt."

"Well, then how did they see the Sphinx of Mars?" I asked quite perplexed.

"That is precisely my point, exactly. How did they do it?"

"I don't know, Julian, how did they do it?"

"That's how I can predict the future. The greatest secret of this world isn't in any of these books. It isn't on TV or in a church. No one is even looking for it, yet every night, it's right there in front of us. The greatest secret of our lives is that we can leave this world and travel to other worlds right next door to us. Worlds where the laws of physics don't mean anything. Time and space have no meaning in these worlds. We can leave our physical bodies and enter the astral plane of existence. Half of us reside in this plane all the time, only we don't realize it. I discovered astral travel and met someone in that world from our future. See, time travel in the physical sense of the word is impossible. You can't go backward or forwards in time, but you can send information

backward or forwards in time. I am living proof of it. Pretty soon, everyone will see the light so to speak. It's going to be a glorious day for the planet."

"You mentioned you meet someone in this astral plane. Does this person have a name?" I asked intrigued.

"They certainly do. I'll bet you can never guess who is giving me this information. It would blow your mind. Give up?"

"You don't mean.....you've got to be kidding."

"Nope. My future self in the year 2024 is sending me back information to me in 1974. I'm seventy years old then. I'm an old man, well, not really, but much older than I am today. I speak every night to my future self."

I must admit, as insane as it all sounded, it did kind of make sense. I knew he wasn't done, I had to get the whole story out of him.

"Julian, 2024 hasn't happened yet."

"Well, not to us it hasn't. To my future self, it has. See, one day in the future, I read a book about something called conscious dreaming. It's sort of like meditation or hypnosis. You're not asleep, but you're not awake either. Imagine being able to dream and not wake up. You can do anything you want. Well, my future self became so good at it, that he decided to see how far he could push the envelope. I've been to Jupiter and Mars. Been to the Garden of Eden. One day I decided to try and find me, my past me and give me some advice about the future. The rest is history."

I really had no idea what to say. Julian may have just stumbled onto the biggest secret in history. The one that could change everything.

"Now, you have to be careful in the astral world, not everyone is friendly, just like here on Earth. You have nice people and not-so-nice people and just plain rotten people. The astral world is no different. You have to know who to trust. You trust the wrong people and I could end very badly for you."

"Julian.....why are you telling me this? Seems kind of forward for you. Why let the cat out of the bag at such an early point in our relationship?" I asked, hoping he would not be offended by the question.

"I had you checked out right after you gave me your card. I have friends in the right places. I knew you'd be back once you knew I got the football game right. I had to make sure I could trust you. I knew everything about you before you told me."

Julian was no small-town hick, that was for certain. He had an ace up his sleeve and knew exactly when to play it and when to keep it hidden."

"Did your future self tell you about me?" I asked

"No. The private detective we hired did."

"Private detective? Are you kidding me?"

"I had to be sure I could trust you."

"I have to be sure I can trust you as well," I added.

"Mr. Mike.....you probably thought you were going to show up here and save me from myself. Truth is I am here to save you from you and your stupid company. Did you guys pass on Buddy Holly? Tell me that's not true."

"Not completely true."

"No, I know exactly what you are and that's why I need you with me. We're cut from the same cloth you and I. Two peas in a pod so to speak. We both have worthless pieces of garbage for fathers. Our whole lives have been trying to convince ourselves that we aren't garbage just like our fathers. You figure the bigger the house, the fancier the car, the more distance you put between the memories of him and you, correct?" he asked.

"I got over my old man a long time ago."

"No, you didn't. Neither did I. I could live to be a hundred and fifty and I will still hate that man. The man who gave birth to me. I share 50% of his DNA, but I share none of his soul. I think you feel the same way, am I wrong?"

It occurred to me that I had Julian pegged completely and totally wrong in every sense of the word. This kid was running circles around me and wasn't even getting dizzy. I had to put the brakes on this before I was so dizzy I couldn't stand up.

"Sure, we have something in common, but that's. Lots of people have shitty fathers. At some point, you have to just let it go. You can't blame your parents for the choices you make as an adult."

"Perhaps.....perhaps not. I guess time will tell," he said.

"Julian, maybe this was a mistake. I'm not sure I want to represent you."

"What? Why not?"

"I feel like I'm playing poker with someone who's using a marked deck. I'm not a very good poker player, to begin with."

"You didn't come this far just to back out now. You know I'm going to be the most famous person in the world pretty soon. You sure you want to pass on this ride?"

"Yeah, Julian. I think I'm going to pass. I'm sorry. I don't think you need an agent at all. Maybe just a secretary. I'm not much of a secretary either."

"Well, think it over. We can always use someone like you in our organization," he said.

"*Organization? What Organization?*" I thought to myself.

"We'll be in touch," he said and gave me a pat on the shoulder as he walked by.

"Pretty soon, I'm going to be bigger than Jesus.....only I won't let a bunch of hillbillies and hicks nail me to a cross," he said stopping.

I left the library and was wondering why he needed a job at all. He was laying low on purpose. He had to have some kind of master plan for all of this. I just wish I knew what it was.

I realized then and there, that he and I were through. There were just too damn many unknowns with him. Problem was, once he did hit the stratosphere, my boss was going to want to know why I decided to pass on him. I was kind of wondering the same thing.

There's just something about this kid that isn't right. Things that should be there aren't and vice versa. Maybe I was just sore about getting played by a real player. I underestimated him big time. Won't make that mistake again. If there is an again.

I left Nebraska and found a flight back to LA the next day. I had a three-hour layover in Phoenix. I sat on a very uncomfortable seat in the airport and went over what had happened. I couldn't put my finger on it, but I knew something was wrong with all of this. It wasn't just the fact that Julian could predict the future. That I handle, it was the fact that this awesome, responsibility had been given to someone like him. He might look like a sack of potatoes, but underneath, he'll rip you in two before you even know what hit you. He was a wolf in sheep's clothing for sure. Maybe I was being too hard on the kid. He was going to be the most famous person in the world pretty soon. It would be a massive burden for anyone, let alone a 20-year-old kid. The problem in all of this is that *Julian wasn't going to be shaped by the world around him, the world was about to be shaped by Julian.*

I just had to hope we were ready.

I was sitting in my den at my house, watching the rain come down, which was unusual for this time of the year in California. It usually doesn't rain out until November or December. I was sitting on my sofa watching the first game of the world series with my son, who had just discovered baseball. I tried to put Julian out of my mind if it were possible. I was almost there and then that damn phone call changed everything.

"Hello?" I said picking up the phone.

"Hi, Mike? This is Nick."

"Who?"

"Nick. I work at the front desk of the motel you stayed at. You gave me your card, remember?"

"Oh yeah. What's up?"

"Last time you were here, you asked me about that Julian guy, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, he just hit the big leagues. One of his predictions was who would win the raffle at the Ford dealership near Columbus. They were giving away a new Mustang as a prize. Ten thousand people bought raffle tickets.....and Julian wrote down the name of the winner, two weeks before he won. You can imagine that everyone is saying it was fixed, but we all watched the raffle, I don't see how anyone could say that. His name was chosen randomly out of a huge bowl."

"Nick.....how many other predictions did he write down? Did he say?"

"He wrote down three. We have two left. I guess there are really four. He wrote down the winner of the world series and the final score of the game and stuffed it in a locker at the high school last week. Said not to pen it until after the last game is played. The principal has the only key. A lot of people are wanting to talk to him. I had a news crew from Mexico stay here last night. They kept asking me if I knew him. They were trying to get an interview with him."

"Anything else, Nick?"

"Well, since I've been keeping you up to date on this stuff, I was kind of wondering if you could buy me a ticket or something to LA. Doesn't have to be first class or anything. I was kind of hoping to get started making a blue movie. I really think I'd be good at it."

"Goodbye Nick."

I watched the rest of the game with my son. The A's pulled out a victory with the final score being 3 to 2. It was getting late. I knew my boss Paul would still be up, so I gave him a call. I don't know why I called him. I wasn't even sure what to say. He was a huge Dodgers fan, so I knew it might not be a good time.

"Remember my buddy Julian.....the wonder kid from Nebraska?"

"The one who could predict the future?"

"Yup. He just correctly predicted the winner of a 10,000-ticket raffle at a dealership near his house. Gave the winner's exact name."

"Jesus.....you think he's for real? I thought you passed on him," said Paul.

"I passed on him, but yes, I think he's the real deal."

"So why did you pass on him?"

"I just didn't trust him. He would be our number one asset and if it went south, so do we. I didn't think it was a good idea to put our eggs in one basket."

"It might be one hell of a basket. You still think he'd talk to us?"

"Maybe? I gotta tell you, Paul, my gut just says to stay away from him. Too many unknowns."

"Mikey, you could have found the biggest diamond in the rough there ever was and you want to pass on him?"

"You didn't seem too interested in him before, why now?"

"I have two TVs in my living room. One for sports and one for news. Julian Crane just got a two-minute spot on national news. He's going national tonight. By tomorrow, he'll be known all over the world."

"Paul, this is no ordinary kid. It's no ordinary situation?"

"Mikey.....look, this recession is hitting all of us pretty hard. Our advertising revenue is drying up. If we don't get some new accounts soon, we could be having to downsize. That's how the death spiral starts. We're too damn small to sign big names. We just don't have the money. Maybe this Julian kid could change all of that."

"I didn't know things were that tight."

"We're going to announce layoffs Monday morning. I saved you in this round, but you might not be so lucky in the net round."

"Sounds like an ultimatum," I said.

"Just business."

"Okay, I got to go to that concert in Pasadena tomorrow night. I'll be on my way Monday morning."

"I'll have Perez handle that. You just get out to Nebraska."

"I have to tell you, Paul, I think this is a big mistake."

"Making money is never a mistake," he said and hung up.

Every time I think my boss is more than just a corporate suit and tie, I'm painfully reminded of the fact that he isn't. He didn't give a hoot in hell about saving me, just saving himself. Maybe he figured with me gone, why keep him around? We don't need a sixty-year-old office manager. Either way, I informed my wife that I had to go back to Nebraska. I could tell by the look on her face she wasn't pleased.

"I almost wish they would just fire you, this is ridiculous. You know your own son forgets who you are? You're gone that much."

"I know honey. I'm sorry. I don't like being away from you, but this is the price we pay for living in this beautiful house." I said putting my arms around her.

"We can get another house. My sister told me about this job with her company. You'd be great!"

"That would mean we'd move to Dallas."

"Can't be any worse than here," she replied.

My wife was trying, but I could tell she was just about at her limit. I never told her why I was going to Nebraska. She wouldn't have believed me anyway. Even I wasn't sure at this point why I was going back. Julian didn't need me. I certainly didn't want him, no matter how much money he brought in. I touched down at the airport around five. Got my rental car and made it out to the same motel on the edge of the city by six thirty. I had been going since five-thirty that morning. I was exhausted. Nick was sitting at the desk watching TV on a small, portable television. He almost fell out of the chair when he saw me.

"Hey, Mike....I mean Mr. Gleason. How are you? Didn't expect to see you so soon."

"Hi, Nick. I'd like a room please."

"Sure....you want a pop or something?"

"No, I'm just going to grab some dinner and probably turn in. I've got a very busy day tomorrow."

"Hey, you got a message," he said and reached behind him into a small mailbox.

"A message? From who?"

"Don't know. Just walked in here yesterday and said to give this to Mike Gleason. It has your name on it." he said and handed the envelope to me.

I opened it. It was a letter from Julian. It had a number where he could be reached. I folded the letter and headed off to my room.

I used the phone in my room to dial him. It rang three times. After the third ring, someone answered.

"Hello?"

"This is Mike Gleason. I'm looking for Julian."

"Everybody is looking for Julian, hold on.....hello, Mike! Where are you?" said Julian

"My motel room, outside of Omaha."

"Yes, I was there yesterday. I dropped off the note. How's it going?"

"Fine. How did you know I would be back?"

"Lucky guess. How about we have a late dinner?" he asked.

"You paying?"

"Of course not."

"Where?"

"There's a steakhouse just down the street from the motel. I'll be there in fifteen minutes. You do eat steak, right?"

"Sure."

"Good, I'll be there. Come alone.....and leave the microcassette in your briefcase," he said.

"Will do," I said and hung up.....*wait....how in the hell did he know about my recorder?*

I called Nick and asked him where this steakhouse was. He gave me directions and ten minutes later, I was on my way.

Bob's Grill and Steakhouse was only a few blocks away. I sat down at a booth and a moment later, Julian sat down next to me. He grabbed a menu and looked it over. I did the same. I was really too nervous to eat, but I certainly didn't want him to know that.

"What looks good?" he asked.

"I'm thinking steak. Porterhouse maybe?"

"I'm not in the mood for steak. I think I'm going to have the fish and chips."

"Solid choice."

The waitress came over and took our order. I put the menu down and looked at Julian. He was wearing the same clothes that didn't fit and wire-rimmed glasses. He was the kind of person that could disappear in a crowd very quickly. There was nothing remarkable looking about him and perhaps that's what made him so dangerous. Anyone would just think he was a hundred and fifty pounds of dork. The kind of dork that had so much sand kicked in his face, he would never wash it out. I was sitting down with perhaps the most remarkable human being of the last five hundred years and he couldn't decide what to order. In spite of all of this, I had to tell myself that he was just a 20-year-old kid from Nebraska. He was probably still a virgin. He was still very green.....yet he had an ability that made him a God amongst us mortals.

"How was the flight?" he asked.

"Julian, why are we here?"

"I was hungry. Did you know that up until last month I had never ever been to a real restaurant before? Not once. My grandparents never had enough money to take me out to eat. Now, I can eat where ever I want and I don't even have to pay. Food's always on the house. How quickly things have changed."

"You still want me to be your manager?"

"Yes. I just want to make sure that you and I are on the same page. Have to make certain we see eye to eye on certain things. Not everything, just what's important."

"Fair enough."

"Mike, I want to ask you something. I want you to be as completely honest with me as you can. There's no right or wrong answer here. The only wrong answer is the one that is not completely honest."

"Ask away," I said as the waitress brought us our drinks.

"Why do you think you have what you have? I mean why do you think you have the whole comfortable middle-class thing going on? Why do you think you sip brandy every night and somebody else with the same brains and ability as you are sitting in a prison cell right now?"

"I follow the law. I work for what I have. I take care of my family. The guy sitting in the prison cell made bad choices."

"Those are all good answers, but they're not the right answer."

"So, what's the right answer?"

"The right answer is: you have what you have because you have never stood up to the dark forces in our government. If you did, you would either be dead or locked away in some prison cell where nobody would find you. See, you can follow the law. You can work hard for a living. You can be a good family man, but the moment you expose the evil monsters in our government, your days as a free man are numbered. That's why you have what you have. You've never tried to stop them."

"Are you going to stop them?"

"Mike, this is the first time the bastards aren't going to win. They aren't going to just be able to sweep me under the rug. Me in the future tells me about what life is like in the year 2024. It sucks. It's horrible. The number one leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2024 is suicide. What does that tell you?"

"Tells me we're in for a rough ride," I said as I sipped my beer.

"Yup. We don't stop them. We let them herd us like cattle to do their bidding. My older brother was almost killed in Vietnam. He's five years older than me. He has to walk with a cane for the rest of his life. What in the hell did the people of Vietnam ever do to us?"

"Nothing."

"So why are we killing them?"

"Julian, I have always thought that this war in Vietnam was the single most idiotic thing we've ever done. It wouldn't surprise me if Saigon fell within a year or two."

"Mike.....we do the same thing to Iraq, twice. We destroy one country in the middle east after another. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions dead or dying. All due in no small part to the actions of our government. We fly these robots called drones, like little radio-controlled airplanes, except they're armed with bombs and missiles. We kill thousands of people all over the globe, every year. What right does our government have to kill anybody that is no threat to us?"

"I agree with you. It doesn't sound like a very bright future."

"Oh, it's not all bad. Technology at your fingertips. We have portable phones that are computers. They can do amazing things and fits right in your hand. You can watch TV on your phone! Imagine that."

"That would be pretty cool."

"We can order stuff on our computer and have it shipped right to our house the very same day. Problem is all the dead parents and orphaned kids. All because we killed them, for absolutely no reason other than they dared to tell our government no. That's the most dangerous world of the 21st century. Just no. We're not allowed to do that. Did you ever watch the Twilight Zone?"

"All the time."

"Remember that story about the boy who had god-like powers and he basically destroyed the whole world, except for his family and a few friends? Made all his enemies disappear into a cornfield? Everyone was deathly afraid of him?"

"I sure do. It was one of my favorite episodes."

"Mine too. I just wonder what would happen to our country if something like that really happened and the boy just happened to be Vietnamese? I wonder what he would do America?"

"I think we would be in a world of shit," I said.

"See Mike. There really is no such thing as the future. Not really, it's just a series of outcomes based upon the collective decisions made by our planet. The day we chose to ignore these monsters in our government is the day we as a society died. They killed John Kennedy. They killed his brother and Martin Luther King. They killed anyone who would expose them. That's what they fear most is being exposed. That's why the world in 2024 is such shit. It's because we right now, don't stop them. We fail to stop them and the results are horrific. If we had one, one millionth the courage of people like Washington and Jefferson, most of our elected leaders would be facing a firing squad for what they have done. If you think Vietnam was bad, wait till you see what we do to Iraq and Syria."

"What are you going to do, I mean how are you going to stop them?"

"I'm going to pretend that I'm one of them. See, it's not too hard to fool a psychopath. You just tell them what they want to hear."

"What's a psychopath?" I asked.

"Someone born without a soul. See, to a psychopath, we only exist to serve them. If a million of us have to die in order to make them happy, then so be it. Our government is nothing but psychopaths. They aren't even smart psychopaths. They're idiots. Like the robber who holds up the liquor store and blows away the clerk for the 20 dollars in his drawer, then gets nabbed two blocks away taking a piss. That's kind of stupid. I looked up the definition of psychiatry before I came here. I opened the dictionary and actually looked it up. You know what it is?"

"No."

"It's the branch of medicine that deals with mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders. Do you think being a psychopath is a mental disorder?" he asked as the waitress brought us our food. Julian wasted no time in digging in.

"I would think so."

"Me too, but they don't. I talked to a shrink once. He told me that he deals with crazy people who want to hurt themselves or others. He said that when a person is no longer aware of the consequences of their decisions, that they are mentally incompetent."

"Makes sense."

"Yes, but don't you see the problem here?"

"What problem?"

"What do you do when society as a whole is unable to comprehend the consequences of their actions? When they cannot distinguish fantasy from reality? What do you do when millions of people need to see a shrink?"

"You think society is sick?"

"Mike, look around us. Look...look at the misery, the loneliness, the despair, the destruction we cause. Do you ever ask yourself why? Why is there so much needless suffering in the world?"

"Sure, I think everyone does at one time or another."

"Mike, we as a society are too traumatized to be able to help one another. We just destroyed an entire generation of Americans in Vietnam. They are going to come back home a shell of the person they once were. Their wives and kids are going to be traumatized as well. Our whole damn society is going to break because they have seen what our government did to the people of Southeast Asia. They will never be able to unsee what they've seen. We destroy more generations with other, pointless, stupid wars. We are the richest, most powerful country on the planet, but everyone in the future is broke. No one owns anything. Everyone is drowning in debt. Future me just sounds so sad when he speaks. He says it doesn't have to be this way. It wasn't supposed to be this way. We're just like cattle being led to slaughter, only we think because the one slaughtering us is wrapped in a big American flag, that they have our best interests at heart. Stuff we joke about in 1974 is a reality in 2024."

"So, you said that you are going to pretend to be one of them? You mean the psychopaths?"

"Yup. In 2024, they're called *Globalists*. Much more marketable than psychopaths. They are responsible for the destruction of the country and much of the planet. They are so goddamn sick and stupid, they actually think they can reinvent the wheel. See, they need me. I'm just a regular, everyday, slob. People will listen to me. I'm going to convince them that I'm on board with their master plan of one world government and everyone too terrified to speak out. I'm going to get in big with them. When they realize I'm too big, they're going to kill me, but it will be too late. The revolution will have started. We're going to hang them by the truckload. It will make red China's purges look like a warm-up. See, I don't just predict the future, Mikey.....*I make the future.....I am the future.*" he said eating his fries.

"I predicted the winner of the World Series. How many games and the final score of the last game."

"That ought to put you on the map."

"Pretty soon, every government around the world will be offering me citizenship. I could literally take my pick."

"Aren't you worried about your safety?" I asked.

"Yes and no. My last prediction is the name of the person that will murder me."

I put down my beer and looked at him.

"Murder you? When?"

"Not too far from now. He's my Judas.....only he thinks he's Jesus. That's the problem with our world.....that's why psychopaths always win. We got too many Judases and not enough Jesuses."

"If you're dead, then how can future you be talking to younger you?" I asked totally baffled.

"Well, that is interesting. See, future me is in this reality, the one you and I are experiencing right now, but, because we alter this reality, future me doesn't exist anymore. We alter his reality and make our own, newer and better reality, one that doesn't exist. His world disappears and our reality takes over."

"So, you change this reality? How can you do that?"

"Well, what millions of us do every day changes after my readings are read. You'll see very quickly what I mean. I've thrown a lot at you tonight. I hope you picked up at least some of it." he said.

I didn't say anything for a few minutes, trying to absorb it all and hoping Julian would continue.

"So, if you know who is going to kill you, why don't you stop them?"

"I don't think it's that simple. See, I've kind of opened up a Pandora's Box here with all of this."

"I'll say."

"I don't think you understand. See, there are an infinite number of me's in an infinite number of existences. The same goes for you. All that's happening is that me in this reality, say reality number 00001 is dead. There are billions of other realities where I'm still alive."

"So, then all we're doing is changing this reality? Not others?"

"Right, I have no idea what is going to happen in reality number 00002 for example. One does not affect the other."

"Well, clearly it must, otherwise how would future you even exist?"

"Because in his reality, I never die. None of this ever happens. I got to work for a company that makes and sells kitchen appliances. My wife leaves me for another man and my daughter joins the Navy. Now, none of that will ever happen. My daughter will never be born. I'll never get married and my bitch of a wife will ruin someone else's life. We have only one universe, but in that universe are an infinite number of realities that can exist. They're all around us, but we can't see them."

"This is a lot to take in," I said.

"You see why we had to meet."

"Yes. I'm glad we did. I feel like I learn something new every time I'm with you. Your future self told you all this?"

"Not all of it, no. I had to figure a lot out on my own. I still don't have all the answers. I probably never will."

"Aren't you worried about screwing this all up?"

"No. I'd only be screwing up this reality. The other fifty billion wouldn't be touched."

"Are you sure of that? What if they're all connected somehow? Had you thought of that?"

"I'm living proof they can't be."

"You mean because you die in one and are still alive in another?"

"Right."

"How do the realities become separated? Shouldn't they all be converging instead of separating?" I asked.

"That's what I thought too. It appears to be just the opposite. It's like we get to live 50 billion different lives, some of the differences are minute and some are enormous. Point is, no two realities are exactly the same for the people in them."

"Maybe, you should just tone it down a bit? You don't want to hit warp speed just yet. Maybe buckle up first?"

"You mean my readings?"

"Yeah.....if our government is really as bad as you say, they're bound to see you as a threat. That might not end well for you."

"What makes you think they haven't contacted me already?" he asked.

"Have they?"

"Yes. They told me to make some errors on purpose, or they would kill my grandparents."

"Jesus.....who were they?"

"It doesn't matter. They're just junior psychopaths, hoping to one day move up the ladder."

"Julian, aren't you worried?"

"Sure I am. I spoke to our District Attorney. He's worthless. I called our sheriff. He wasn't much help either. Said he couldn't do anything unless I had their names and who they worked for. Worms of men. Cannon fodder for the elites. It would be nice to meet someone that didn't turn out to be a completely, gutless, pathetic excuse for a human being. Are you that guy Mike? That one in a thousand who will do the right thing over the easy thing."

"Probably not, no. Then again, I'm not some scumbag who's going to rip you off either." I said finishing my meal.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said.

"As I said, I'm not a bullshit salesman, I'm just trying to be honest with you."

"You're still thinking in terms of dollars and cents. I'm thinking about the future of humanity," he said finishing his drink.

"Julian, I'm just an agent. I'm not the savior of mankind. I know my limits."

"You're scared," he said, finishing his drink.

"Maybe. Maybe I just don't see how I can help you."

"Honest and decent people help everyone they meet, whether they realize it or not."

"If you're looking to recruit a saint, I'm probably not your guy," I said.

"You're selling yourself way too short," he said.

"Maybe you're just giving me way too much credit."

"I understand. I hope you see why I couldn't have you as my manager," he said.

"You could have just told me no."

"Sure, but I want you to understand. Someone out there has to know the truth in all this. Someone has to know the whole story. Someone should know we've been to Mars before and drew pictures in the sand. Someone should know how easily the globalists can be beaten. Somebody has to know this world is a prison and it's so easy to escape it. If you aren't that one in a thousand, at least be the one person I need right now."

"I hope I can at least do that."

"I don't want the bad guys to win this time Mike. Please, God.....don't let them win this time. For once in your life, take a stand for something. If you care at all about your kids and their kids.....you'll do this for me."

"Do what?"

"Write about me. You always wanted to be a writer.....here's your chance. Tell the world what I know. I want everyone to know. I'll send you the legal forms in the mail. I want you to write my autobiography."

"I might have to record you. I want to get it right."

"I want you to get it right too. This is too important. I know you brought it. You may as well start recording," he said.

I ran out to my car and grabbed my microcassette recorder. I made sure it was working, then went back inside. Julian ordered dessert. How he had room for dessert after eating a giant meal like that, I have no idea. Must be nice to be young.

"Okay.....this is your show. I'm just here to listen." I said and hit the record button.

"My name is Julian Price and this is a story about the future," he said and started talking.

Julian kept talking and more and more people started listening. He wasn't the first to say it, he was just the one people were listening to the most. He correctly predicted the winner of the 1974 World Series, the Oakland A's. That in itself was nothing earth-shattering, rather, it was the fact that he correctly predicted how many games they would need to win and the final score of the last game. He had made many skeptics and debunkers look bad. He was getting daily coverage from all over the world. Each week, his predictions would be read from a locked box at the local newspaper office, which was now under armed guard, 24 hours a day. Once his prediction went in, it was not read until the following week. A video camera was also set up in the office to record the lockbox. There were now hundreds of people gathered outside the newspaper office in Columbus, each week, waiting for the prediction to be read. Pretty soon, it was thousands. The local police department was overwhelmed. Julian's organization did a good job of keeping him hidden and protected from the press. They had sniffed out two undercover FBI agents and promptly sent them packing. Sure enough, just as Julian predicted. The U.S. government was

none too pleased. An arrest warrant was issued for him in federal court, charging him with conspiracy and fraud. Some scientists with the federal government went on national TV and outlined how Julian was making these predictions. No one with a room temperature IQ bought it, but it didn't matter. He was now public enemy number one.....at least for this reality anyway.

That was just the problem. When you realize that you exist in an infinite number of other realities, suddenly, you don't seem so special. You are just one of many billions of other yous, just going through the everyday motions of life.

I never told anyone about the recordings. Not even Paul. Julian had sent me hours and hours of his recordings. I knew what this future was going to be if nothing was done. I knew what was in store for humanity and it was not good. He said that this was not our future, just our future if we didn't act. Several TV stations defied the government and broadcast a lengthy interview with Julian where he told everyone how he was able to predict the future. He then went on to correctly state the Dow Jones and S&P 500 would close the next day. Things got very serious when the government announced that it would have to close Wall Street indefinitely until Julian was apprehended. Then, the unthinkable happened, Julian vanished from America and turned up on the streets of Moscow. He said it was the only way he could remain alive. Most of the public figured he was a Soviet spy, not realizing that in the future, Russia becomes our ally and saves the world from a fate worse than death. A poll showed that most Americans were split among Julian. Half said he should be shot, the other half said he was the savior of mankind. Regardless of which side you were on, one thing was for certain, Julian had just changed the game, permanently. The rich and powerful now had another even more powerful adversary to contend with. A 20-year-old boy who could predict the future. There was a failed assassination attempt on his life at his residence in Moscow. Two Americans were apprehended. The KGB had purposely set up a trap for any would-be assassins and we walked right into it. Both of the hit men had cyanide capsules which they never took and were immediately taken into custody.

Watergate was now front page news and every night, it seemed to get worse. The government and the Nixon administration were looking worse and worse each day. When the assassins were caught and paraded around a courtroom in Moscow, they both freely admitted that they were hired by the CIA to kill Julian. The rest of the world had pretty much figured that out for themselves

Julian's last speech was broadcast all over the world. The government attempted to suppress it and threatened to fine and arrest any news station that aired it, but most stations told the government to go to hell and aired it entirely. It was powerful and sobering.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Julian Price. Some time ago, I discovered that you can cheat the laws of physics. You can leave your physical body and travel to other planes of existence where the laws of time and space don't apply. I received information from my future self in the year 2024, when I am now a seventy-year-old man. I gave me, as strange as that sounds, the results of events that have not happened yet. I am not a scientist. I do not understand how all of this works. How can I exist, when it hasn't happened yet? I cannot say. You see, there is no such thing as the future. It happens a microsecond before the present. It is based on all of the decisions made by us, here on planet Earth. The problem is that 99.9% of us don't have any say in our future. We have

delegated that responsibility to our elected officials, who quite frankly suck at it. Our present future is scary. Perhaps for some, it is wonderful, but for most around the world, it is not. I guess scary may not be the most appropriate term, perhaps depressing would be a better fit. I am here to level the playing field so to speak. I am here to ensure that the wealthy and those in positions of power do not abuse that power. I shall say this evening, with no hesitancy, that any nation on earth that does not abide by the universal declaration of human rights put forth by the United Nations and ratified by the UN General Assembly. They are not merely suggestions, but rather rights that every human being on this planet has, regardless of race, color, creed, or financial position. If we do respect everyone, then we respect no one.

We stand this evening on the threshold of paradise or destruction. Our planet went from the first incidence of recorded flight to putting a human being on the surface of the moon in less than 63 years. Our planet is capable of fantastic achievements. We are capable of tremendous good and just as capable of tremendous evil. The choice is ours to make. Will ours be a future filled with death and destruction? Or will it be a future filled with prosperity and hope? President Eisenhower remarked once that 'Peace is the climate of freedom.' Truer words have never been spoken. No civilized society should possess weapons of mass destruction. They are a moral and reprehensible evil, whose very existence belittles the foundations upon which society is built. If it were possible to remove all of them with the stroke of a pen, I would do so without the slightest hesitation. I call on all elected leaders of the planet. President Ford, Premier Kosygin, Prime Minister Wilson, Prime Minister Chirac.....gentlemen, let's get rid of these terrible weapons once and for all and remove this cloud of death hanging over the planet!" he shouted.

Everyone in the audience stood up and madly applauded. Several high-ranking communist party members immediately rushed in and shook his hand. It was his moment to shine and shine he did. The very next day the UN General Assembly met and unanimously elected Julian as Under Secretary.

The strategic arms limitation talks were bolstered and a cursory agreement was made. Julian wasn't just popular in the western world, he was popular everywhere. He was one of us, not one of them. His plan was working brilliantly. He was checkmating the elites at every turn. He knew their game plan and was using it against them. The Soviet Union told the United States that Julian was given citizenship and if we tried anything, the excrement was going to hit the fan. Most other countries around the world said pretty much the same thing. Mexico, Honduras, Brazil, and just about every other country on Earth offered him citizenship as well. He declared that "he was a citizen of the planet Earth and that borders serve to keep the rich in and the poor and broken-hearted out." the very next day, the United States dropped all charges against him and President Ford extended the olive branch by offering him a sit down meeting at the White House, which Julian promptly accepted. For the next several months, the planet earth enjoyed a relative calm, which produced several new treaties between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, including a cursory plan to eliminate 99% of all nuclear weapons in both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. For a while, it looked like we really had changed the future, just not in the way we anticipated.

Conscious dreaming wasn't just some out there, new age thing anymore, Julian had proven it works, except he wasn't the only one doing it. Every country was doing it now and most were

doing it much better than Julian could. That's when the problems began. We had opened Pandora's box and there was no way to close it.

President Ford now had to have conscious dreamers protecting him around the clock, for fear he would be killed in his sleep, which was happening to some leaders around the world. There were millions of conscious dreamers altering the future each and every day by knowing what was going to happen next. The problem with all of this is that we weren't altering the future, we were destroying it. There was no real future now, just a hodgepodge of possibilities. All over the planet people were disappearing and people that had never existed before were being created. People were waking up and believing that they were someone else entirely, with absolutely no memory of who they were before they went to sleep that night. Things on planet Earth were going to hell in a handbasket very quickly. In less than a month, Julian went from being the most popular man on the planet to the most despised. President Carter died in his sleep in 1976. Nelson Rockefeller was quickly sworn in, but he lasted less than six months and left office. The rumor was he had suffered a complete mental breakdown and a week later, he simply vanished from the face of the Earth! If that weren't strange enough, millions of Americans simply forgot who he was! It was as if the man had never existed for many. They believed the President of the U.S. was Ted Kennedy because, in their future, he was elected. The same thing was happening all over the world. The reality was collapsing for many. My company's building changed one day. We were no longer a record company, we were now a shipping company! My boss, Paul, no longer existed. This nightmare was becoming very real.

Reality wasn't just changing by the day, it was changing by the hour, maybe by the second.

Then, one day, the unthinkable happened. My wife and my son no longer recognized me. I was a complete stranger to them. She freaked out when she woke up next to me, demanding to know where her husband was! She finally calmed down and just started sobbing. I knew then that our planet was toast. I had to find Julian and find him quickly.

It took several days, but I managed to locate him. He was in hiding, trying desperately to undo the damage he had caused, but it was too late. He said he would meet me in a park not too far from my house.

In that time, NATO and the Warsaw Pact fought a limited nuclear war, only to have it wiped clean from everyone's memory the next day. Henry Ford had become the supreme leader of the United States in 1924 and made America look completely different than it did. The Nazis had won the second world war and conscious dreamers had warned General Lee not to go anywhere near Gettysburg and the American Civil War dragged on for another ten years before a truce was reached. We now had the United States of America and the Confederate States of America. California was its own country and Elvis Presley was on the 20-dollar bill. That was just in one day. A limousine pulled up next to me and a man got out and waved me over. I was searched for weapons and then put in the back seat.

Julian was smoking. He looked like a complete wreck, not that I was in any better shape. None of us said anything for a minute. I took out my recorder and hit the record button.

"Julian.....what in God's name have we done?"

He said nothing, just looking out the window and began sobbing. He was just sobbing and sobbing, like a two-year-old who didn't get his favorite toy in the supermarket. He finally composed himself and spoke.

"How's the book going?"

"I haven't even started it yet. Right before I came here, I realized that the news and radio were broadcasting in Latin. Took me a moment to recognize it. Julian.....how do we fix this?"

"Mike.....I made a mistake.....a horrible, terrible mistake. You see, the person telling me all these things in the future wasn't me.....it was never me.....I don't know who he was, well, that's not true, I know exactly who he was.....boy, he played me good. Do you believe in the devil, Mike?"

"I do now."

"Yeah. I thought I was special. I was. I met with the devil every night and was too blind to be able to recognize him. See, I realize what it is that I've done."

"You fucked everything up real good is what you did. Good thing this is just in this reality. At least the other realities are okay." I said.

Julian began to chuckle.

"What is it?"

"He's done the same thing to all of the other realities as well. In all of them, we discover we can change the future through our dreams, and in all realities, all *five quintillions* of them, we have destroyed ourselves. Ours was the last one, the very last one and I'm the one who ruined it for us. If I had just kept my goddamn mouth shut."

I was stunned. This was like a slow-motion nightmare that just kept getting worse and worse, no matter how loud I screamed, I just couldn't wake up.

"I have something for you. I didn't understand it at the time. It just didn't make any sense, but it makes perfect sense now." he said and showed me the lock box from the newspaper office. He opened it and unfolded the piece of paper.

"Remember how I predicted the name of the person who will kill me? I think we both know who that person is," he said, handing me the piece of paper.

Sure enough, it read that the person responsible for my death will be Mike Gleason of Los Angeles, California.

"I want you to kill me."

"I want to Julian. In some way, I feel responsible for all of this. I've lost everything. I will probably kill you, then kill myself." I said starting to cry.

"This morning, I passed by a bunch of school kids. They didn't even look like us. I then realized, they were Neanderthals. In that future, they never died out, we did. Have you seen the news, about all of the millions of people just vanishing off the face of the Earth?"

"Yeah, I think somehow, Mother Nature is trying to reset itself."

"Pretty soon, every living being on the planet will disappear into their own reality. Our planet will have to start over, with a new reality we all have to live by. I guess in those realities, none of this ever happened."

"If you want me to kill you, why was I checked for weapons?"

"I want you to make sure you do it right. I don't want to leave anything to chance," he said and handed me a loaded .357 magnum.

"Do you ever think back about that day at the steakhouse?" he asked

"Every day. I should have killed you then."

"I know, I wish you had. That future was a paradise compared to this one."

"If only we had known then."

"If only," he said, staring out the window.

"You really going to kill yourself too? You got the guts?" he asked

"I don't have anything else to live for."

"You don't have the balls. Neither do I, that's why I need you to do it. Turns out, I'm just a wimp like everyone else. It's a terrible thing, you know, a very horrible thing to have to live with." he said

"What's that?"

"To know that you are the one who destroyed the world. Maybe it would just be someone else, maybe, I guess we'll never know. I just can't figure out why he chose me, little Julian Crane. The loser from Columbus, Nebraska. Why me?"

"Why not you? He needed a good salesman and he got one."

"Goodbye Julian," I said as I squeezed the trigger, blowing half of his head apart in the limousine. I then shot the two men in the front seat, before they could draw their weapons. No one wanted to live, not in this world anyway.

I got out of the car and walked home. Los Angeles was eerily quiet, I was the only one on the street. There should be cars and people everywhere but there were none. Maybe in my reality, this is how it is. Maybe I have to spend the rest of my days alone and think about what we've done. Maybe that is my sentence. I stop in front of a light, in the middle of the street, put the gun

to my head, and squeeze the trigger, but I hear only a click. The gun is empty. I have to find bullets for the gun. Maybe I'll just jump off a building, or swallow poison. That's how I'm going to spend the rest of my days, looking backward and finding the quickest and easiest way to end my life and just putting all of this behind me, in the past, where it belongs.

I realize I may be the only person left alive in this reality. I turn on the radio station and there is nothing but static. There's nothing for miles around, in the middle of Los Angeles. *This is my new reality. One, where I have to live it, to be reminded of what I had done. I just wanted to change the world and make it better too. I just wanted the good guys to win for once.*

I now spend my days wandering through a giant empty city. Once in a great while, I will see another human, but I ignore them and keep going. I read as much as I can on conscious dreaming. I'm getting a little bit better at it every night. A few days ago, I really believe I left my body and sailed over the city, just as empty as I thought it would be. I'm going to find myself from a year ago. I'm going to find myself in the past and make sure I kill Julian. I don't know how much longer I will remain alive in this reality. Everyone is gone, but there are no bodies. It's just empty and silent. The silence has become its own monster. I have to find Julian... ..this cannot be how this all ends... ..it can't be, I won't let it.