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*“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***

*“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

*“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

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### *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

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### *“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.

End of this sample of *THE GRAIL CONSPIRACIES*.

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