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Chapter 1

Mind Control and How to Fight It

I knew it was going to be a good day when Astrolabe, my fuzzy Persian, didn't mess all over the kitchen floor. Usually she messes all over the floor, not in her kitty litter, and I gotta clean it all up. Not at all like Sextant, our hermaphrodite Siamese cat, who always knows where to mess. But today Astrolabe messed in her litter, and when I saw that, I said to myself, Hey, this is going to be a good day. And I was right. Usually the cat messes all over the floor, as if she can't make it to the litter box. And then when I get up in the morning, the whole place stinks and I have to clean it up. Kris says that Sextant -- we call her Sexy for short -- is *her* cat, and Astrolabe is *my* cat. I don't remember the justification for this division, but it means that I am responsible for cleaning up Astrolabe's mess. So every morning, before I go to work, I put on the 1935 recording of "Also Sprach Zarathustra" that Serge Koussevitzky made with the Boston Symphony, and wash the kitchen floor. I usually have to wash the floor again when I get home from work, because Astrolabe usually misses the target. But that particular morning was different. And the cat hadn't even died. Here, she was still alive and had done her business in the litter box.

I've been reading about all of this mind control stuff. Now they made some computer chip that replicates your brain cells, so who needs an organic brain anymore? They implant these chips in people's brains when they go in for a routine physical or an X-ray or even for an eye exam. I understand that even some barbers are in on it. It's mind control, that's what it is. And now all these lobotomies! Lobotomy is serious business. You shouldn't go and get a lobotomy unless you think about it first, because you're not going to be in any shape to think about it afterwards. Of course, a lot of it is involuntary. I just hope I can get out before they come after me.

But I knew they wouldn't come that day, because the cat didn't mess on the floor. That was a good start. I didn't have to clean the floor that morning. The people at the supermarket would ask me why I was buying so much floorcleaner. I just told them that I like to keep my floors clean as a whistle. They joked with me, all in good fun, said I must be cleaning floors on the side and maybe I would like to come over to their houses and clean their floors too, but I told them, No, I've already got a job. Professor of History at the University of Washington.

So I had extra time on my hands what with not having to clean the floor, and so I decided to stop by Union Station and check the departures. Got to keep alert. Never know when you might want to make a break for it and get out. Go to Mexico or something. And you can't trust the airlines, what with all their crashes. I mean, Seattle is going to the dogs, the final crash might come very suddenly and it'll be a scramble then. Best to know what the train schedules are. 6:30 a.m. for Portland, continuing on to Boise. 8:46 a.m. for Portland, continuing on to Los Angeles and Ensenada, Mexico. 9:15 a.m. express train to Phoenix. 10:20 a.m. to Vancouver. 11:23 a.m. for Calgary. That's one place I don't ever want to go.

I cut my own hair. That started about three years ago when I found out what was going on in these so-called "barber shops". I remember one place where I was having a nice conversation with the barber and heard plenty of snipping sounds, and was remarking to myself how neat the barber was, not letting any snipped hair fall onto my lap. Then I got up for a moment and tripped over an electrical cord. In a flash, the "barber" disappeared. He had only been a hologram. That made me think. Then I tried the competition. Had a very striking name: "the First National Barber Shop". It was a bank-owned financial front organization. At least *their* barbers actually cut the hair, but they seemed a bit scatter-brained, had too many standardized replies. They would say, "Good morning, have a seat, we'll be right with you" every time the door opened, even if it was because someone was leaving. I realized that these "barbers" were actually audio-animatronic robots. No doubt working far below minimum wage.

Mind control takes many forms. Subliminal messages on television and e-mail, product promotion in films, and this constant soothing prattle on the news

programs trying to put us all into a state of blissful equanimity. They want us to believe that all we have to worry about is murder, rape, arson, robbery, invasion, impoverishment, car crashes, pestilence, AIDS, riots, earthquakes, floods, sudden loss of electricity, sudden loss of memory, Alzheimer's disease, strikes by bus drivers, corruption, juvenile delinquency, the subversion of the legal system, terrorism, global warming, alien abductions, and the growing gulf between the rich and the poor. Life should be so simple! No, the reality is, as I have learned, far more complex, far more disturbing. So you have to be careful. Very careful. Otherwise, who knows, you could lose your mind.

Take the case of prozac. People say it makes them feel sanguine and content. Jolly, I call it. But it's not healthy to be so jolly. You start to accept everything they tell you. The coffee houses are dens of prozac. Take, for example, Queequeg's -- Seattle's most popular coffee house chain. Why do you think everyone looks so jolly at Queequeg's? Then, while they have their customers in so receptive and vulnerable a disposition, they feed them subliminal messages in the musac. Seattle wants to be the Republic of Latte. Well, count me out!

Some handy rules: Avoid juices of all kinds, especially from concentrates. Check all fruit and vegetables for syringe marks. Avoid grapes altogether. Where crackers are concerned, eat only Finnish crackers. Avoid ground meats of all kinds. Eat only imported butter. And *never* buy large, bargain sizes. One can never be too careful.

That's one of the reasons I like the old recordings. They were made before they started putting all those subliminal messages into the tracks. So you can listen to Willem Mengelberg's 1928 recording of "Ein Heldenleben" with the New York Philharmonic without fear. They haven't gotten around to "fixing" it yet. I have proof.

Kris, my wife of six years, had been in the Resistance for many years. Fought with the Mannequin Liberation Front. Tied herself to Trident missiles in some sort of protest. I forget the details. On one occasion, she even traveled to Iran, back in the days of the Shah, and became involved in international subversion. Then one day she decided to go straight, went on a diet, started using makeup, threw away all her fatigues and filled her closet with leather skirts, silk blouses,

and taffeta gowns. Now she likes to fix pretty bows in her hair and keeps the house very very tidy. *Very* tidy.

I've tried a couple of times to talk to Kris about her years with the Resistance. But whenever I've tried, she always turns the conversation to cleaning, and usually starts cleaning something.

She's not so worried about lobotomies as I am, although she appreciates the risk. She says that nobody in her family has ever had a lobotomy. I'm not sure what that has to do with anything. How is it that after all those years in the Resistance, she has no sense of the importance of self-defense, of protection? Maybe she's forgotten.

I hate elevators. Being trapped like that without any possibility of escape. And then they get inside with you. Of course they want you to think they just happen to be in the same elevator. They don't want you to realize that they've been following you. But they can't fool me. They want to control me. They want to take out my brain, so that they can continue with their skulduggery. Better to take the stairs.

We voted differently in the election. The party bosses wanted us to choose between Mondale and Reagan, but I thought about it and it seemed to me that the best president we had ever had was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. So I wrote in his name for president. I figured so what if he was dead. He knew how to pick good advisers and I figured that his advisers wouldn't be dead. Kris said that I had wasted my vote. But Kris had trouble choosing between the two major party candidates, because both of them dressed neatly and washed their hands regularly. So she decided to vote for both of them. I told her that her ballot would be thrown out and that she had wasted her vote. But she said that it felt good to vote for men who were neat and clean. At any rate, Reagan was back in office as our president and I just hoped that he understood the danger that the international brain surgery conspiracy represented.