

J. K. HAYWARD



THE
LUCK
PARTICLE

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For Lisa, Matt and Kash, without whom
this book would not have been written.

"History is written by the victors."

Anonymous, attributed to Winston Churchill

CHAPTER 1

Near Mayak, Crimea, Ukraine - August 2007

The man sat with his eyes shut, facing the setting sun. Whether he was aware of the beauty of the moment, with the impression of a fire burning far out into the ocean as the great orange orb sank into the sea, he made no sign of it.

Barely breathing, he sat cross-legged, on the end of the crusted and rusting pier platform. Jutting out from a secret alcove, long forgotten, surrounded by rocky, mountainous outcrops. A sailing craft big enough to sleep six people gently tilted side to side alongside the pier. Its main sail raised marginally, the canvas flapped every so often softly, in concert with the stays and the lapping of the small waves.

The air was dry, even this close to the ocean and at this hour of the evening. A stillness hung around the cove. The sand, hot and hazy, was motionless. From a corner, a little soft-shelled crab staggering across from where it had buried itself in the shade an hour or so ago.

All was quiet.

He took a long, silent breath in through his nose, filling his lungs, breathing from his diaphragm to maximise his intake.

He held it for several moments.

Removing a Dictaphone from his pocket, he clicked it on, and began to talk.

"I am the Historian. If you're listening to this, either a copy has reached an unknown place in the world by some slim chance invisible to The Watchmen. Or, quite unbelievably, one man can change the world."

CHAPTER 2

Vienna, Austria - Tuesday August 7th, 2007

The report that had just hit his desk provided the first trace that things might be going awry after recent acts of intervention by his close circle.

BNP Paribas had just terminating withdrawals from three significant hedge funds, without authorisation.

It had cited a 'complete evaporation of liquidity' in the financial markets as the reason.

Many of Adnan Karvorkian's peers, both inside the group of individuals connected by a special bond as well as those outside, were surprised and damaged by this action.

That no one had been pre-warned within his cabal was especially egregious, given their connections and associated 'skills'. The situation was a more than simply a little awkward.

The flashes of embarrassment caused in a few isolated incidents tore across complex interconnected investments. Deals, on-going discussions and a couple of significant projects imploded spectacularly.

No one was entitled to be surprised that some re-setting of the financial markets would happen. Given the bursting of the bubble in the sub-prime lending market the year before, in part forced by the actions of his fellowship, it was inevitable. But this should not have affected those in in Karvorkian's circle. There were precautions to limit the ripple effect of the re-balancing to those who deserved to be reminded of their place.

No. Something had changed. It had to be an external factor. No one in their collective counsel would have deliberately caused this outcome. It was impossible.

Sitting in the near dark, Karvorkian's screen flashed financial market information in reds and greens (at this point way more reds than greens). He tapped a sinewy finger slowly on the mouse, pondering.

Accounting for all known variables, he sighed; it could mean only one thing. That infernal machine was getting closer to

completion.

His hand moved to the phone. He depressed the well-worn speed-dial button, lifted the receiver and waited for the person on the other end of the line to pick up.

Before the person at the other end of the line could even acknowledge him, he spoke.

"We need to convene. Please make the necessary arrangements."

"I understand. I'll do so now."

Karvorkian put the receiver back down without a word of thanks and resumed scrutinising the screen.

He was not yet perturbed. This type of thing had been going on for hundreds of years. At the same time, he was not careless enough to think that this was a blip, an anomaly or accident.

There was no such thing as chance.

A correction and a punishment. That was what was needed. But first, the situation required further analysis. To choose the appropriate counteraction to re-align the current situation to his coalition's interest.

They needed to bring back balance. By balance, of course, his definition was that of the reintroduction of the status quo. A situation where Karvorkian's close union of peers regained control.

As he shut down his computer he reminded himself of the mantra that had been guiding people like him for centuries.

"May you live in interesting times," he whispered, as he stood and stalked out of the room, now completely dark.

The screen ticked as it cooled, seconds of a clock. It gradually slowed, giving the impression that time itself was slowing. Nothing could be further from the truth.

CHAPTER 3

The city of Geneva - Tuesday August 7th, 2007

For a city of around one hundred and seventy-five thousand people, Professor Ebhart Fenkhause mused, Geneva was possibly one of the most interesting petri-dishes of habitations in the world.

He remembered as he navigated the wet streets that it was the place which printed the first ever English version of the Bible. He felt a delicious irony. How could such a religious city play host to the European Organization for Nuclear Research? An organisation laser-focused on understanding a universe without a god?

Indeed, he mused, if ever there was a counter-balance to the Holy See in The Vatican, Geneva surely provided it.

In its relative infancy, a Count under the Holy Roman Empire ruled it. Now, Geneva was a global centre of finance. A rumoured one trillion dollars sloshed around private bank accounts, through transactions almost as shady as the Vatican Bank itself.

He wondered how the city managed to draw the first organisation which led to a hive of institutions with globally-significant power bases to reside in its streets. The United Nations through to multi-national internet and telephony infrastructure organisations. Trade, transport, meteorology, medical and economic bodies. The breadth of politics and morality was incredible. If Geneva was a party, the guests were A-list.

Luckily for him, the Professor smiled, the chances of an actual party in Geneva occurring were slim to none. The place was almost as animated at night as the plastic owls placed around the railway generators to scare away rodents.

Professor Ebhart was single, a confirmed bachelor and married to his work. He ate, drank and slept science. If it was possible to forgo sleeping, drinking and eating, he would have happily spent twenty-four hours a day at CERN.

It was Ebhart's job, his mission, to lead the ATLAS team. The team responsible for the detector critical in searching for and verifying the existence of the Higgs boson. The God particle. Every step he took, every minute that past, he felt a growing sense of

closeness to that confirmation.

For a man of no religious belief, his strength of feeling in his work could have been described in a religious context as fanatical. His certainty in something so fundamental to his perception of the universe that was unproven by science made him who he was.

ATLAS was his church. Forty-five metres long, twenty-five meters high, and weighing about seven thousand tons.

He had even described it on the official website as 'about half as big as the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris'.

His three thousand bishops were physicists drawn from thirty-eight countries. Universities and laboratories made up his one hundred and seventy-seven dioceses.

Every morning, he would go and pray at the altar of data. His white coat his cassock and surplice. He ate and drank of the body of work that created the future of scientific proof.

His work was beginning to generate a real sense of anticipation and a growing awareness around the world.

The recent switching on of the largest electro-magnet in the world generated strong press interest.

Eighteen years since the start of development. Billions of Euros later, the Large Hadron Collider project was almost ready. Ready to delve into the answer of life, the universe and everything, to steal from the wonderful Douglas Adams. Ehbart had appreciated his work greatly when, in his youth, he had had the time to read fiction.

That he would live to see it switch on and begin to work caused Ehbart to have a profound sense of awe and mystery on a daily, if not hourly, basis.

Others were less inclined to feel so positive about this progress. The shifting of institutional power that it would inevitably cause if Ehbart was successful, formed a clear and present danger.

The intervention of those holding these views was currently not anywhere near his list of possible threats.

Ehbart trudged along the pavement, thinking about his current schedule.

One international organisation that had a presence in Geneva tracked him ever more closely. It had no name, no offices and no tax returns. It did have one of those hidden bank accounts. Very

useful for all types of emergencies that required surreptitious financial transactions.

Soon, it would strike. Hard.

Harder than it had in 2005. Its intervention then caused a one thousand two hundred-kilogramme cabinet containing electrical switchgear to fall on Miguel Salenca. With fatal consequences. The death remained unexplained. The internal accident report logged and typed as an issue of 'Personal Accident' in the Electronic Document Handling System. It sat on the system, gathering virtual dust. Unlike the real dust that gathered on the first place trophy Miguel had won in the individual unloading event at the recent French Forklift Championships.

There was no field, even had someone identified sabotage as the cause, to record an act of sabotage like that on the form.

No, it would strike harder than on the twenty-seventh of March of that year. A cryogenic magnet support 'broke' during a pressure test involving one of the machine's inner triplet magnet assemblies. This was due to a 'fault' that had been present in the original design. A fault which had remained 'unnoticed' during four engineering reviews over the following years.

Further analysis revealed that it was a design flaw. Made as thin as possible for better insulation, the magnet was not strong enough to withstand the forces generated during pressure testing.

Again, someone filed an internal accident report. No mention of the possibility that a member of staff may just have manipulated the results to impact the core stability of the LHC.

Professor Fenkhause was completely unaware of who and what was about to attempt to destroy him.