

The Grail Conspiracies. Mind-tech: tapping the brain and beyond. The legends of the Grail as a cup, or even a womb were deliberate “disinformation” dating back hundreds of years.

The deeper Grail is dormant within the human mind, and is the most powerful force—or, potentially, most powerful weapon— ever known.

It was sought by the Nazi “*Ahnenerbe*” or “Occult Bureau” in WWII, and now by the scruffy, brutal “army” made up of fans of Twisted Messiah, an international super-star rock group with neo-Nazi political ambitions and occult dimensions. *Can you find it before Twisted Messiah finds you?*

To order THE GRAIL CONSPIRACIES now via Amazon

<https://www.facebook.com/MichaelMcGaulley.books/>

P.S. These and my other books are available via various merchants in various formats. You can find an overview—of both fiction and career how-to—at my page on [Amazon](#)

Apologies for any technical glitches that may have crept in in “translating” these pages from book form to this sampler edition.

"My own suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can imagine."

— J.B.S. Haldane

"We will first understand how simple the universe is when we recognize how strange it is."

— John Archibald Wheeler

"So I decided to summarize the conclusions I had drawn from all these experiences, over all these years. . . .

1. *Consciousness has legitimate dimensions not yet guessed at.*

2. *At least some psychic phenomena are real.*

3. *There are energies associated with the human body that are not yet understood."*

--Michael Crichton, M.D.

Travels

"Miracles happen, not in opposition to Nature, but in opposition to what we know of nature."

— St. Augustine

"I learned aikido from a teacher who operates from the premise that the perfect move, the perfect throw, already exists. Our mission was simply to join it."

— George Leonard

The Silent Pulse

DAY ONE

Twisted Messiah

A SHOT TAKEN from a helicopter hours earlier, just before sunset, caught the size of the crowd massed at the abandoned air base outside Berlin for the live performance.

It seemed an eerie reminder of the old photos of the 1963 Civil Rights march on Washington, when the sea of faces listening to Martin Luther King filled the Mall from the Lincoln Memorial back through the Reflecting Pond toward the Capitol, bodies packed together as densely as blades of grass.

That was no coincidence; that was one more carefully planned part of the Twisted Messiah message.

Nor, of course, was the name Twisted Messiah a coincidence.

Nor was the Twisted Messiah logo a coincidence: the double-S in Messiah replaced by the infamous lightning-bolt SS lettering of the Nazi *Schutzstaffel* paramilitary group. The symbol was chosen to provoke controversy. Controversy brings publicity, after all.

But, as the world was soon to learn about much of the Twisted Messiah mystique, there was more to it: the Nazi SS lettering bore echoes of the occult.

And Twisted Messiah was *intentionally, provocationally*, of the occult . . . a creature of the dark occult.

THE DIRECTOR CUT FROM BERLIN to shots of the other audiences in Munich, Paris, Sydney, Miami, all sitting as quietly as church-goers; it was as if the same young faces had been cloned in cities around the world, a rag-tag army in dirty clothes, unkempt hair, rings in noses, lips, cheeks, ears, and assorted tattoos. Skinheads co-existed alongside kids with long raggedy hair streaked day-glo purple and chartreuse.

Some of the faces were tattooed beyond recognition, several with white death-head skulls like the performer in the Toilet Video.

All in all, they were the kind of lost kids seen on the streets of any city, messy kids with angry, unhappy faces, hanging out together to pass empty days.

Yet there were also very ordinary-looking kids among them, kids no different in looks than ones you see walking home from school, or wandering the malls.

It was those “ordinary” kids, I’d find out later, that the intelligence agencies and police around the world considered the real threat.

They were, in the term first used by Cal Katz, “the world’s worst nightmare” *because* they looked so ordinary. They looked as normal and harmless as the kids down the block, yet were indoctrinated in the Twisted Messiah outlook. They were the sleepers who could do the real harm if they were awakened.

The cameras zoomed in on individuals here and there, and I began to realize what was different about these faces. These kids weren’t here just for music. There was a quiet intensity tonight: these had come with a deeper agenda than just partying. Had they come here, as one of the news articles suggested, in search of “a way to put some kind of meaning into their chaotic, aimless lives?”

The silence in the stadiums was chilling: tens of thousands sat immobile, as if waiting for the Rapture.

These were not just *fans*, I realized, these were *cultists*.
Occult cultists.
And I was about to become their target.

The Toilet Video

TWISTED MESSIAH had burst onto the scene a couple of years back, with what came to be called the “Toilet Video.” It was deliberately controversial, and got worldwide publicity, most of it negative—which was the point of the exercise: for maximum attention, shock.

It ran in shadowy black-and-white. A couple in long hair and black leather, sexes unclear at the start, writhed against each other. The camera moved like a voyeur, catching the dirty tile and open stalls of a grungy public toilet. Their bodies pounded to climax as the singer screamed,

*The best sex
Isn't what turns you on!
The best sex
Is what turns your stomach!*

When they were done, the girl bent over one of the sinks and vomited. The boy laughed.

The camera pulled zoomed in, revealing his face with a grinning human skull tattooed on his skin.

That tattooed skull covering the face was a trade-mark of Twisted Messiah’s hard-core fans here and around the world. For a while, those skull-faces were plastered all over the media. In interviews, asked how they were going to live out their lives with those tattoos, the response was usually something like, “Who gives a shit? We aren’t going to live long.”

Another secret came out: the inner circle of Twisted Messiah fans, a special cadre in nations around the world, wore identifying tattoos in the pubic area, and the tattoos varied with rank. Not many photos of those tattoos made it into the media.

But it was talked about, and added to the buzz, and the buzz was the point.

The piece wrapped with a shot of Twisted Messiah in an earlier concert, zooming in on the lead singer, Jesse Cripes, in his trademark shoulder-length hair, beard, and flowing robe—a replica of the Jesus of countless holy pictures. Back-lighting gave the effect of a scarlet halo around his head. That was the persona Jesse had projected at the start of last night’s performance.

Twisted Messiah’s first album, “Masses” had captured the wave of outrage. For the jacket cover, Jesse Cripes and the rest of the group had dressed in robes, positioning themselves to simulate Leonardo’s Last Supper, though with one difference: instead of a table, they sat around the body of a naked pre-teen girl, echoing the symbolism of a Black Mass.

The controversy made their reputation. Shock was their marketing ploy, and they worked, week after week, to provoke. The more the outrage, the better the sales, and the more the cult-following built.

“Sacrilege is in the eye of the beholder,” Jesse had said on the *Today* show, defending that first cover. “If you choose to see sacrilege, that’s your problem, not ours.”

“A playful spoof,” one columnist wrote. A piece in the arts section of the *New York Times* described Twisted Messiah’s product as “a creative extrapolation of multiple genres, breaking through to a musical orgasm of body and mind.”

Sales of the “Masses” album surpassed those of the peak albums of Michael Jackson, Madonna, and the Beatles. From that point, the group dominated the entertainment industry.

Butterfly

I GOT SOME WATER and checked e-mails in the minutes before the show started. This had just come in as a fax:

WARNING!
You are the butterfly!
You're about to set off a storm that
spreads around the world!
Have crucial new info regarding our
recent conversation.
We need to talk, ASAP!
Meanwhile, watch your back!
You're involved, like it or not.
Don't call me, I'll call you when/if it's safe
THIS IS NOT A DRILL!

It sounded like another bubble in that vast ocean of jokes floating around cyberspace.

But this was hand-printed in the distinctive scrawl of Cal Katz, as thick and stubby and intense as the man himself, and Cal was definitely not into jokes.

Cal was a strange little guy, one day hush-mouthed and conspiratorial, the next day ready to tell you more than you ever wanted to know about what was *really* going on behind the scenes in Washington.

A conspiracy nut, but an intelligent one who did his homework . . . obsessively.

Have important info regarding our recent conversation: Typical Cal, at the same time both paranoid and forgetful: Which part of which recent conversation? Why am I the butterfly? Why watch my back?

To Cal, everything was of life-and-death importance. That conversation, a week or so ago, hadn't been so much a conversation as Cal talking *at* me about his latest project, an upcoming expose of Twisted Messiah.

Then, in one of his characteristic mind-jumps, he'd asked whether, by any chance, any relative of mine had served in the OSS during World War II.

To which the answer was yes: my uncle, Paul Tapscott, who had died at the time of D-Day invasion of France, in 1944. But before I could follow up, Cal had moved on, saying we needed to

talk, “mucho and pronto.”

In Cal’s eyes, Twisted Messiah wasn’t just a rock group. It was, as he’d put it in an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post*, “media superstardom consciously morphing into a world-wide political force.”

It was in that same op-ed that he had been the first to coin the term, “the world’s worst nightmare.” (And now Twisted Messiah had adopted it as their own.)

Strong words, typical Cal Katzian exaggeration, I’d figured. At that time, the possibility seemed bizarre. But that was before the “celebrations” had begun. The feedback to the *Post* reflected that: *Rock stars as a world-wide political force? Get real!*

Alas, as events turned out, Cal wouldn’t live quite long enough to see his prophecy coming to life.

THE PHONE RANG as I was sitting down again in front of the screen.

“Did you get it? Did you get what I just sent?” Cal Katz’ voice, raspy from too many stinky cigars.

“Yeah, but I’m not clear—”

“No, don’t say anything. Not on an open line like this. We need to get together. But not now. Right now we’ve gotta watch the big show. You are going to watch, yes? It’s vital, you’re wrapped up in this, like it or not.”

That stopped me. Finally I managed. “I haven’t a clue about—”

“You will, tomorrow. When we talk. Now it’s starting. We gotta get back to it. I’ll be in touch first thing.”

Bringers of destruction

IT WAS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT IN BERLIN. The lights dimmed, and the crowd stood in a wave that rolled a half-mile along the runways.

A single spotlight found Jesse Cripes. He raised both hands, as if giving a blessing, then walked slowly up the aisle to the stage.

The other members of the group followed a dozen paces behind. A drum beat out a march cadence. The spectators stood in reverent silence.

Jesse wore his trademark beard and shoulder-length blond hair. Coupled with his usual ankle-length loose robe and sandals, he was a look-alike for the Jesus of the holy pictures—though the image was jarred by fluorescent orange and hot purple robes.

He arrived at center stage and turned to the audience. The hush continued as he reached into his robe, pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one. The brand happened to be one of the corporate underwriters of the world-wide telecast.

He held the pack up to the cameras and waved as if to say, Join me, and the kids in the crowd did, and held up their cigarettes as if to say to the world, We do what we want, We do what Jesse wants.

Hundreds of thousands of hands, held into the air, waving like a vast field of grain in the breeze.

And uncannily like those old newsreels of the crowds at Nuremberg, right arms raised in

tribute to Hitler. The Hitler Salute had been banned in Germany after the war, but who could object that this was anything political, this was just some kids flaunting their right to smoke.

“THE BEST SEX,” The opener, the group’s early hit, began as a soft ballad, as sweet as the bubble-gum music of the early ‘60’s. But the tone shifted in the second piece, a harsher, harder beat building, concluding with Jesse screaming, the massed voices of the audience joining in:

*The best sex
Isn’t what turns you on.
The best sex
Is what turns your stomach!*

I caught a shadow passing across the screen behind the stage, then another. Part of the show was an array of lightning-fast visuals flashing across the sub-conscious, synchronized with the beat of the music.

Each lasted only an instant, not long enough for the eye to focus, just long enough for the image to register somewhere back in the mind, triggering intriguing dark impulses.

Scary, horrifying images balancing arousal and disgust. Yet magnetizing. That scene from their old video of the couple copulating in the grungy public toilet.

A pair of naked girls, wispy blonds with pre-pubescent breasts, straddling a black—no, not a man, it was a decaying corpse.

“Do it! Taste it! Screw it!” the audiences around the world roared along with Jesse to wrap up the piece.

THE VRIL SONG came next, controversial from the group’s second album, “VRIL!”

The sound built until it seemed to reverberate in my chest, drawing my heart-beat into its pounding rhythm. The audiences around the world rose, as if hypnotized, to sway with the rising beat, their fists pounding out the music: “*The Vril is high! The Vril is high!*”

The camera drew back from Twisted Messiah on the stage in Berlin to cut to arenas in Paris, Amsterdam, Moscow, London, Atlanta, Tokyo, Los Angeles. Audiences around the world joined in the mantra: “*The Vril is high! The Vril is high!*”

Something I noticed only then: the kids in the audiences were all wearing sunglasses—or something more like the plastic glasses for 3-D movies. Were they seeing something that the rest of us did not?

JESSE LED THE CHANT; as his tempo and volume built, the music rose to match it, a peculiar mix of rock and military march. His gestures were jerky, almost mechanical, so he seemed like a strange puppet dancing in synch with the music and words.

The camera moved in for a close-up as he finished. His eyes were blank, rolled back in his head, and the words shrieked out of lips covered with fine foam. His face gleamed with a weird intensity, the sweat casting a sheen across his porcelain-white skin.

When he came to his climax, the music abruptly stopped, and there was only the sound of his voice, shrieking across the Berlin airdrome and echoing around the world:

*The Vril is high!
We move with a Different Power!
We follow a New Cross!*

Jesse raised both arms and crossed his hands over his head, forming the asymmetrical X of the New Cross—the proportions of the Christian cross, twisted onto its side as if broken off at the base.

The camera cut to the audience, and tens of thousands duplicated the gesture, chanting, “We follow a New Cross!”

Now the director shifted to another camera, and the flaming red swastika—the New Cross—appeared in the night sky over Berlin, a holographic image beamed up, a gyrating apparition in the dark night.

*We move with a Different Power!
We follow a New Cross!*

The red New Cross in the sky began to turn. The music built, another rough, crashing heavy-metal rock-march, and the New Cross in the night sky turned faster and faster, spinning until it was like a flaming red wheel. Jesse resumed his chant, and the crowd chanted with him, a single massed voice, the low rumble of an earthquake:

*We move with a Different Power!
We follow a New Cross,
We follow the Twisted Messiah!
We are the world's worst nightmare!
We are the bringers of destruction!*

THE LIGHTS CUT OFF, leaving the arena and the screens around the world black. Total silence for a long moment before the lights flashed on again.

Now Jesse had shucked off his Jesus costume, and stood in the spotlight, resplendent in a military uniform. Not just a uniform, a gleaming replica of the Nazi SS.

The crowd gasped in shock—a gasp likely heard everywhere around the world.

Then the massed audience joined Jesse in one worldwide roar:

*We are the world's worst nightmare!
We are the bringers of destruction!
We revel in evil!*

THE LIGHTS CUT OFF AGAIN, leaving total blackness for what seemed a very long time, then the giant screens flashed alive, each with a scene from one of the gatherings around the world.

On cue, the audiences in each rose, screaming that same chant:

We are the world's worst nightmare!
We are the bringers of destruction!
We revel in evil!

Now adding a new line:

And the nightmare time of evil and destruction is NOW!

DAY TWO

“Celebrations”

Washington, D.C.

I DIDN'T GET MUCH SLEEP AFTER THAT SHOW. I don't think anyone did, not with police and fire sirens racing past through the night to control the flash mobs that sprung up across Washington and cities everywhere. And whatever sleep we did manage was torn by the nightmare images imbedded from the spectacle.

I finally got up at dawn. I flicked on the TV and stood transfixed, by the news morbidly fascinated by the scenes of the overnight riots: Flash-mobs of Twisted Messiah fans in cities around the world burning, looting, and destroying as a way of celebrating last night's concert, already following through on the chants:

*We are the bringers of destruction!
We revel in evil!
And the nightmare time of evil and destruction is NOW!*

THAT CONCERT had been promoted as “Jesse Cripes’ 33rd Birthday Gift to the World.” For those not up on it, the bloggers hammered home that, by legend, Jesus Christ died at age 33.

The hype had been building for weeks. An estimated 500,000 fans from all over the world had been gathering at the concert site, an abandoned air base in the former East Germany, not far from Berlin. Most had been camping out there despite the October chill, and more were on the way.

The live concert had been beamed by satellite to audiences around the world.

Over the previous week, “pre-celebrations” had sprung up in London, Paris, Tokyo, and dozens of other cities world-wide. The kids were destructive “for the hell of it, just to show what we can do,” as one of them put it.

A British kid put it, “Got nothing else to do, so let's just go break stuff, burn up stuff, smash the hell out of people.”

The earlier mobs had been relatively small-scale, and politicians and police had mostly opted to hold back, not wanting to risk provoking bigger riots.

Others weren't so sure that was prudent. As one talking head put it on a morning show: *“There's a potential undercover army of dead-end losers spread out across the world. They're looking for a leader, and I fear that Twisted Messiah and Jesse Cripes are maneuvering to fill precisely the role that their name suggests. And if that happens, what's the core: Neo-Nazi? Or destructive nihilism?”*

Chaos theory

CAL'S MESSAGE was on my mind as I showered. *You are the butterfly about to set off a storm that spreads around the world!*

"Butterfly"—I understood that much of it. The term came from Chaos Theory, suggesting that small, unanticipated events, like the tiny puff of wind set off by the wings of a butterfly, can trigger a chain of events that bring about major, unpredictable change.

But me as a butterfly? Not likely. I was just another faceless soldier in that army of Beltway Bandits living off government contracts. I had no politically embarrassing documents to leak, no secrets the media or anyone else would find the least titillating.

So I thought then.

But a storm *was* brewing, and I—the 180-pound butterfly— was indeed about to set it off.

That storm would spread, and merge with another storm, and before it all ended, less than a week later—on Election Day, no coincidence— things would be changed forever, not just in my life, but in Washington, in the Establishment running it, in politics, in the whole country.

Changed even in how we human beings view the world and what is possible within the reality we experience.

Issue of national security

A CALL CAME IN while I was in the shower. Vermont, from the area code, not a number I recognized, but my father's voice: "Greg, it's me. Don't—*do not*—call me back. It's urgent. I'll call you again in a little while. Oh, and I'm sending you a fax right now."

THE FAX consisted of a letter sent to Dad, which he'd forwarded to me, with no explanation:

Carston Mansions, #12

Carston Gardens

London, SW 7

Dear Frank,

For information on your brother, Paul, alleged to have been killed in action in France in June, 1944, perhaps your son, Greg, would be kind enough to meet with me at the Hotel de la Monnaie in La Rochelle, France, on 26 October, at ten in the morning.

Greg will find a room reserved there for him, with our compliments.

It's time the reality emerged, and time is of the essence now.

P. Willoughby

KISS A TOAD first thing in the morning, and nothing worse can happen to you all day—my feelings as I took the phone and a glass of juice out to the balcony, dreading the conversation with my father.

Looking back now, sure, I regret I felt that way. But lately every conversation with Dad had been a downer.

He'd been pressuring me since summer to come for a visit, and I'd been putting him off, partly because things had been too hectic here. But also because he'd been in a funk for over a year now, since Mom died, and it was draining to be around him.

Dad had been a lifer with IBM, and couldn't seem to accept that there were other ways of living. In his view, I was long overdue to quit consulting and get a "real job"—by which he meant one where I filled a box on an organization chart, putting in the years toward a pension. As he saw things, I was *unemployed*, not *self-employed*. The world had changed, but he hadn't.

THE COOL AUTUMN AIR cleared my head. My apartment overlooks a park and a little brook that meanders through a natural growth of trees and underbrush. It's like living in a tree-house—a nice fantasy for those days when life in Washington gets to me. As apartments go, it's great, but I've been there too long—going on two years, since Laurel and I split.

The rain had let up. Mist hung in the trees, almost blocking the view of the park and Massachusetts Avenue, one of those broad, tree-lined boulevards L'Enfant laid out a century and a half ago when he redesigned the city, back before the days of commuters and grid-lock, back before Washington had evolved from a swampy village into the self-proclaimed center of the universe.

The phone chirped again. "Morning, Greg. Hope I didn't wake you up."

Great way to start a conversation. "Actually, Dad, I've been—"

"Tell me, has anybody come around asking you about Paul?"

"No, but I got—"

"A couple of men showed up at the house last night, asking some very peculiar questions like, 'When was the last time we saw Paul?' and 'When did we last have contact with him?' Crazy stuff, and I told them so. They were from the CIA."

That stopped me. "CIA? You're joking!"

"You know I'd never joke about Paul. And never forget it was the CIA, successor to the OSS, that kept insisting all these years that Paul was dead. Now they show up asking questions, won't tell me diddly-squat, just some jibber-jabber how it's related to some issue of national security. I said that sounds like something to do with terrorism, and he said he couldn't say more, but his non-verbals told me yes."

"Uncle Paul linked to a terrorist group? That's—"

"That's why I want you to catch the plane tonight. Go there, meet Willoughby, but also let's come up with some answers on our own."

"You're taking that Willoughby letter seriously? It sounds—"

"He wants to meet, he's even paying for your air tickets. They're being delivered directly to you."

"But who is Willoughby? What could he possibly have to say that we haven't heard over the years?" I cut off before reminding him of how many false leads had come into the family, each one leading to another dead end.

Has he been drinking this early? I wondered.

"That's the point, I don't *know* who he is, don't have a clue. He signed it P. Willoughby, but the name, Willoughby, means nothing to me. Anyway, I scanned some other photos and papers

and things you might need, and e-mailed it all to you. It should already be in your in-basket by now. Print it out, look it all over, then we'll talk before you leave. You catch a plane to Paris, late afternoon today, connecting to La Rochelle. Everything is in that e-mail I've sent you."

"Paris? La Rochelle?" I echoed. He was losing it. Maybe his meds were off. "Sounds great, but I can't go anywhere today. Not today."

"Your passport—it is up to date, isn't it?"

"I'm overdue on a report, and I can't leave town until I turn it in." It pained me to say that. A trip to France sounded like a lot more fun than pounding a keyboard. "Why don't you go, Dad? A trip would do you good."

"I can't do that, Greg. The fact is I'm not—not feeling so well these days. I really need you to do this for me."

"Not feeling well? You're sick?"

I heard him sigh deeply, the way he used to in those grim months before Mom died. "There's something we haven't talked about. I was hoping all summer you'd come up to visit so I could tell you face-to-face."

"Tell me what, Dad?"

"Take a look at the materials I've sent, then we'll talk before you leave. Set up the camera on your computer, and we'll have a video call, face to face."

"You've been telling me your camera doesn't work."

"It works now. We'll talk later, after you've reviewed the material I've sent."

Old letters

I PRINTED OUT THE MATERIALS Dad e-mailed, then settled down with another coffee.

The mystery of my uncle began with the telegram that arrived from the War Department at the end of June, 1944:

The Secretary of War desires me to express his deepest regret that Paul Anthony Tapscott has been missing in action in Normandy, France since 7 June 1944.

A couple of weeks later, a letter arrived from Paul's commanding officer, assuring the family that Paul had "died a hero on the Normandy front on 7 June 1944."

June 7, of course, was the day after D-Day. Things were hectic, and the letter gave no details. As Paul had been in the OSS, there was no real signature, just a bureaucratic code: B/F-12.

That settled it for the family: it was true, Paul was dead, a reality confirmed by his Commanding Officer. Maybe his body would be found and returned home for burial after the war.

BUT THEN ANOTHER LETTER ARRIVED a few months later, that summer of 1944, after

France had been liberated. It set off a mystery that puzzled our family for all these years.

That letter had supposedly been sent by a young Frenchwoman named Cecile Du Fresne, with a return address 23 Rue des Cygnes, apartment #4, La Rochelle, France. She wrote that she'd had the "honor" of meeting Paul during the "short period of 7 to 10 June, 1944, while he was in La Rochelle," and was writing to enquire about him.

Nothing unusual about a soldier making friends with a local girl. Nothing unusual, except that Paul had been on a secret mission into occupied France: would he really have given her his name and home address?

Even more puzzling, La Rochelle was nearly 300 miles south of the Normandy invasion site. If Cecile was telling the truth, then Paul had been a long way from where his Commanding Officer claimed he died.

Further, Cecile Du Fresne claimed that she had been with Paul until June 10. If that was true—a big if—then Paul had been alive for at least three days after his official date of death.

Aunt Ursula wrote back to Cecile three times, and got no reply.

After the war, Dad made the trip to La Rochelle when travel became possible again. He had even knocked on the door of #23, Rue des Cygnes, but supposedly no one there had heard of Cecile Du Fresne.

Cover-up

OVER THE YEARS, the family had made attempt after attempt to get to the truth of what had happened to Paul.

Finally, they sent copies of Cecile's letters to one of the Vermont Senators, who passed them on to the War Department and the OSS for an explanation. By that point, the War Department was evolving into the Department of Defense, and the OSS into the CIA. Not much came back.

The Senator pressed the issue. Eventually a letter from Washington arrived, changing the government's story:

Due to a similarity in operational code names, the death of Paul Tapscott and another OSS member had been inadvertently confused as the result of difficult operating conditions during wartime. After thorough investigation, it has now been determined that Paul Tapscott died attempting to blow up a railroad bridge near La Rochelle, France, on 11 June 1944. The objective was to block reinforcements heading north to the Normandy area, and his effort was successful.

Similarity in names . . . inadvertently confused . . . difficult operating conditions during wartime. That made sense. After all, the term SNAFU—Situation Normal, All F'd Up—had come out of that War, and Dad himself had encountered enough SNAFU's to accept that a mistake like this could have occurred

Along with the letter came a black-and-white photo of that bridge, along with a photo of a plaque to the memory of "*Un Soldat Americain Inconnu.*" An unknown American soldier.

Requests to have Paul's body brought home opened the next phase. Now the people in

Washington claimed that it was not known where Paul had been buried.

But, as Dad put it in the letter he wrote back, “If the U.S. government doesn’t know what happened to his body, and the French don’t know the name of that unknown American soldier, then why should we have any more confidence in the story that Paul died at the bridge in La Rochelle than the previous account that had him dying in Normandy? Why won’t you just tell us the truth? What really happened to Paul Tapscott? Why the lies? What are you covering up?”

Links

I WASN’T THERE, of course. But I learned later that the meeting that first morning had gone like this:

Brad Fackson had the kind of bland, chubby face no one noticed. Ride an elevator with him and you wouldn’t really see him—he was the generic middle-aged white guy in a gray business suit who blended into the scenery like one of those computer-generated extras in a film.

That potato face, coupled with a mind that was definitely not average, were the assets that had made his career. A lawyer by training, he had put in his 20 years to a pension in the FBI before leaving to serve as lead investigator on a Senate committee exploring illegal foreign campaign contributions. His ability to get the goods on those who were out of favor and to be “reasonable” in dealing with those with better connections attracted the notice of law firms around the city.

Washington was full of lawyers, but Fackson had unique skills. The big law firms needed a savvy resource they could use—overtly, with deniability—to collect the kind of “dirty” information a respectable law firm couldn’t risk being caught looking for.

It was the same with trade associations—the going euphemism for lobbyist groups—and companies that did a lot of business with the government.

Political campaigns used Fackson for “Oppo” work, ferreting out the skeletons in the closets of their opponents.

Fackson Research Group—FRG—was much smaller and even more secretive than Kroll Associates and the Investigative Group International, its two main rivals in the business of obtaining information without leaving footprints.

Close to half of FRG’s business came from Hadley Barrington, either directly through the companies he controlled, or indirectly through the clients and contacts he introduced. When Barrington called, Fackson jumped.

SHARON ESCORTED FACKSON to Barrington’s office, then left them alone. Barrington grunted, “Sit!” and continued to look out the big windows, as he did when he was thinking.

The dome of the Capitol dominated the view down Pennsylvania Avenue; a corner of the Treasury building and some of White House grounds could be seen in the other direction. That always impressed clients, a graphic demonstration of the access the firm enjoyed at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Finally Barrington reached down to the controls on his wheel-chair and rolled into the secure conference room next to his office. Fackson followed.

He had retired, supposedly, when he turned 85, but he retained his office and was still the force behind the firm. He had survived a variety of cancers, and seemed likely to go on forever.

Modeled on the secure rooms in American embassies, the special conference room was windowless, shielded in every way against eavesdropping. Sharon swept it each morning for electronic bugs. “White noise,” a low hum, played constantly in the background.

“You told Sharon there was a problem with Katz?” Barrington said. “A goddam ‘glitch,’ you called it. I don’t like the sound of that.”

“It seems he may have sent some copies of that project off before—”

“Copies! Sent where?” Barrington’s dark eyes receded beneath the heavy lids, as they did whenever he was upset. He knew they still called him Lizard-eyes behind his back, just as they had so many years ago, back in Louisiana. Now even his skin, pale as parchment and wrinkled from so many years of heavy smoking, had shriveled to resemble lizard skin. “Christ, what a screw-up!”

“It’s not as bad as it sounds. Just two copies.”

“Just two? For Christ sake, *one* is enough to kill us! That damned little bastard, Katz! You’ve got to take *care* of him. Feed him to a bunch of hungry ‘gators, whatever.”

Immediately he waved his hand. “Correction! I didn’t *say* that. You didn’t *hear* it.”

“So what *are* you saying, sir?”

“Those sets of copies he sent. I hope to hell you’re going to tell me you grabbed them before they got out into the world.”

“We’re on top of it. We know who he sent them to. The first was obvious enough: Naismith.”

“*The Naismith Letter*—that’s one damned blog Washington people do read. That bastard Naismith has been on my case since back when he was with the *Post*. I pulled some strings, got him canned then, and he’s never given up.”

“Naismith is weak. We can deal with him. It’s that second person who’s a puzzle. He’s a nobody. We can’t figure how he links with the rest of it.”

“This nobody have a name?”

Fackson reached into his briefcase and handed a sheet across the table.

“*Tapscott!*” Barrington burst. “*Tapscott*, of all the damned ironies! If Katz links with . . . *Shit*, and I was thinking it couldn’t get any worse!”

“I ran the name, Gregory or Greg, Tapscott, through our data-bases. He tried law-school for a year, then dropped out and ended up with a master’s in biology—*marine* biology of all the useless damned things—along with a night-school M.B.A. Works short-term contracts with various consulting firms around the Beltway—agency reorganizations, little stuff. The same kind of crap Katz did on the side. The first—”

“Where’s he from?” Barrington cut in.

“From? From nowhere, really. His father worked for IBM, so he moved around a lot in his early years.”

“The father, where’s *he* from?”

Fackson had to check the printout. “From Vermont. Burlington, Vermont. Where he lives now, retired from IBM.”

“Hell! Then it *is* the same goddam Tapscott! I knew a relative of his, a long time ago. Back in the war. That’s bad, *very* bad news.”

Fackson was surprised at how troubled the old man suddenly looked. He handed Barrington a man’s photo. It was a little fuzzy, blown up from an ID shot. “This is Tapscott, one

we had in our files.”

“I *know* it’s damned Tapscott, but why is it in your files? He’s been dead— Hold on! You mean this is *young* Tapscott?”

“Of course. An ID photo we had in one of our data-bases.”

“Well, isn’t that the damndest thing! He’s the goddam image of his uncle, the one I knew back then. The same thick brows, the same nose, even the same smile. God, this takes me back!” He leaned back in his chair and stared at the photo.

Then he said, “Put your best people on this, fast. I want to know every damned thing about young Tapscott, and I want him watched, starting right now. Send somebody good in to do a search of his place. Install taps, the works.”

Fackson was stunned. This was the kind of full-court press they put on for corporate clients with big mergers underway . . . or on behalf of White-Collar clients in very deep trouble.

“Isn’t that a bit excess—”

“Just goddam do what I say,” Barrington snapped, his eyes dark beneath the heavy lids. “With the election so close now, we can’t afford to take a chance. We can’t let *anything* screw it up.”

“Sir, I understand you think it’s not need-to-know for me, but if you could just give me a sense of how Katz’ interest in Twisted Messiah can have an impact.” He shrugged. “After all, Twisted Messiah is just a rock group, granted with international impact, but I don’t see the link with—”

“You don’t have to tell me about damned Twisted Messiah. I have other sources. Some in government. But you’re right, it’s a hell of a lot *more* than just another damned rock group, with all that implies. If Katz was researching it, and especially if he sent info to young Tapscott, then the little jerk was definitely into too damned much for comfort. It links with things you have no idea about, and never damned will.”

Fackson nodded. A second surprise in five minutes. First the reaction to Tapscott, now this, as if Barrington had been fearing a link.

“But what I can’t fathom is this: Why *now*? Dammit, why now of all times? Is it to crush my boys? Or is it payback?”

“If you can share some more on just what—”

“That’s not need-to-know. You don’t need to know all that. Just stop them. No matter what it takes. No matter what, you understand?”

“Yes sir, I understand,” Fackson said. But he thought: *But I really don’t understand, not at all. But I’m going to make damned sure that I do understand, ASAP.*

Shrunken old man

THE RECEPTIONIST AT THE FRONT DESK buzzed to say that an envelope had just been delivered for me, marked Urgent.

“Who delivered it? Fed-Ex? A bike messenger?” I asked, groping for clues about Willoughby.

“Neither. It was a man in a business suit. He pulled up in a car, just long enough to drop it off. He said he was a travel agent, and you needed the tickets right away.”

I went down. Tickets—business class, a nice touch—on Air France’s first flight of the evening, leaving Dulles about five this afternoon, arriving in Paris at six in the morning, connecting on to La Rochelle. No indication who had arranged them, just a Visa charge slip with the usual last four digits of the credit-card number. They weren’t from my cards, nor from Dad’s.

No business card from the travel agency, nothing I could trace.

Also in the envelope was a reservation for a hotel in La Rochelle, and a wad of cash—about \$5000 in a mix of Euros, British pounds, and dollars. Willoughby thought of everything. Whoever he was.

But if we were meeting in France, why the British pounds?

THE PHONE RANG AGAIN as I pounded away at that report. Dad, back at his usual number. “Greg, we need to talk. Got your computer set up for a video-conference?”

“You’ve been saying your camera is out of commission.”

“That was then, this is now. Time for me to be honest with you. Time for you to see how I’m looking these days.”

Honest with me? What did that mean?

I keyed in the numbers for the call, and my screen flashed to life.

When I’d last been up to visit Dad, in May, I’d been encouraged by what the family genes forecast for me. Despite the pain of losing Mom, he’d still been tanned and fit—at 76, six feet and 200, an inch shorter than I, and proud that he was only 20 pounds heavier. His hair had thinned over the years, but he still had the Tapscott features, the large eyes, the prominent brows. His only complaint had been a stiff neck that he couldn’t shake.

That was then. Now, over the course of a summer, my rugged, vibrant father had turned into a shrunken, hairless old man hunched in a wheelchair.

I sat, speechless, unable to comprehend that this could be my father.

“Remember that stiff neck I had last spring? Well, turns out it wasn’t just from too much golf, like I thought. Turned out to be a cancer, pretty bad one at that, progressing damned fast.”

I couldn’t get the words out at first, then finally managed, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“That was why I was hoping you’d come up over the summer. I wanted to . . . didn’t want to have to break the news this way, over the phone. The doctors say I’ve got maybe a month, two at the most, though I’m going to be knocked out with the drugs for half that time. I really need you to follow up this lead on Paul—so I can know the truth before I go.”

With his hair gone now, and his face swollen by medications, he looked like an oversized baby with a big, round head. Without the Tapscott eyebrows to shield them, his eyes seemed bigger and more expressive, and I picked up a sense of vulnerability that had never been there

before.

How many times over the summer had he asked me to come up for a weekend? I'd begged off each time.

He broke off, overcome by a spasm of compulsive coughing. The connection went dead.

CIA Boys

"AS I TOLD YOU EARLIER," Dad said when he came back online, "a couple of guys in lumpy suits showed up at the door last night. CIA, they said, and showed ID that looked legit. I pointed out how damned odd it was for them to suddenly come asking me about Paul, since it was their agency that had been insisting all along that Paul died back in '44. They shrugged it off, said they were just doing their jobs."

He paused to take some pills. "Those CIA boys like to ask questions, but don't like to give much in return. But they did tell me this much. Supposedly they've been picking up Paul's name frequently in the 'chatter,' as they called it, of a certain terrorist organization. You know what chatter is? Intercepted messages and phone calls and e-mails."

I was back swimming in that sea of unreality. Were Dad's medications causing him to hallucinate?

Paul had been dead since 1944. Why would his name be of interest to today's terrorists?

He chuckled, and I saw a flash of the person he used to be, before the sickness and drugs that had bloated him. "I can still read your face, just as well as ever. No, your old man hasn't hallucinated all this. I even asked them what made them think this was the same Paul, our Paul"

They said there was no doubt. That some terrorist group has been talking about Paul Tapscott, actually using his name, and there was no doubt, it was my brother Paul they'd been talking about.

"What group? What possible link—"

"They wouldn't say." He laughed again. "They wouldn't tell me much of anything at all, so I don't feel I need to tell *them* every damned thing. Like Willoughby's letter. That arrived by messenger, not more than a half-hour after they left. I could have called them, they'd given me a number, but I decided the hell with them. For whatever reason, they haven't been straight with us over the years, so now I'm returning the favor."

"You faxed me a copy of that letter this morning. But who is Willoughby? Why did he write now? What connection does he have with Uncle Paul?"

"I don't have a clue who Willoughby is, never heard of him. But did you notice the wording? 'Your brother, who was alleged to have been killed.' Not 'killed,' but '*alleged* to have been killed.' That's why we've got to follow this up."

"If Willoughby lives in London, why not meet there? Why have us both go all the way to La Rochelle?"

"Willoughby also says, 'It's time the truth came out.' We can't pass up the chance that it might just amount to something."

"But can we trust Willoughby? There have been so many false leads over the years—what

makes you any more sure this is the real thing?”

I saw the sadness cross Dad’s face, and wished I hadn’t asked. “Fact is, I’m not sure of this one. But I know this is the last chance . . . last chance in my lifetime, that’s for certain. I’ve spent most of my life wondering what really happened to Paul. If Willoughby can tell us that, then I can go in peace.”

Then I can go in peace. I choked up then, and turned away from the camera.

“ONE MORE THING, GREG,” he said just before I cut the connection. “Pray for me, Greg.”

“Sure, Dad, of course I’ll pray for you,” I said, hoping it didn’t come out sounding as phony as I felt saying it. I wasn’t much for praying. Not then. Praying and church-going and all that had been the fabric of life in the family as I’d grown up.

But then I’d gone to college, majoring in science, and before very long realized that prayer was not, could not be. To whom or what do you pray? Why would “they” care? Why they bother to answer?

To my mind at that point, saying “I’ll pray for you” was—at best—about as meaningful as saying, “Have a nice day.”

Now, looking back, knowing what I do now, I can see that I’d been looking at reality as narrowly as if through a microscope.

World’s worst nightmare

I FINISHED the report, and hit Send, knowing that, no matter how much polish I put in now, the client would bounce it back, nit-picked.

But that’s the nature of consulting. There was one consulting joke Dad hadn’t thrown at me yet: How is a consultant like a eunuch? Answer: Both have good ideas, but don’t get to follow through.

All too true.

THE PHONE RANG again as I was heading out the door, running later than I’d planned, hoping I’d left enough time to get through the layers of airport security. A local call, a number I didn’t recognize. Whoever it was, I didn’t have time to spare. I let it go through to the answering machine.

“Dammit, pick up. It’s me. We need to get together.” The throaty voice of Cal Katz, raspy from too many of the stinky cigars he lived on.

“I’m here, Cal.”

“You got my message? We need to follow up, ASAP. Why don’t you come over now, see the stuff I’ve turned up.”

“Cal, sorry, but I can’t do that now, I’m on my way to the airport. Anyway, I’m not clear what it is you want me to see. You were working on—”

“No names, no details,” he cut in. “I’m calling on a new cell-phone, prepaid, anonymous,

but they could be tapping your end. But yeah, I'm working on what I asked you about last time we talked. Remember what that was?"

"You asked if I'd had a relative in—"

He cut me off before I could say OSS. "Yeah, yeah, that's it, *part* of it, anyway. But only part of it. Just don't say the word. Gotta watch what you say. Like it or not, now you're part of it, so you gotta be smart, watch your back. This is serious, these people play for keeps."

Like it or not—again that phrase. What had I been drawn into?

"It'll have to wait a few days. I've got some things to do, then catch a flight to La Rochelle at—"

"You didn't hear what I just said. Be smart, don't give out clues over the phone. But if that's where you're going—if you're *serious*—then we've *really* gotta talk, pronto. 'Cause that's the core of it all."

"Can't it—"

"Lemme put it this way: stuff's happening that you don't have a clue about. I've got contacts in the intelligence community, and they're— No, can't go there, not over the phone, just that it's potentially the world's worst nightmare, and, like it or not, you're part of it."

It sounded wacko. But then a lot of Cal's other manias sounded wacko . . . until they made headlines, and sent people to prison.

Paul Tapscott, dead since D-Day. Twisted Messiah, rock mega-stars. And me.

"Sure, when we get—"

The house phone rang: the front desk, telling me my cab to the airport was here.

"Cal, I'm sorry, I hate to run, but I really *have* to make this plane, There's just not time to get together today. I'll call you as soon I get back."

"We can really scratch each other's backs on this." The last words I'd ever hear Cal say.

I WAS IN THE CAB as some of the things he'd said echoed in my mind: *contacts in the intelligence community . . . potentially the world's worst nightmare, . . . and, like it or not, you're part of it.*

The world's worst nightmare—wasn't that Twisted Messiah and its army of cultist fans? They had even used the term to wrap up last night's performance. Had they cribbed it from Cal?

But Cal had also been talking in the context of something he'd asked the other night, if a relative of mine had been in the OSS in World War II: that would have been Uncle Paul. But how did Cal learn about him? And what else did he know about Paul?

Like it or not, now you're part of it, so you gotta be smart, watch your back. This is serious, these people play for keeps.

Like it or not—again that phrase. What had I been drawn into?

DAY THREE

The Convent of the Debauched Virgins

BUSINESS CLASS was a nice touch for the long flight to Paris. Get to load first, before the masses crowd back into steerage class. No fight for luggage space, no contortions to fit into the seat.

Even a bowl of heated nuts and a cold drink before take-off. And served with a smile, not a snarl.

Thank you, Mr. Willoughby, whoever you are. But why are you being so nice to me?

ANOTHER PERK: news on-line, from all over, served up on your own little screen.

The big news, naturally, was the Twisted Messiah concert. It was the lead editorial even in the staid *London Times*. The *Times* took the phenomenon seriously, seeing Twisted Messiah and the movement that had suddenly sprung up from it as a “very dangerous and disruptive force.” As the editorial put it,

The threat posed is clear, though difficult to fit into the traditional categories. In one sense, Twisted Messiah can be seen as Neo-Nazi in direction, yet the attraction extends equally across the spectrum from hard-right to hard-left. The message, at its core, is a nihilistic embracing of political chaos—the destruction of all existing political and moral systems and institutions.

That message seems to resonate with today’s disgruntled youth, particularly in a Europe where unemployment especially among the young is as high as it is. Social and welfare benefits are generous—unduly generous, some say—but still many see no future for themselves. That anger broods over the continent and the world, a force waiting to be tapped by the kind of nihilism that Twisted Messiah advocates on a subconscious if not conscious level.

For those, bored and dissatisfied with the present and despairing of the future, the message of “pre-emptive destruction” offered by Twisted Messiah and their “New Cross” movement is all too appealing.

Eloquent but overblown, I thought.

Then I thought again. There did seem to be a sickness afflicting the developed countries. Most people, even most politicians, agreed that something was wrong, though the differences lay in the diagnosis of the cause.

Images of the major riots over the past few years ran through my mind: the big London riots; the six days of rioting in Stockholm—of all places. Chicago. Paris. Miami.

Some blamed high levels of unemployment, while others said the cause was overwork among those who did have jobs. Welfare was too generous, some claimed, while others said it was too limited. Some said the cause was a spiritual emptiness, others that it was a normal readjustment as people moved away from the “verities” of the established religions and conventional belief systems.

One thing was clear, though: Jessie’s “Birthday Gift to the World Concert” had, literally overnight, achieved worldwide impact. After the music ended, the fans had come together in cities around the world for supposedly spontaneous rallies and marches. The police had handled

them well in some places, but in others the rallies had blossomed into nasty confrontations.

Twisted Messiah seemed to have reached world-wide critical mass through this one concert. Until a few weeks ago, it had been just another group—bigger than the Beatles or Michael Jackson at their peaks, more confrontational than Madonna, more political than most of the other major groups put together.

Now, it seemed, Twisted Messiah was creating a new style of politics conveyed by music and celebrity.

Augmented by terrorism?

And, for some reason, interested in my Uncle Paul, dead since 1944.

I DINED WELL (it was Air France, of course), and slept well.

After breakfast I flicked on the in-flight TV news. Another night of mobs of Twisted Messiah followers and “celebrations” in cities around the world.

Most were peaceful, though in Mexico City the police had used teargas; in Los Angeles a sniper had fired into the group, killing one, injuring a half-dozen., including a couple of police officers

These were relatively peaceful, relatively little destruction, relatively little violence. But the threat was in the air, and everyone from politicians to police to the rest of us could only hope.

THE NEXT STORY was relevant in a way I wouldn't understand until days later: a report that Jesse Cripes, Twisted Messiah lead singer, had flown from the Berlin concert to his “private refuge” in the Alps for a few days of rest and “consultations” with advisors.

Jesse Cripes' hideaway was a former monastery for nuns, which he had renamed “The Convent of the Debauched Virgins.”

End of the sample of *THE GRAIL CONSPIRACIES*

Thank you for reading this sampler. I hope you will want to read the complete book, which is available via various sellers, including Amazon. It is available in both ebook and print editions.

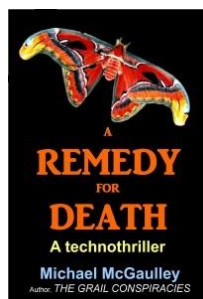
[To order THE GRAIL CONSPIRACIES via Amazon](#)

Want to tap in on my research for this book . . .as well as updates I'll be adding? Then I invite you to check out my main blog and website at

**MichaelMcGaulley.net
facebook.com/MichaelMcGaulley.books/**

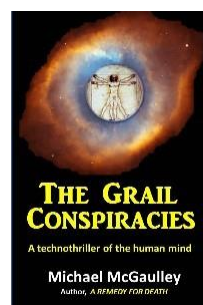
Enjoy this book? My other books include:

“Real” science technothrillers



A Remedy for Death. It’s said that we only go around once in life . . . but what if? What if there is a “Jurassic Park for rich old guys? What if today’s emerging bio-science offers a select, secretive, super-rich elite the chance to come back, into “healthy, horny 21-year old bodies complete with all our accumulated savvy from this lifetime”? But what if the project is *almost* successful . . . but opens dangerous doors that cannot be closed?

[To order via Amazon as ebook or pbook](#)

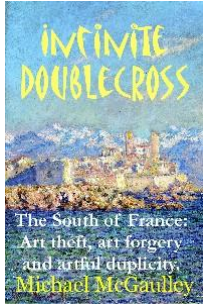


The deeper Grail is dormant within the human mind, and is the most powerful force—or, potentially, most powerful weapon—ever known. It was sought by the Nazi “Ahnenerbe” or “Occult Bureau” in WWII, and now by the scruffy, brutal “army” made up of fans of Twisted Messiah, an international super-star rock group with neo-Nazi political ambitions and occult dimensions. Can you find it before Twisted Messiah finds you?

The Grail Conspiracies. Mind-tech: tapping the brain and beyond. The legends of the Grail as a cup, or even a womb were deliberate “disinformation” dating back hundreds of years.

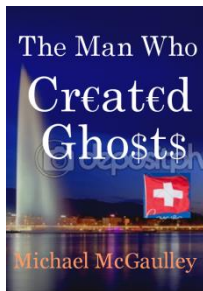
[To order via Amazon as ebook or pbook](#)

International mystery and crime



Infinite Doublecross. The French Riviera. Art theft. Art forgery. Artful duplicity. A “perfect guy.” And a vacationing techie who finds herself caught up in a tangle of duplicity and deception. If she can’t trust herself, who *can* she trust?

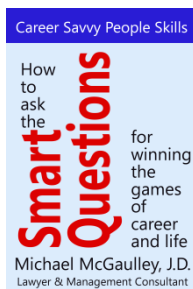
[To order via Amazon](#)



The Man Who Created Ghosts. Dirty money. Dutch chocolate. Swiss bankers. Stealing from “the worst people in the world”. And “ghosts” who are not at all pleased with what’s happening.

[To order via Amazon](#)

Career Savvy People Skills Series

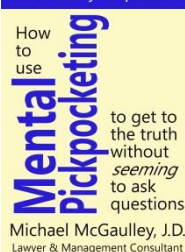


“You’ve got to be aware of the games that are being played. You don’t have to play the games yourself, but you do need to recognize when they are being played against you.”

Like it or not, the reality is that games, probes, and subtle competitions—and not to forget office politics! —are facts of life in most organizations.

Smart Questions provides the tools for looking through to what’s really going on in situations, on spotting the “real rules”, on focusing on what really matters and staying out of unnecessary confrontations, and on selecting the best option under the circumstances—and defending it if challenged.

[To order via Amazon as ebook or pbook](#)



When you ask a question, *most* of the time, *most* people will do their best to tell the truth.

But not always. Sometimes simply to ask a question is to give the game away because it alerts the other person to what you're really after, and hence raises a flag on what they may want to fudge, avoid, or distort. (Or even tell a fib!)

Mental Pickpocketing introduces you to an array of methods of getting to the truth without seeming to ask questions.

[To order via Amazon as ebook or pbook](#)

© 2016 Michael McGaulley. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, with the exception of brief quotations in reviews or related articles.

The title Infinite Doublecross is a trademark of Michael McGaulley.

Published in the United States of America by Champlain House Media.

This is a work of fiction. Any similarity to real persons or names, living or dead, or to actual events, organizations, or locales, is coincidental and not intended by the author.